

Who's 'Leaking' President Trump's Private Phone Calls to the Media?

Phone conversations that President Donald Trump had with world leaders over the weekend—which were supposed to be kept private—have been leaked to the media.

At least that's what we're meant to believe. But in at least one case, the party on the other end of the line is discrediting the reports as “based on (absolute) falsehoods.” So we're left wondering two things:

- If they're real, who's leaking them to the press and why?
- If they're fake, who's making them up and why?

In every case, the parties on both ends are denying any involvement in the leaks. But the fact that the reported contents of those conversations are far more embarrassing for the foreign leaders Trump called, it would seem the leaks came from the administration's side.

In the case of the conversation with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto, the Mexican Foreign Relations Department completely rejected the Associated Press' “leaked” transcript of last weekend's phone conversation between Trump and Nieto. They stand behind the joint statement that was issued Friday, saying the conversation was “constructive.”

In the Mexican media, however, the conversation was reported as “humiliating” for Nieto, who is struggling to keep the public on his side. True or not, the reports are damaging to his chances of staying in office.

In the case of the leaked conversation with Australian Prime

Minister Malcom Turnbull, there's a very real possibility the leaked details could end his leadership. Australia, regardless of whether the liberals or conservatives are in charge, have a deep affection for the U.S., and bad relations with Washington can be politically fatal for a premier.

Trump made it clear during the call, if the reports are accurate, that he thought the deal to transfer 1,250 asylum seekers Australian authorities couldn't accept to the U.S. was horrible. His own tweets after the call reinforced that position:

Do you believe it? The Obama administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!

The official read-out of the phone conversation states:

President Donald J. Trump and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull spoke by phone for twenty-five minutes today. Both leaders emphasized the enduring strength and closeness of the relationship that is critical for peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and globally.

The phone call was originally scheduled to last about an hour. That the official account states that it ended after only 25 minutes does give credence to the "leaked" account. The U.K. newspaper The Daily Mail has reported that its sources in the White House are suggesting the leaker was Trump's chief strategist, Steve Bannon, who released the transcript as an effort to reinforce the president's opposition to the deal.

Are the "leaks" meant to be leverage in the president's negotiations with other foreign leaders? Or is the liberal mainstream media resorting to its same old bag of tricks in a vain effort to embarrass him in the early days of his administration?

For now, that's a question that will have to remain unanswered.