

SEVEN REASONS TRUMP'S ENTIRE NATIONAL SECURITY TEAM SHOULD RESIGN IN DISGRACE

The White House, with the help of Politico, is trying to make National Security Adviser Mike Waltz the fall guy for adding Atlantic editor Jeff Goldberg to the Signal thread on which they planned war strikes against Yemen.

Nothing is decided yet, and White House officials cautioned that President Donald Trump would ultimately make the decision over the next day or two as he watches coverage of the embarrassing episode.

A senior administration official told POLITICO on Monday afternoon that they are involved in multiple text threads with other administration staffers on what to do with Waltz, following the bombshell report that the top aide inadvertently included Atlantic editor in chief Jeffrey Goldberg in a private chat discussing a military strike on Houthis.

"Half of them saying he's never going to survive or shouldn't survive," said the official, who like others was granted anonymity to discuss internal deliberation. And two high-level White House aides have floated the idea that Waltz should resign in order to prevent the president from being put in a "bad position."

"It was reckless not to check who was on the thread. It was reckless to be having that conversation on Signal. You can't have recklessness as the national

security adviser," the official said.

Mind you, the knives have been out for Waltz already, and the notion that he was in touch with a Neocon journalist like Goldberg would only help those already trying to oust Waltz make the case that he's not on Trump's America First agenda.

And Politico doesn't mention whether its sources were also on the Signal thread, and whether their discussions about making Waltz take the fall were done on Signal.

It is a transparent attempt to make a major breach – potentially a crime – into something else, the forgivable error of adding the wrong person to a chat thread.

This cover story, that this is just a reckless mistake about adding the wrong person to a Signal thread, also happens to be the line Trump's closest allies in the Senate and the few Fox News hosts Trump hasn't already hired into his Administration are parroting on TV.

1. Waltz set up a Signal chat to make war plans without verifying the ID of those included

To be sure, it was pretty boneheaded that Waltz didn't better verify the people he was first adding to Signal and then putting on a "principles [sic] group" to plan war strikes.

On Tuesday, March 11, I received a connection request on Signal from a user identified as Michael Waltz. Signal is an open-source encrypted messaging service popular with journalists and others who seek more privacy than other text-messaging services are capable of

delivering. I assumed that the Michael Waltz in question was President Donald Trump's national security adviser. I did not assume, however, that the request was from the actual Michael Waltz. I have met him in the past, and though I didn't find it particularly strange that he might be reaching out to me, I did think it somewhat unusual, given the Trump administration's contentious relationship with journalists—and Trump's periodic fixation on me specifically. It immediately crossed my mind that someone could be masquerading as Waltz in order to somehow entrap me.

[snip]

Two days later—Thursday—at 4:28 p.m., I received a notice that I was to be included in a Signal chat group. It was called the “Houthi PC small group.”

A message to the group, from “Michael Waltz,” read as follows: “Team – establishing a principles [sic] group for coordination on Houthis, particularly for over the next 72 hours. My deputy Alex Wong is pulling together a tiger team at deputies/agency Chief of Staff level following up from the meeting in the Sit Room this morning for action items and will be sending that out later this evening.”

Note, at about the time Waltz made this list, 11:28 PM Moscow time, list member Steve Witkoff was meeting with Putin, after having been left waiting for hours.

So yeah, Trump's National Security Adviser exercised little diligence about how he set up a list to carry on highly classified conversations involving people's cell phones, including cell phones that might be in Russia.

2. The entire national security team participated in a potential violation of the Espionage Act

But the effort to claim this is just a mistake in the creation of the Signal list is an attempt to downplay that Trump's CIA Director, John Ratcliffe, sent the identity of a currently serving intelligence officer and later sent what appears to be sources and methods on Signal, and then his Secretary of Defense, Whiskey Pete Hegseth, sent operational details of the imminent strikes on Yemen on Signal, and then Waltz himself sent out what sound like the immediate results of the operation, also on Signal.

All those men, who loudly condemned Hillary Clinton or Joe Biden for their unintentional mishandling of classified information, who demanded that DOJ prosecute such lapses, sent information on an insecure chat that happened to include a journalist.

18 USC 793(f) makes it a crime to so negligently mishandle National Defense Information that someone not authorized to receive it does receive it.

(f) Whoever, being entrusted with or having lawful possession or control of any document, writing, code book, signal book, sketch, photograph, photographic negative, blueprint, plan, map, model, instrument, appliance, note, or information, relating to the national defense, (1) through gross negligence permits the same to be removed from its proper place of custody or delivered to anyone in violation of his trust, or to be lost, stolen, abstracted, or destroyed, or (2) having knowledge that

the same has been illegally removed from its proper place of custody or delivered to anyone in violation of its trust, or lost, or stolen, abstracted, or destroyed, and fails to make prompt report of such loss, theft, abstraction, or destruction to his superior officer—

Shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than ten years, or both.

And yet Trump's entire national security team — not only his National Security Adviser and his CIA Director and his Secretary of Defense, but also his Chief of Staff, his Secretary of State, his Vice President, his Director of National Intelligence, and others — did nothing as the entire team shared information about an upcoming and recently completed military attack, on Signal.

The entire gang was in on it.

