



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on October 17, 2025

John Bolton Faces Life in Prison

John Bolton could spend the rest of his life in prison. President Donald Trump's former national security advisor surrendered to authorities on Friday and pleaded not guilty to 18 counts tied to allegations that he abused his position by sharing classified information with people he shouldn't have.

He collected and passed on classified information as part of a book he was writing, according to charging documents. He used his personal emails to send that information. And the email accounts were eventually hacked by Iran, the indictment alleges.

The charges were filed Thursday in the U.S. District Court of Maryland after a grand jury indicted him. Each count carries a maximum potential sentence of 10 years. At 76, he only needs to be convicted of a few to spend the rest of his life in jail.

But he says he's innocent and the target of despotic persecution. "I look forward to the fight to defend my lawful conduct and to expose his abuse of power," [he said](#) in a statement.

His former boss and supposed despot thinks his former employee had it coming. "He's a bad guy. That's the way it goes," Trump told a reporter at the White House.

Bolton was President Trump's national security advisor (NSA) from April 9, 2018, to September 10, 2019. He's held several other government positions going back to the Ronald Reagan years, including assistant attorney general, undersecretary of the State Department, and ambassador to the United Nations.

Bolton is accused of holding classified national security documents at his Maryland house, and of sharing more than 1,000 pages of his daily activities as NSA with people he wasn't allowed to. He faces eight counts of transmission of national defense information and 10 counts of retention of national defense information.

Classified Information

The court document says Bolton "had access to some of the US Government's most sensitive and closely guarded national security secrets." He had top-secret security clearance. In September 2018, while in his post as NSA, Bolton had a SCIF (a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility) installed in his home for storing classified information. (The SCIF was decertified after Trump fired him.) He also received intelligence reports and had meetings with many intel agencies, including the National Security Agency and Central Intelligence Agency, as well as officials from foreign governments. But he took advantage of that access, court documents [say](#):



AP Images
John Bolton



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From on or about April 9, 2018, through at least on or about August 22, 2025, Bolton abused his position as National Security Advisor by sharing more than a thousand pages of information about his day-to-day activities as the National Security Advisor — including information relating to the national defense which was classified up to the TOP SECRET/SCI [sensitive compartmented information] level — with two unauthorized individuals.

The indictment doesn't identify the people he allegedly shared this information with, but it provides some clues. Individual 1 never had security clearance. Individual 2 also never had security clearance, but was related to him. The speculative consensus points to his wife and their daughter.

“Diaries”

Bolton allegedly used his AOL and Google emails to send classified information in the form of “diary-like entries.” Those entries ended up being printed and stored at his house, according to allegations.

Per court documents:

Bolton wrote many of these diary-like entries by transcribing his handwritten notes from his day's activities into word processing documents, which he then electronically sent to Individuals 1 and 2 through a commercial non-governmental application. ... At no point did Bolton have authorization to store or transmit the classified information that he sent to Individuals 1 and 2 via his personal electronic devices and accounts. Nor did, at any time, Individuals 1 or 2 have authorization to know or store the classified information that Bolton gave to them.

The information in these notes included details he learned from meetings with senior government officials, intelligence briefings, talks with foreign leaders, and foreign intel organizations. The court documents say Bolton regularly sent the people “diaries,” “including information classified up to the TOP SECRET.SCI level.”

After being fired in September 2019, Bolton was told he could no longer have classified information at his house. The indictment says that when that happened, he failed to tell the government that he had sent classified information to people he shouldn't have.

Hacked by Iran?

Making matters worse, Bolton's emails were later hacked by someone with supposed ties to Iran's government, according to the indictment. “A representative for Bolton notified the U.S. government of the hack in or about July 2021, but did not tell the U.S. government that the account contained national defense information, including classified information, that Bolton had placed in the account from his time as national security adviser,” court files say.

Writing a Book

The reason Bolton took and passed on all this information, according to the charging document's framing, is to put them in a book. He referred to the two people as his “editors.” After Bolton's stint in the administration ended, his literary agent sent an email to a publisher about a book he was working on about his time as national security advisor.



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The indictment noted:

In that email, the literary agent stated, among other things, that Bolton's forthcoming book would include [his] impressions of his time as National Security Advisor "in a meticulously observed manner with direct quotes from all parties based on contemporaneous notes."

On December 30, 2019, he submitted a manuscript titled *The Room Where It Happened: A White House Memoir*. By the time the book was published in July 2020, the classified information included in the 18 charges had been removed following a review by the National Security Council. He ended up making more than \$1 million selling the rights to his book.

In June 2021, the government entered into a civil agreement with Bolton over his book. He agreed to provide all the classified information he had to the government. The following month, he told the FBI, through a representative, that his email was hacked by Iran. But he never told authorities that he had used that email to send classified information.

Still Had Classified Information in 2025

Fast-forward to 2025. On August 22, the FBI raided Bolton's home. "Part of the material seized ... included electronic files showing that Bolton transmitted his diary entries, many of which related to the national defense and contained classified information ... through a non-governmental messaging application," documents say. The feds seized classified documents.

The indictment spends a few pages highlighting public comments Bolton made between 2016 and 2025 to show that he knew how to handle classified information.

While the mainstream media likes to frame Bolton's legal troubles — as well as James Comey's and Leticia James' — as revenge by a president who spent 10 years mired in false allegations and under legal threats, the FBI began probing this before Trump began his second term. Even *The New York Times* [pointed out](#) that "his case gained momentum in the Biden administration."

What's concerning is that, assuming the indictment is accurate, it appears Bolton got a pass for years — likely so because he's an Establishment man.

Bolton is as neocon as they get. As we [said](#) in August 2023, his "foreign-policy establishment credentials are impeccable," and his main concerns have always been "standing up to evil dictators all over the world in the name of nebulous 'interests,' and maintaining the post-World War II status quo that includes the perpetuation and enlargement of the UN system and the continuation of NATO."

While Trump's Justice Department has shown some signs that it's willing to make an effort to erode the two-tier justice system, there has so far been no accountability. Are things about to change?



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