



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on October 20, 2016

Former Marine Corps General Pleads Guilty in Leaks Case

On Monday retired Marine General James Cartwright (shown on left) [agreed to plead guilty](#) to charges that he lied to the FBI during its investigation into leaks over the clandestine Stuxnet operation back in 2013. Stuxnet was a computer virus, or worm, that was designed to harm Iran's ability to produce weapons-grade material for its nuclear program. (On that same day, the FBI released documents charging that the Department of Justice offered the FBI a "deal" to reclassify some of Hillary Clinton's e-mails retroactively.)



As Josh Rogin [noted in the Washington Post](#), the FBI release of information on the Justice Department the same day was no coincidence, saying that the FBI's handling of the Cartwright case "reeks of political considerations."

Cartwright was accused of leaking secret information to a reporter about the Stuxnet virus and lying about it, damaging national security because the Iranians would then know what we were doing. Cartwright admitted that he did talk to a reporter, but he said he only did so *after* the reporter had written about the topic. Cartwright said he agreed to an interview with the reporter, in which he verified that America had launched the computer virus, because he was trying to stop the reporter from potentially leaking any additional classified information. No one has accused Cartwright of being the initial source of the leaked information on the computer virus. (Those high administration officials who are likely culpable have not been targeted for prosecution.)

The investigation into Cartwright's role in the Stuxnet operation began in June 2013 when he received a "target letter" from the Department of Justice, saying that he was under investigation for leaking classified information about Stuxnet, a cyberattack against the centrifuges used by Iran to refine nuclear material. That investigation continued until 2015, the time of the "Iran deal" — a deal to lift nuclear-related economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for small concessions by Iran. Then the prosecution was put on hold because pursuing the Cartwright case could be inconvenient and possibly damaging to the Iranian negotiations, if the information became public knowledge. However, when Hillary Clinton began to undergo serious public scrutiny for her own mishandling of top secret information on her personal computer (which was easily accessible to foreign government agencies), Cartwright's case was resurrected.

In March 2015 Cartwright's lawyer, Gregory Craig, said that his client had had no contact with federal investigators for over a year, and that besides, the general was innocent:

General Cartwright has done nothing wrong. He has devoted his entire life to defending the United States. He would never do anything to weaken our national defense or undermine our national security. [General] Cartwright is a national treasure, a genuine hero and a great patriot.

He was also expendable, without any high-ranking politicians willing to cover his back. As Rogin



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explained:

Under his plea deal, Cartwright could face up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Last year, Petraeus cut a deal with the Justice Department after admitting he had lied to the FBI and passed hundreds of highly classified documents to his biographer and mistress Paula Broadwell. He pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor of mishandling classified information and was sentenced to two years' probation and a \$100,000 fine.

Clinton was not charged at all.

Despite the fact that Petraeus was grossly derelict in protecting sensitive information and despite the fact that FBI Director James Comey's charged that Clinton was "extremely careless" in the handling of "very sensitive, highly classified information" in her e-mails, Petraeus got a slap on the wrist and Clinton got off scott free. Cartwright stands to have the book thrown at him — so that the FBI can say that it actually does prosecute high-ranking officials.

Steven Aftergood, director of the Federation of American Scientists' project on government secrecy, nailed it: Cartwright "is being singled out for prosecution and public humiliation. It's an implicit rebuttal to those [millions of private citizens] who argued that other senior officials such as Clinton or Petraeus got off scott free or got too light of a sentence."

In other words Cartwright was a bone thrown to the crowd of angry citizens over the lack of justice in the Clinton e-mail affair.

The hypocrisy of the FBI is staggering. Following Cartwright's public humiliation on Monday, Assistant FBI Director Paul Abbate fairly chortled:

The FBI will continue to take all necessary and appropriate steps to thoroughly investigate individuals, *no matter their position* (emphasis added), who undermine the integrity of our justice system by lying to federal investigators.

He didn't add, as long as that investigation doesn't involve anyone named Clinton.

Aftergood said of the prosecution: "They [the FBI] seem to be trying to make a policy point. The Justice Department would say they are not influenced at all by policy or political considerations. In the real world of course, they are influenced."

The guilty plea also served as damage control, a distraction from the political campaign and from undue additional attention to Clinton herself. As Joe Scudder, writing for *The Constitution*, put it:

In order to give the pretense that it enforces the law equally, the government sacrifices a less important person to cover themselves when they let a more important criminal go free.

Recently, the FBI covered for criminal Hillary Clinton. So now we see damage control in the case of General Cartwright.

Monday's Cartwright plea therefore served several purposes: an attempt to restore some of the FBI's lost credibility in letting Hillary off, a bone to outraged citizens that not everyone gets off, and a distraction away from Clinton as the presidential race rounds third and heads for home.

There's an excellent chance this whole mockery of justice could backfire. Cartwright is not a criminal politician but a highly respected career Marine officer who, at his retirement ceremony in 2011, received his *fourth* Defense Distinguished Service Medal, along with Distinguished Service medals from the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Coast Guard. He currently serves as an advisor to the



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prestigious Center for Strategic and International Studies, ranked by the University of Pennsylvania as the number one think tank in the world for defense and national security.

With exposure of the sham “justice” even being reported by national media outlets such as the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, Clinton’s “special class” distinction may soon disappear altogether.

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