



### Fallout from the Trump Administration's Signal Group Chat Leak of Its Yemen Attack Plans

There has been significant fallout this week in light of the revelation that top Trump administration officials shared sensitive plans regarding U.S. military strikes in Yemen via group chat on the messaging app Signal, with the [texts being leaked](#) due to the mistaken inclusion of journalist and editor-in-chief of *The Atlantic*, Jeffrey Goldberg. The group chat chain was comprised of a host of senior U.S. officials including Vice President JD Vance, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director John Ratcliffe, among others. While the White House has tried to downplay the seriousness of the incident, lawmakers, former U.S. security officials, and experts have raised major questions and concerns about the leak. Goldberg argued that he initially withheld certain detailed messages from the exchange, citing unease over disclosing classified U.S. intelligence. However, after Trump officials like Hegseth and Gabbard repeatedly blasted his reporting and claimed that sensitive information was not circulated in the group chat, Goldberg and *The Atlantic* stated that they wanted to make the array of messages public in order to allow people to decide whether or not that was the case for themselves. Thus, later in the week, additional group chat messages were published that consisted of further specific operational details regarding the timing of attacks and weapons that would be used in them.

For many observers that have reacted to the breach, there are legitimate reasons why it has elicited such alarm. The mere fact that senior Trump administration officials decided to bypass a range of secure classified government mechanisms and instead discuss plans for an upcoming military attack on a commercially available app is itself highly troublesome. Former U.S. security and defense officials who have taken part in correspondence around similar-type sensitive operations [expressed disbelief](#) at what they viewed as “shocking negligence” and irresponsibility on the part of Trump officials in the case of the Signal group chat leak. As one put it, “We've got the best secure communication systems in the world — of any country — so why are we using a rickety, commercially available system?” The official added that even putting aside the fact that a well-known journalist was given access to the chat, sending a real-time minute-by-minute timeline of impending strikes through a messaging app endangers American personnel and could compromise the success of a U.S. military operation. Furthermore, had the texts simply fallen into the hands of someone who decided to share them on social media, the targets of the attacks could have had time to thwart them, putting the livelihoods of American personnel carrying them out at great peril. It should also be noted that ironically, just one day before the group chat communication and Yemen strikes, the U.S. Defense Department had warned about the security vulnerabilities of Signal by divulging that entities tied to the Kremlin in Russia were actively trying to hack the messaging app.

The considerable questions and concern over the group chat leak prompted lawmakers in the House Intelligence Committee to hold a hearing in which they interrogated top U.S. intelligence officials such as Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard about the messages. Various lawmakers stressed that the leak was a terrible breach of security which could have been intercepted by hostile entities and shared with Houthi militants, to the detriment of American military personnel. Some are therefore demanding investigations into the disclosure of the sensitive material, and criticized the “sloppy, careless, and incompetent behavior” of Trump officials. The actions of Defense Secretary Hegseth, in sharing key details about an imminent attack hours before it took place, have been especially

condemned, with several Congressmembers calling for his resignation. National Security Advisor Waltz has also drawn heavy critique for sharing real-time updates which dangerously had the potential to reveal the assets that the U.S. had in the region and was relying on for information. Additionally, the analogous and repetitive responses of Gabbard and others to the Congressional questioning caused anger among members of the committee. U.S. Representative Jim Himes (D-CT) added that the Trump administration's dismissive response to the Signal group chat leak is concerning and hypocritical because if lower ranking officials did what is described, they would more than likely lose their clearance and be subject to criminal investigation – rather than have their actions minimized and defended at every turn.

One of the other elements of the leak that was particularly eye-opening involved the clear acknowledgement from Vice President JD Vance that the Trump administration's actions in Yemen run counter to the alleged "America First" narrative that they have repeatedly espoused – as we [laid out in last week's edition](#) of our newsletter. The texts provided the American public with insight into the intimate internal discussions surrounding this. Despite consistently calling out Europe for not "carrying their weight," Trump officials are readily admitting that U.S. military strikes in Yemen are actions which benefit Europe and others, not the United States. In the leaked texts, Vance even states that "I am not sure the president is aware how inconsistent this is with his message on Europe right now" as he also references the massive discrepancy in the percentage of U.S. trade that runs through the Suez Canal compared to that of Europe. [JD Vance's berating and disdainful recent speech in Munich](#) had already created friction with Europe, and now the leaked messages on Signal are likely to exacerbate this even further. Upon learning of Vance's comments, some in Europe reacted with indignation but lack of surprise, rebutting his sentiments by arguing that Europeans are not freeloaders and that they have been supporting the U.S. in its geopolitical efforts for many years. For others affiliated with European allies, the incident also raises concern over intelligence sharing with the United States, as one UK official remarked that "It has to make our security services nervous about the intelligence we're sharing with them." In addition to Vance, Defense Secretary Hegseth's comments regarding Europe in the text message exchange drew attention for being highly critical as well, with him stating that he fully shared Vance's loathing of European free-loading – which he labeled pathetic in all caps.

Due to the magnitude of the concern that has been levied at the incident and the type of information that was shared, Trump officials have been compelled to preserve the messages in the Signal group chat by Federal Judge James Boasberg. The judicial order comes after a watchdog organization, American Oversight, filed a lawsuit arguing that the use of the messaging app in this instance for the disclosure of sensitive military details violated federal records laws. In response to the order, the Trump administration has assured Judge Boasberg that measures are in place to collect and preserve the messages – which will be important moving forward as the fallout over the Signal group chat leak continues.