

WHY DID TRUMP TAKE CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS IN THE FIRST PLACE?

Carl Golden, June 14, 2023



While the internet continues to dissect the 37-count federal indictment against former President Donald Trump for retaining highly classified government documents after leaving office, one of the more intriguing questions is why anyone would do this in the first place.

What was the point in filling 300 cartons with secret official papers and splicing them off to Florida, where they were stacked haphazardly in a storage room at Trump's resort in Palm Beach?

In the waning days of the Trump administration, when presumably the material was gathered, was there no one in the room who spoke up and warned it was a bad idea to carry out the plan?

Did all involved agree to it or were those who had doubts fear speaking up and incurring Trump's wrath?

The notion promoted by some that Trump intended to sell the documents to a foreign power is beyond absurd. The indictment does not allege that nor has the Department of Justice suggested it. Even Trump's most fevered supporters would have quickly abandoned him if dealing the material in some sort of international clandestine blackmarket was under consideration.

The answer to the why of it can likely be found in Trump's personality, an individual whose turbo-charged ego matches his turbo-charged libido.

Call it self-absorption or uncontrolled narcissism, but Trump is obsessed with being someone no one else can be, knowing something no one else knows and possessing something no one else possesses.

He has placed his name on everything from office buildings, hotels, gambling casinos and airlines. The brand and the man have merged into a single entity.

Given his history, it is logical and likely he retained the documents to triumphantly pull out of a desk drawer and wave them around to visitors while bragging they contained some of America's most closely held secrets. There is some evidence that he did exactly that on more than one occasion.

Bragging rights mean a great deal to him and what better to brag about than personal possession of material involving nuclear war, international intrigue, intelligence gathering, insight into foreign leaders and national security.

The Department of Justice indictment is a damning list of allegations, an existential threat to Trump that far outweighs the wafer-thin indictment for business fraud brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg in April.

Trump, according to the indictment, stored the cartons of documents in an unsecured area, potentially exposing them to anyone without need or authority to view them.

He also is accused of refusing to return the material to the government and of lying to the FBI concerning their whereabouts.

His defenders, including some in Congress, argue that President Biden and former Vice President Mike Pence kept and stored classified material in their homes or offices while former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stored classified material on a private e-mail server in her home.

Those, however, are arguments to be made in the court of public opinion rather than a court of law. A defense that concedes one's client may have broken the law but others committed similar egregious acts without consequence will not travel well before a judge and jury.

Biden and Pence returned the material once it was discovered, and while the FBI accused Clinton of gross carelessness in her handling of sensitive material, her transgressions were not criminal.

Despite what appears to be a rock solid case against Trump has not, however, impacted the support of his Republican base which continues to stand firmly behind him in his quest for the presidential nomination.

He's maintained a lead of as much as 40 points in polling and appears to be holding steady. His claims of a hyper-partisan band of prosecutors determined to destroy him has resonated with his base, to the dismay of Republican leaders who fear he is so deeply wounded by his legal

troubles and criminal accusations that his defeat and those of the congressional ticket in 2024 is assured.

His ego and his desire to be, know and possess what no one else has or does has brought him to the brink of decades in prison.

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