

CHUCK GRASSLEY QUESTIONS WHY DOD INSPECTOR GENERAL CANNOT REPORT ON SENIOR OFFICIAL LEAKS

Chuck Grassley just released a scathing criticism of the DOD Inspector General Report on the Pentagon's cooperation with the makers of Zero Dark Thirty.

A draft of the report, which got leaked to Project on Government Oversight in June 2013, reported that Leon Panetta had disclosed Top Secret information. But when the report got released shortly thereafter, the damning information on Panetta had been suppressed. The IG later went after the employee who provided a copy of the draft report to Congress.

All these issues led Grassley to ask his staffers to investigate the IG Report. In the final assessment of it, Grassley called the report a "second-class report that is not worth the paper on which it was written."

But that's not the most stunning part of his report.

Grassley reveals that DOD has a "long-standing Department policy mandating the removal of sensitive information" from IG Reports prior to publication. That policy requires that "all derogatory information pertaining to unauthorized disclosures by senior officials be removed from the report." Grassley explains how this served to protect former Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Leon Panetta and current Under Secretary for Defense Michael Vickers.

Senior officials, including former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director and DOD Secretary Leon Panetta

and Under Secretary for Intelligence (USDI) Michael Vickers, were accused of allegedly making unauthorized disclosures of highly classified information on the Osama bin Laden raid.

[snip]

When top government officials, like the Secretary and Under Secretary of Defense, stand accused of misconduct, there should be some accountability to the public. Thus far, in this matter, there has been none. By comparison, former Deputy Secretary of Defense and CIA Director Deutch mishandled highly classified information and got hammered for doing it. He lost his clearance for six years and came close to prosecution. Unlike the Zero Dark Thirty leaks, the matter was dealt with effectively and aired in public. Those lessons seem to have been forgotten.

Grassley doesn't say it, but the revisions in the report may also have protected one other senior DOD official: Admiral William McRaven. The initial draft of the report had referred to McRaven "purging" photographs members of the raid had taken of Osama bin Laden (he did so after several outlets FOIAed the pictures). The word "purge" and reference that he had sent the pictures to another agency (CIA) was eliminated in the final draft.

Grassley called for "independent review and possible modification" of the policy of suppressing details that reflect badly on senior officials. If he's serious about the need to hold senior officials accountable, Grassley should probably adopt stronger language than "possible modification."