

(U) Ask Zelda!: Rebuilding after the Hurricane

FROM: (U//FOUO) "Zelda," Dispenser of Advice on Workplace Issues

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(U) This article is unclassified.



Dear Zelda,

Nearly a year ago our lives changed because of one "bad seed" employee who took it upon himself to share classified information with the world that he, himself, did not comprehend. Now Americans are confused and have been misled. We all have and continue to *pay a price* in his bad doing. As loyal Americans, we've hurdled many bumps in the road, yet we continue to get the job done because we know we have to! I'd like to know your thoughts on the "bad seed" and your suggestions on how we can move forward in bringing transparency and trust [of NSA] back to the American people.

Sincerely,

A loyal American

Approved for Release by NSA on 09-20-2017, FOIA Case # 81057

Dear loyal American,

Thanks for bringing the subject to this forum. I know many people here feel the same way you do and are unsure what they can do to help the recovery/healing process. Wiser minds than mine have been dedicated to this very question for over a year, so I won't pretend to have the answer--or even any novel ideas.

My Thoughts

Every time I think about what happened and the ignorance of the people who are speaking out against the Agency, my circuits overheat. I felt this way even before my 15 minutes of infamy.* Normally a pacifist, I fantasized about creating a voodoo doll of Mr. Bad Seed. If you want to know how I really feel, read **this opinion piece** ...to which I say "Amen!"

In addition to feeling angry over the harm done to our capabilities, damage to U.S. relations with its foreign partners, and the increased potential for loss of life due to the leaks, it has been a daggone *nuisance* for our workforce. We have had to take time away from our important missions to research the leak, answer questions, and implement new measures that--while they increase security--hamper us in doing our jobs. In a way the issue is similar to heightened airport security in response to a terrorist attempt: everyone is inconvenienced and has to suffer because of one bad seed. Grrrrr...

Lastly, it scares me that one dangerously stupid person can have such a devastating effect on our national security. I pray we never experience another incident like Mr. BS again.

How to Move Forward

Unfortunately, there is no easy fix. It takes a long time for the furor to die down and even longer to rebuild trust. We cannot defend ourselves (ipse dixit**), but others can do this for us. You might be

gratified to read about the comments from our supporters on the **Media Campaign Lead Outreach blog**. We still have fans of what we do and applicants who want to serve their country by working here.

Eventually some new "scandal" will replace this for the public's attention, and the memory of it will fade. Meanwhile, here are my tips for moving beyond it.

- **Let it go.** Your anger won't change the situation and it will only upset you. (Unless you are a skilled voodoo priestess who can channel her anger to another person, in which case please give me a call. I have a doll I want to put a spell on.)
- **Act above reproach.** Continue to follow the rules at work, and model integrity in all facets of your life. It may not seem like a lot, but those around you (family and friends) will seriously question whether someone as trustworthy as you could be involved in something illegal or underhanded. Their confidence in you might even prompt them to defend the Agency to others.
- **Prepare answers in advance and respond calmly.** The Media Leaks website (see the button in the upper right corner of the **NSADaily home page**) contains **talking points** that you can use with family and friends. When people ask you questions about the subject, know what you can and should say.
- **Support our leaders** as they interact with the public, our overseers, and the media.

A "media storm" truly is like a hurricane. While it's happening, the best we can do is hang on and survive it, holding things together as best we can. When the worst is over, we have to survey the damage and plan a way forward. There may be things you cared greatly about that have been irreparably damaged. It's OK to grieve for them. But then we have to clean up the mess and rebuild. And when we rebuild, we make things stronger, to survive another potential storm. Some of the new structures will be even better than what was in place before. I have every confidence that the NSA of the future will be fine--stronger and more secure than ever.

Zelda

Notes:

* The one time I checked out a website publishing the leaked material (when I learned that several **Zelda columns appeared in the media**), I got so mad at all the ignoramuses expounding their off-base and uninformed thoughts that I vowed never to do that again. The only thing it served to do was raise my blood pressure.

** From Wikipedia: *Ipse dixit*, Latin for "He, himself, said it," is a term used to identify and describe a sort of arbitrary dogmatic statement which the speaker expects the listener to accept as valid.

(U) Looking for some of the older "Ask Zelda" columns? They are filed away in the archives under the "Ask Zelda! 2010" and "Ask Zelda! 2011" and "Ask Zelda! 2012" and "Ask Zelda! 2013" series. Also, if you'd like to submit a question of your own to Zelda, just use the "comments/suggestions about this article" button below to send it in.

(U//~~FOUO~~) *SIDtoday is a forum for open communications. The views expressed in articles are those of the person(s) or organization listed in the byline; they are not necessarily the official, corporate stance of the SIGINT Directorate (messages from SID leadership excluded).*