



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on July 24, 2012

Key Dem Says Leaks Came from WH, Then Backtracks

Republicans have been accusing the Obama administration of leaking classified documents in order to bolster the Obama campaign. Now, a key Democratic leader on the Senate Intelligence Committee has voiced similar sentiments. But Dianne Feinstein's [statement](#) has caused such a stir that she has taken to Twitter to try and backtrack from her assertion.



Last week, Attorney General Eric Holder assigned two prosecutors to investigate the leaks of classified documents that reveal the Obama administration's approach to counterterrorism and details about the "kill list" related to the use of drones.

U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Ronald C. Machen, Jr. and U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein will lead separate [FBI](#) investigations into who may have given reporters top secret information about national security operations.

Several prominent Republicans immediately accused the Obama administration of intentionally leaking the information. When the leaks were first reported, Representative Peter King of New York accused the president of using the leaks to "build his reputation" before the election.

"He's trying to be like George Patton or John Wayne," said King, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. He added,

This is the most shameful cascade of leaks I've ever heard or seen in government. It's clear from those stories this came right from the White House, came right from the National Security Council, came right from the Situation Room.... It has to lead to people very high up in the administration in his White House.

President Obama has denied the accusations, asserting it was "offensive" for people to assume he or his aides would do such a thing. "The notion that my [White House](#) would purposefully release classified national security information is offensive, it's wrong," Obama said in a press briefing on Friday.

However, key Democratic Senator Dianne Feinstein seems to be in disagreement with the president. "I think the White House has to understand that some of this is coming from their ranks," she told a World Affairs Council forum.

Feinstein made it clear that she does not believe President Obama to be the party disclosing secret information, asserting, "I don't believe for a moment that he goes out and talks about it."

While she does suspect that some of the leaks are coming from the White House, Feinstein has since [backtracked](#) a bit from her statements.

"I stated that I did not believe the president leaked classified information," Feinstein said in the statement on July 24. "I shouldn't have speculated beyond that, because the fact of the matter is I don't



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know the source of the leaks.”

Feinstein regrets how her remarks are being used against the president.

“I’m on record as being disturbed by these leaks, and I regret my remarks are being used to impugn President Obama or his commitment to protecting national security secrets,” she said. “I know for a fact the president is extremely troubled by these leaks. His administration has moved aggressively to appoint two independent U.S. attorneys. There is an investigation under way, and it is moving forward quickly.

Feinstein has been a critic of GOP proposals to appoint a special counsel to investigate the administration, asserting, “I know we are in campaign season, but I hope the investigation proceeds without political accusation or interference from anyone.”

But her July 23 remarks were seized on by Republicans, prompting her to backtrack.

Senator John McCain was one of the first members of Congress to accuse the White House of leaking the classified information in order to bolster the president’s image as a fierce leader in the war on terror.

“It is difficult to escape the conclusion that these recent leaks of highly classified information, all of which have the effect of making the president look strong and decisive on national security in the middle of his re-election campaign, have a deeper political motivation,” said McCain, who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Senator Lindsey Graham voiced similar observations: “I don’t think you have to be Sherlock Holmes to figure out what is going on here. You’ve had three leaks of intelligence that paint the president as a strong leader.

In response to the leaks, the Pentagon has announced that it would be taking new steps to avoid further leaks. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has ordered Pentagon Press Secretary George Little to help monitor “all major, national level” news reports for the authorized disclosure of secrets.

Likewise, Senator Feinstein has indicated that her committee will be drafting legislation to address the leaks of classified information.

According to U.S. officials, “the number of people with access to some of the nation’s most carefully guarded secrets topped 4.86 million in 2011,” reports Fox News. That figure is an increase from the 4.7 million from the year before.

Meanwhile, some cannot help but notice a major disparity in how these leaks are being handled in comparison with the Wikileaks cases and the aggressive prosecution of Pfc. Bradley Manning, the low-level Army intelligence analyst who is facing a court martial for having leaked cables to Wikileaks.

“The fact that this administration would aggressively pursue leaks perpetrated by a 22-year old Army private in the ‘Wikileaks’ matter and former CIA employees in other leaks cases, but apparently sanction leaks made by senior administration officials for political purposes, is simply unacceptable,” McCain said.

GOP presidential contender Mitt Romney seized upon Feinstein’s initial [remarks](#) about the leaks during his campaign trip, [speaking](#) to a Veterans of Foreign Wars group in Reno:

This conduct is contemptible. It betrays our national interest. It compromises our men and women in the field. And it demands a full and prompt investigation, with explanation and consequence.



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Whoever provided classified information to the media, seeking political advantage for the administration, must be exposed, dismissed, and punished. The time for stonewalling is over.

Exactly who in the White House betrayed these secrets? Did a superior authorize it? These are things that Americans are entitled to know, and they are entitled to know right now.

What kind of White House would reveal classified material for political gain? I'll tell you right now: Mine will not.

Feinstein is reportedly [angry](#) that Romney cited her remarks in his speech.

"I am disappointed by the statements made by Mr. Romney today regarding a question I was asked yesterday at the World Affairs Council," Feinstein said in a statement.

Photo: Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) appears on Face the Nation on Sunday, June 10, 2012, in Washington: AP Images



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