

Remember when we were all shaking our heads in August about the classified government documents found at Mar-a-Lago, then it so happened that former Vice President Mike Pence and President Joe Biden also had classified materials? It seems folks who work at the White House may have a penchant for taking them home.

All three are being investigated, though former President Donald Trump may be in the hottest of water. Attorney General Merrick Garland has appointed special counsel Jack Smith, who is investigating Trump's complicity in the January 6 attack and the wider attempt to overturn the 2020 election.<sup>1</sup> Smith is also probing the former president's actions over the classified materials found at his Florida home after he refused to hand them over for months.

Pence also took classified documents to his Indiana home and has since returned them.<sup>2</sup> Garland has not appointed a special prosecutor to investigate Pence.

Documents dating back to Biden's tenures as senator and vice president were also found in the president's former office and home.<sup>3</sup> Though it is reported he began returning them as soon as Biden became aware of their location, the White House did not announce when they were first discovered, reportedly around the 2022 November midterm elections.<sup>4</sup> Selected by Garland, special prosecutor Robert Hur will investigate.<sup>5</sup>

The so-called congressional "Gang of Eight" was recently granted access to the documents found in the possession of the three men.<sup>6</sup> The eight politicians, comprising the four party leaders in the House and Senate and the four chairs and ranking members of the House and Senate intelligence committees, have access to the most sensitive information.

Then last week, news broke that an unspecified number of documents from the Pentagon had been found posted on social media, particularly on a video game chat service called Discord.<sup>7</sup> Some files have been identified as highly sensitive, revealing US intelligence efforts regarding notable allies and oppositions. Among the documents were worries regarding vulnerable areas in Ukraine's military strength after more than a year of war.<sup>8</sup> The country's top officials have, naturally, argued the leak may be a Russian disinformation effort.

Also among the Pentagon leak, documents on China revealed assessments on risks posed by the country, specifically its willingness to send deadly aid to Russia, and details of an experimental hypersonic weapons test conducted in February.<sup>9</sup>

One leaked evaluation posited an attack from Ukraine on Russian soil using NATO weaponry could draw Beijing into the war.<sup>10</sup>

Possible security breaches and sensitive materials don't have to come from the upper echelons of political power—or even the US government. During Biden's trip to Belfast in April to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the Police Service of Northern Ireland made the Secret Service aware of local reports of a document related to the president's visit that was found on a city street. The man who discovered the PSNI document called a BBC radio show and said the paper had information such as road closures, police commanders assigned to various posts, and phone numbers.<sup>11</sup>

It makes you wonder how many documents are not where they're supposed to be and are in the hands of people who shouldn't have them.

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## Notes

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