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CIA Prepping for Possible Cyber Strike Against Russia

By Jason Ditz
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According to a new report from NBC News, the CIA is actively selecting targets for a potentially imminent order from the White House to launch a “clandestine” cyber attack against the Russian government, with a particularly eye toward embarrassing Russian leaders.

Officials have repeatedly suggested that the US would launch such attacks “in retaliation” for hacking attacks against Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, even though Russia denied involvement in that and US officials have declined to offer any public evidence of official Russian culpability.

Vice President Joe Biden confirmed earlier today that the US had sent a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin advising him of a cyber attack “at the time of our choosing, and under the circumstances that will have the greatest impact.” This suggests the official descriptions of the attack as “clandestine” are using a very loose definition of the word.

NBC cited officials as saying there is some debate within the top leadership of the administration about the wisdom of launching such an attack, and President Obama has yet to officially sign off on the matter. The primary argument for the attack is that the administration has repeatedly blamed Russia for hacks, and repeatedly vowed revenge, so the lack of revenge could be

embarrassing for the president. Former CIA official Michael Morell cautioned against covert attacks, saying the US should attack Russia openly, “for everybody to see.”

One former intelligence official said US options for cyber attacks on Russia weren’t good, and that anything the US could do, Russia could do in retaliation, adding “do you want to have Barack Obama bouncing checks.”

The administration was also reportedly holding meetings today on the possibility of attacking Russia militarily in Syria, and while there is no word of what came out of those meetings, the sudden increase in talk of cyber attacks suggest that might be the “compromise position” in an administration full of officials desperate to pick a fight with Russia.