3. [Trump claims] his entire national security team may have committed a crime and also an embarrassing story was about to break but no one told him

When Trump was first asked about the story, he played dumb, claiming he didn't know anything about it.

I don't know anything about it. I'm not a big fan of The Atlantic. To me it's a magazine that's going out of business. But I know nothing about it. You're saying that they had what?

Sure, this is almost certainly a lie. Goldberg says he told the White House about it at 9AM yesterday morning.

But now that Trump has told the lie, he has also claimed that after his entire national security team learned that a journalist may have witnessed them engage in behavior that might violate the Espionage Act, none of them told him – not JD Vance, not Mike Waltz, not Susie Wiles, not the NSC spox who gave on the record confirmation that the thread was authentic – none of them alerted Trump to the breach. Trump would further have you believe that none of them told him – not JD Vance, not Mike Waltz, not Susie Wiles, not the NSC spox who gave on the record confirmation that the thread was authentic – that an incredibly damaging story was about to drop.

If that were true it would mean Trump could trust no one to keep him informed of the most basic things. It would mean his entire national security team fucked up and kept it a secret from him.

4. DOD attacked a foreign country based on Stephen Miller's feels of Trump's intent

One weird line in the Atlantic story describes how Stephen Miller (Trump's domestic policy advisor, not formally on his foreign policy team) interpreted Trump's views from a prior meeting in the Situation Room, and Miller's interpretation was all it took to affirm Trump's intent to launch strikes on Yemen.

At this point, the previously silent "S M" joined the conversation. "As I heard it, the president was clear: green light, but we soon make clear to Egypt and Europe what we expect in return. We also need to figure out how to enforce

such a requirement. EG, if Europe doesn't remunerate, then what? If the US successfully restores freedom of navigation at great cost there needs to be some further economic gain extracted in return."

That message from "S M"—presumably President Trump's confidant Stephen Miller, the deputy White House chief of staff, or someone playing Stephen Miller—effectively shut down the conversation. The last text of the day came from "Pete Hegseth," who wrote at 9:46 a.m., "Agree."

This entire operation was — is, still — being authorized solely on Presidential authority.

But the Presidential authority, the thing that gives it some cover of law, amounts to Stephen Miller's feels about the President's intent.

That's a pretty flimsy basis on which to launch military strikes.

5. Hegseth lied when caught


All this broke as Pete Hegseth was flying to Hawaii, his first trip to Asia as Defense Secretary (if he makes it that far).

When asked about sending war plans on a thread that included a journalist, Hegseth lied, claiming no one had been texting war plans. (In a truly spectacular touch, Hegseth put the video of himself lying up on his "DOD Rapid Response" Xitter account, after which it promptly got fact-checked.

. @SecDef response to the @TheAtlantic article....

“You’re talking about a deceitful and highly discredited “so-called journalist”



 Readers added context they thought people might want to know

The White House has confirmed the authenticity of the Atlantic's reporting.

bbc.com/news/articles/...

I get that these underqualified right wing white men never take personal accountability for their actions.

But this undermines whatever leadership credibility Hegseth otherwise might have had.

The military requires accountability from its leaders.

Hegseth refused to take any.

6. Waltz set the threads to autodelete, likely deliberately defying the Presidential Records Act

According to Goldberg, Mike Waltz set the text threads to auto-delete.

There was another potential problem: Waltz set some of the messages in the Signal group to disappear after one

week, and some after four. That raises questions about whether the officials may have violated federal records law: Text messages about official acts are considered records that should be preserved.

Not only would deleting this thread without creating a record violate the Presidential and Federal Records Acts, but that's probably *why* they were sending war plans on Signal.

That is, the most likely reason why Trump's entire national security team was using an insecure platform to plan war strikes was to ensure there were no embarrassing records for posterity, a violation of the law.

7. The entire national security team may have committed a crime in plain sight but Pam Bondi and Kash Patel won't investigate

Pam Bondi was admittedly busy yesterday making multiple TV appearances in which she scolded Jasmine Crockett for opposing Elon Musk's efforts to dismantle the government.

In none of them did she say she was opening an investigation into whether Mike Waltz or any of the other people on the list violated the Espionage Act or any other laws.

Who are we kidding? There's no way Bondi or Kash Patel will investigate this (though they too criticized Biden and Hillary about classified information).

And that, in and of itself, is reason why Bondi and Patel should resign in disgrace. Because even in the face of a humiliating security breach, they'll do nothing to hold Trump's

people accountable.

Update: I watched the Threats hearing at which Tulsi and John Ratcliffe testified. Both seem to be claiming that nothing they posted was classified, but they defer to DOD regarding whether anything Whiskey Pete shared was classified. Clearly Whiskey Pete has retroactively declassified material to cover up his possible crime.

Of note, Ratcliffe did not know (and seemed surprised) that Steve Witkoff was in Russia during the period of the list. And Tulsi admitted she had been overseas during the period as well; she did a trip to the Pacific, including stops in Hawaii, Japan, Thailand, India and France.

Finally, Tulsi freely agreed to have her own use of Signal (and other encrypted apps) audited to make sure she's not doing anything impermissible; Ratcliffe was cagier, and said only he'd do so if NSC agreed.