

# WHEN REPORTERS DISCOVER SELECTIVE LEAK TARGETING

Shane Harris wants to know – and not for the first time – why James Cartwright will be the only one to take the fall for leaking to David Sanger about StuxNet.

The charges weren't exactly a surprise. Cartwright has known for more than three years that he was the target of an investigation into who leaked details about the so-called Stuxnet computer virus, which the United States used to destroy centrifuges inside an Iranian nuclear enrichment facility in 2008 and 2009.

But notably, Cartwright who previously served as vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is the only person to have been charged with leaking information about the highly classified program, even though it's clear from various books and articles that he wasn't the only source of information about it. Times reporter David Sanger revealed the operation and wrote about it extensively in his book, *Confront and Conceal*.

That raises questions about why Cartwright is being charged now and if he was somehow singled out for speaking to Sanger and another journalist, Newsweek's Daniel Klaidman. Journalists and U.S. officials in Washington have generally known for years that Cartwright was a major source about Stuxnet, but it was also understood that he had permission from the White House to share certain details about the program.

The intrigue surrounding the investigating dates back more than three years, according to Harris, to the last time he raised questions about Cartwright's targeting. In that article, he admits,

Cartwright did have fans in the press corps, which usually found him an affable and, most importantly, accessible source.

Harris might more productively look at what was different about the Sanger story that got investigated – namely, that it blamed the Israelis for revealing the program by letting StuxNet escape. That it, it may well be that Cartwright got prosecuted not because he leaked the thing that was permissible – that the US had allegedly stalled Iran's nuclear power production with computer code – but rather that the Israelis undermined the program that was undermining their excuse to attack Iran.

Still, it's odd that Harris finds it odd that just one person is getting prosecuted in the first place, as if he's only discovering that happens all the time.

It's something Charlie Savage did in his book, *Power Wars*, too. I showed how erroneous that assumption is in the case of the UndieBomb 2.0 leak, where Donald Sachtleben was scapegoated even though the record shows he only confirmed something the reporters already had. But the same is true of other leaks, as well. For example, the public record already identifies another source for James Risen's Merlin leak, and the trial record shows FBI believed still another person was the main leaker and never really dismissed him as a target.

So we always should be asking why the one and only one person who gets targeted gets targeted. In this case, a better parallel might be to the Scooter Libby case. There, as here, the target claims to have been authorized to leak. In that case, Fitzgerald was definitely trying to move

up the chain to Dick Cheney. In both cases, the big question may be about whether the President (or Vice President, if he's the one in charge) authorized the specific leak.

Me, I'm more interested in why Cartwright was prosecuted in DC, rather than Maryland, even while Maryland's US Attorney Rod Rosenstein oversaw the investigation. I suspect that's because it was deemed a special counsel investigation of sorts, but that raises even more questions about why Ronald Machen investigated UndieBomb 2.0 and Rosenstein investigated this, but both were apparently in DC.