

WHY WOULD A WHISTLEBLOWER GO TO ERIC CANTOR?

The NYT reports that in late October, a “whistleblower” approached Eric Cantor to tell him about Petraeus’ affair.

Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, said Saturday an F.B.I. employee whom his staff described as a whistle-blower told him about Mr. Petraeus’s affair and a possible security breach in late October, which was after the investigation had begun.

“I was contacted by an F.B.I. employee concerned that sensitive, classified information may have been compromised and made certain Director Mueller was aware of these serious allegations and the potential risk to our national security,” Mr. Cantor said in a statement.

Mr. Cantor talked to the person after being told by Representative Dave Reichert, Republican of Washington, that a whistle-blower wanted to speak to someone in the Congressional leadership about a national security concern. On Oct. 31, his chief of staff, Steve Stombres, called the F.B.I. to tell them about the call.

“They took the information,” said Doug Heye, Mr. Cantor’s deputy chief of staff, “and gave the standard answer: they were not able to confirm or deny any investigation, but said that all necessary steps were being taken to make sure no confidential information was at risk.” [my emphasis]

Note Cantor describes this person as an “FBI

employee," not an agent (though he may be deliberately vague to hide the person's identity), so it's possible this person is more senior. The person went first to Dave Reichert, who—as a Representative from Seattle—has no ties to the FBI offices that conducted the investigation (though he's a former Sheriff and may have ties to the FBI through law enforcement channels). And then he asked to talk to someone "in Congressional leadership," rather than, say, the head of the House Judiciary Committee, Lamar Smith, who has jurisdiction over the FBI, or Mike Rogers, himself a former FBI Agent and the head of the House Intelligence Committee.

In other words, this instance of whistleblower was not conducted as it normally would be, through the appropriate committees, but instead went to the guy whose job is primarily political, leading the Republican caucus.

Note the timing, too. Petraeus was interviewed around October 25-26. Given that Cantor's Chief of Staff called Mueller after that, it appears the FBI person probably contacted Cantor after that interview—or certainly after it got scheduled. One thing's certain: the interview could not have been a CYA effort after Mueller got the call from Cantor.

But it may be what Dianne Feinstein called a "additional complication" today. And it's possible James Clapper finally got informed of the investigation into Petraeus—he says, on November 6, election day—because Mueller knew that Cantor had heard of it. That is, by alerting Cantor, this "whistleblower" may have ensured the national security establishment couldn't protect Petraeus.

One more note about the timing. The interview—and this alert to Cantor—happened after the time the GOP was going full October Surprise mode on Benghazi. There were tensions between CIA and FBI because CIA had not shared video of the attack with investigators. Again, there's no reason to believe this is Benghazi related. But there were certainly institutional

tensions playing out just as the FBI interviewed the head of the CIA about his mistress' access of his email.

Update: Apparently Andrea Mitchell says the FBI investigation would have ended had this not been brought to Cantor.