



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on December 6, 2016

## Snowden: Petraeus Disclosed “More Highly Classified” Information Than I Did

In an interview with Katie Couric for Yahoo Global News, Edward Snowden (shown) said what many already know: America has a “two-tiered system of justice.” People with political value and government connections are handled with kid gloves when they mishandle or disclose classified information, even when it is for their own gain, while others — those with no political value or government connections — are given the iron fist for mishandling or disclosing classified information, even if it is for the public good.



Answering a question about what a plea deal would look like in his case, Snowden said he wasn’t “exactly sure” since he is not a lawyer. He continued by saying:

But the idea here is when most people — who are involved in government or the intelligence community — are involved in some sort of case where the government goes “This person was acting in good faith, they were trying to do right by the American people, but they did break the law,” no charges are ever brought or they’re brought very minimally.

Couric asked Snowden if he was “suggesting there’s a double standard between high-ranking officials and lower-level employees” in the government, Snowden said, “I’m not sure I’m *suggesting* it; I think everyone’s aware of it.” He went on to say:

We have a two-tiered system of justice in the United States, where people who are either well-connected to government or they have access to an incredible amount of resources get very light punishments, whereas people who are from more vulnerable populations — they live in more precarious situations, they’re an inner-city youth — will be very much tread upon by our justice system.

While the Yahoo [article](#) points out that “Snowden did not cite any examples” of those who acted in good faith and were either not charged or were charged “minimally,” it is reasonable that his years in the intelligence community give him experience to speak to the subject.

Another aspect of this which was not covered in the interview is that when leaks of classified information benefit the government, no one is charged. As this writer reported in a [previous article](#) about the Justice Department’s refusal to indict Hillary Clinton despite a mountain of evidence that she broke the law and risked national security:

In 2012, *Bloomberg* reported that “Eric Holder, attorney general under President Barack Obama, has prosecuted more government officials for alleged leaks under the World War I-era Espionage Act than all his predecessors combined.” That means that in the months and years leading up to the FBI’s inexcusable decision to not recommend the indictment of former Secretary of State Hillary



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Clinton for mishandling classified information during her time in office, Obama's Justice Department charged and prosecuted people in government for doing exactly what Secretary Clinton did.

Ok, not exactly what Clinton did. In fact, both *Bloomberg* and the *Washington Times* asserted that Obama's Department of Justice has used the Espionage Act to punish whistleblowers to send a message to anyone considering blowing a whistle on illegal government activities and programs. That message is clear: Inform the media about government misdeeds and spend the lion's share of your life behind bars. So the difference between Secretary Clinton and many of those prosecuted by Obama's DOJ is that they acted out of a sense of patriotism, and she acted out of a sense of self-service.

That article quoted *Bloomberg* as [reporting](#):

The indictments of six individuals under that spy law [the Espionage Act ] have drawn criticism from those who say the president's crackdown chills dissent, curtails a free press and betrays Obama's initial promise to "usher in a new era of open government."

And the *Washington Times* [reported](#):

However, when leaks to the press benefit the administration, prosecutions from the Justice Department are absent. For example, AG Holder was not prosecuting anyone over who leaked information about the killing of Osama bin Laden. The Justice Department has yet to charge anyone over leaking information regarding the U.S. involvement in cyberattacks on Iran as well as an al-Qaida plan to blow up a U.S. bound airplane. In fact, the Justice Department ended up appointing one of two attorneys to the cyberattacks investigation who was an Obama donor.

Snowden's remarks about people who — as he puts it — "are either well-connected to government or they have access to an incredible amount of resources" are in sync with a trend of government punishing some crimes while either completely ignoring or rewarding others. Case in point? General Petraeus, who is being considered by president-elect Donald Trump for secretary of state. Snowden said:

Perhaps the best-known case in recent history here is General Petraeus who shared information that was far more highly classified than I ever did with journalists. And he shared this information not with the public for their benefit, but with his biographer and lover for personal benefit — conversations that had information, detailed information, about military special-access programs, that's classified above top secret, conversations with the president and so on.

When the government came after him, they charged him with a misdemeanor. He never spent a single day in jail, despite the type of classified information he exposed.

While he was director of the CIA, General Petraeus gave a black book of highly classified "code word" documents (which included the names of "covert officers" and notes of the meetings of the National Security Council) to his biographer, Paula Broadwell, with whom he was having an affair.

Instead of going to prison for revealing information that is "classified above top secret," General Petraeus — who also admitted that he "made a false statement" to the FBI about his criminal actions — was allowed to plead guilty to a single misdemeanor count of mishandling classified information and given probation and a fine.

Four years after his crimes came to light, Petraeus is being considered for the same office Hillary



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Clinton held while he was committing his crimes. Clinton's tenure as secretary of state offered the American people two valuable lessons. The first is that having someone in that office who is willing to risk national security for personal gain is a bad idea. The second is that what Snowden says is true: Politically connected insiders are not held accountable for their crimes. In fact, they are usually rewarded.

As another example of someone who is "well-connected to government" getting a pass for crimes, Snowden cited the case of General James Clapper, the director of National Intelligence. In March 2013, Clapper testified under oath and before Congress that the NSA does not collect *any data at all* on American citizens. Since it is now known that the NSA does indeed do exactly what Clapper said it does not do, it is a self-evident fact that he perjured himself. As Snowden said:

We had the most senior intelligence official in the United States, General James Clapper, who lied to the American people and all of Congress — on camera and under oath — in the Senate in a famous exchange with [Senator] Ron Wyden. He wasn't even charged. But giving false testimony to Congress under oath, as he did, is a felony. It's typically punished by three to five years in prison.

Though many in Congress called for Clapper to be held accountable for his false testimony, Snowden is correct: Clapper was never charged and has been allowed to continue in his position as director of National Intelligence. He resigned in the wake of Trump's election, effective at the end of President Obama's term.

So, both Petraeus and Clapper — while serving their own interests — broke the law. Clapper was never charged and has been allowed to remain in his position. Petraeus was allowed to resign, pay a fine, and serve a two-year period of probation and is now being considered for secretary of state.

Snowden, on the other hand, served his country by revealing the unconstitutional and illegal actions of the government spying on one and all by the mass surveillance being conducted which vacuums up all unencrypted phone calls, texts, e-mails, private messages, browsing histories, and more. He is a wanted man who has had to flee his country to avoid certain imprisonment and possible execution. A [campaign to petition President Obama to grant Snowden a full pardon](#) is gaining ground, but the fact that he would even need a pardon in the first place says a lot about the validity of his assertion that there is "a two-tiered system of justice in the United States" that allows "people who are either well-connected to government or they have access to an incredible amount of resources" to get away with their crimes while others — like Snowden — are "very much tread upon by our justice system."



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