



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on June 26, 2026

Former Nat Security Advisor Bolton Pleads Guilty to Violating Espionage Act. Fined \$2M-plus.

Former National Security Advisor John Bolton, who repeatedly said those who violate the Espionage Act should be executed, pleaded guilty today to violating that law.

But the disgraced 77-year-old neoconservative warmonger won't be executed.

Rather, the man who said whistleblower Edward Snowden should swing from a tree for revealing the National Security Agency's surveillance of Americans will pay a more than \$2 million fine and perform community service. He faces up to 60 months in federal prison.



AP Images
John Bolton

President Trump's national security advisor from 2018 and 2019, Bolton also blasted Trump for his supposed mishandling of classified information that was stored at the president's Mar-a-Lago estate.

□Former U.S. National Security Advisor John R. Bolton, II PLEADS GUILTY to Violating the Espionage Act: Sent Top Secret Information on Personal Account Allegedly Hacked by Iranians

"John Bolton held a position of extraordinary public trust as the country's top National Security... pic.twitter.com/lpECKoouQ2

— National Security Division, U.S. Dept of Justice (@DOJNatSec) [June 26, 2026](#)

Bolton's Crimes

On October 16, a federal grand jury indicted Bolton on 18 counts of illegally transmitting and retaining classified information.

"From on or about April 9, 2018, through at least on or about August 22, 2025, BOLTON abused his position as National Security Advisor by sharing more than a thousand pages of information about his day-to-day activities as the National Security Advisor — including information relating to the national defense which was classified up to the TOP SECRET/SCI level — with two unauthorized individuals," the [26-page indictment alleged](#).

As well, he "unlawfully retained documents, writings, and notes relating to the national defense, including information classified up to the TOP SECRET/SCI level, in his home in Montgomery County, Maryland."

The two unauthorized individuals were his wife and daughter, neither of whom had security clearances.



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For about 18 months starting in April 2018, the [indictment said](#), Bolton regularly “sent diary-like entries” to the women that contained national security secrets. He transcribed his handwritten notes from his daily activities into “word processing documents,” which he then e-mailed to the women through a commercial non-governmental messaging application.”

Bolton used personal AOL and Google email accounts to transmit the classified information.

Worse still, given that Bolton was leading advocate for war against Iran, “a cyber actor believed to be associated with the Islamic Republic of Iran hacked BOLTON’s personal email account and gained unauthorized access to the classified and national defense information in that account, which BOLTON had previously emailed” to his wife and daughter.

While he reported the hack to federal authorities, the [indictment alleged](#), he did not say the account contained classified secrets or that he sent classified information on a “non-governmental messaging application.”

Bolton collected the information for his memoir, [The Room Where It Happened](#). That memoir led then Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard [to revoke](#) his security clearance.

The Justice Department reported that Bolton pleaded guilty to one count and that all 18 counts are thus resolved. He faces up to five years in federal prison, must pay a \$2.25 million fine, and perform 100 hours of community service.

Theodore D. Chuang, U.S. District Court judge for the District of Maryland, will sentence Bolton on October 28.

Amusingly, the fine will just about take all of the supposed \$2 million advance [he received](#) for his memoir.

Hang ‘Em High!

If nothing else, Bolton has never been a weak sister in advocating severe punishments for those who divulge national security secrets.

“I hope he gets 176 years in prison,” he said of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who published secrets leaked by “transgender” soldier [“Chelsea” Manning](#) — real name, Bradley.

Of Manning, convicted of violating the Espionage Act in 2013, which led to seven years in prison, Bolton said this to a reporter: “If he’s found guilty, he should be punished to the fullest extent possible.”

Reporter: *And what is that?*

Bolton: *Death.*

Reporter: *You think he should be killed?*

Bolton: *Yes.*

John Bolton called for Assange, Snowden and Manning to be executed under the Espionage Act, for communicating true information to the public.

Now Bolton faces 18 counts under the Espionage Act for mishandling national defense information. pic.twitter.com/pr0H7pkFUL

— WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [October 17, 2025](#)



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Snowden should face the gallows, he said on Fox News:

Snowden committed treason. He ought to be convicted of that and then he ought to swing from a tall oak tree.

He also thought President Trump's mishandling classified material should end his career.

I don't know what broke in the matrix, but watching John Bolton not only plead guilty to a felony but the specific felony he spent decades depicting as the most egregious — calling for life imprisonment or execution for it — is a level of karmic justice I didn't know existed.

<https://t.co/r0BkhoZ3Qo>

— Glenn Greenwald (@ggreenwald) [June 26, 2026](#)

Over video of that statement on X, independent journalist Glenn Greenwald, to whom [Snowden disclosed](#) the NSA's massive domestic surveillance program, revealed an immense feeling of *schadenfreude*.

"I don't know what broke in the matrix, but watching John Bolton not only plead guilty to a felony but the specific felony he spent decades depicting as the most egregious — calling for life imprisonment or execution for it — is a level of karmic justice I didn't know existed," he wrote.

The judge has wide discretion in sentencing Bolton. Bolton won't likely request to "swing from a tall oak tree."

Ducked Vietnam

Bolton's bellicose warmongering includes his opinions that the United States [should attack Cuba](#) and [North Korea](#). While Bolton has advocated attacking any country he thinks needs a licking, he ducked service in Vietnam by joining the Maryland National Guard on graduating from Yale University in 1970.

"I confess I had no desire to die in a Southeast Asian rice paddy," Bolton wrote in his 25th reunion book, as the campus [Daily News reported](#). "I considered the war in Vietnam already lost."

In his book *Surrender Is Not An Option*, [Bolton elaborated](#):

I had concluded that the Vietnam war was lost, and I made the cold calculation that I wasn't going to waste time on futile struggle. Dying for your country is one thing, but dying to gain territory so that anti-war forces in Congress would simply return to the enemy seemed ludicrous to me. Looking back, I am not terribly proud of this calculation, but my World War II veteran father, who still wrecked his life daily for his fellow citizens as a firefighter, approved of it, and that was good enough for me.

Almost 10,000 Americans [died in Vietnam](#) from 1970 through April 30 1975, when U.S. helicopters evacuated the embassy in Saigon.



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