



## Pentagon in Damage Control Mode After Leaks: 'Working Around the Clock to Look at the Scope and Scale'

### Description

**USA: The Pentagon appears to be in full damage control mode after the discovery of leaked intelligence that revealed closely guarded details regarding the Ukraine War such as casualty counts and Ukraine's readiness for the upcoming spring offensive, as well as potentially politically embarrassing assertions about close allies.**

"The Department of Defense is working around the clock to look at the scope and scale of the distribution, the assessed impact and our mitigation measures. We're still investigating how this happened, as well as the scope of the issue," said Chris Meagher, assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, during a press briefing Monday.

He added, "There have been steps to take a closer look at how this type of information is distributed and to whom. We're also still trying to assess what might be out there. We of course, condemn any unauthorized disclosure of classified information and we're taking this very seriously."

The department said Sunday that United States officials have engaged with allies and partners and informed relevant congressional committees about the leak.

"The department and other U.S. officials are engaging with allies and partners, at high-levels, to reassure them of our commitment to safeguarding intelligence and fidelity to our security partnerships. Those conversations began over the weekend and are ongoing," Meagher said.

According to the *Washington Post*, a leaked document citing signals intelligence said that South Korea's National Security Council in early March "grappled" with a United States request that the country provide artillery ammunition to Ukraine over concerns it would provoke Russia, and that its national security adviser suggested possibly selling the weapons to Poland to give to Ukraine.

Another leaked document also citing signals intelligence said Israel's Mossad intelligence agency was encouraging protests against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to tighten controls on the Supreme Court, according to Reuters. The disclosures indicated the United States is spying on two

of its closest allies in the Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

Netanyahu's office called the assertion "mendacious and without any foundation whatsoever," and a South Korean presidential official said Sunday the country plans to discuss "issues raised" with Washington, according to Reuters.

Ukraine is also unhappy over the leaks, which showed estimates of casualty counts for both Ukraine and Russia. One leaked slide said Russia has suffered between 35,500 to 43,500 killed in action, when U.S. officials have publicly indicated the number is far higher. The slide also said Ukraine has suffered 16,000 to 17,500 killed in action. The United States typically has declined to give estimates for Ukrainian casualties.

Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak blamed Russia for the leak.

The aim of secret data "leaks" is obvious: divert attention, cast doubts & mutual suspicions, sow discord.

It's an ordinary game of ru-secret services. To take open briefings, add fake info or certain parts of interceptions & publish them on social networks legalizing the "leak"

— ??????? ??????? (@Podolyak\_M) [April 8, 2023](#)

The Pentagon refused to discuss the substance of the leaked intelligence — some of which has been posted to social media forums and applications Discord, 4chan, Telegram, and Twitter in the form of slides — but characterized the leak as of "highly sensitive, sensitive classified material," and has referred the matter to the Department of Justice, which has begun a criminal investigation.

Separately, the Pentagon has stood up an interagency effort to assess the impact the leak could have on United States national security and on allies and partners. The interagency team includes the White House, the National Security Council, the State Department, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and other intelligence agencies, according to the Pentagon.

Meagher said Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was first briefed on the morning of Thursday, April 6, received updates throughout the course of the day, and on April 7 began convening senior leaders daily to discuss the leak.

Meagher said there is also an internal Department of Defense team looking at the matter to "wrap our arms around what happened" and "the way ahead in terms of our response." He said the team will report directly to Austin, and would not disclose who is leading it.

The material was first posted to internet forums as early as February 28, according to the *Post*.

Some of the material appears to be from the Joint Chiefs of Staff's Directorate for Intelligence's daily brief to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which is accessible digitally to thousands across the intelligence community. The daily brief is not available to foreign partners, indicating an American leaked it. The leaked material appears to have been printed out, then photographed and posted online.

Meagher did not confirm where the documents were from, but said, "These are documents that you know, are used by a variety of people and departments within the Department of Defense to inform

their work and beyond the Department of Defense, frankly to inform their work and to provide intelligence updates to help us do our jobs. So without going into you know, any further specifics, that's probably how I'd classify it."

by Krisitna Wong

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