

# US Justice Department considers investigation into Clinton email use

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According to a report by the *New York Times*, the Justice Department has been asked by two inspectors general to open an investigation into the handling of classified information in relation to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's private email account, which she maintained during her tenure at the State Department.

Clinton, the current frontrunner for the Democratic Party's nomination for president in 2016, used this private email account for almost all of her correspondence, including her State Department activities, during this period (2009-2013).

The request comes from Inspector General for the US Department of State Steve Linick and Inspector General of the Intelligence Community I. Charles McCullough, III, both nominated by President Barack Obama for their respective positions and confirmed by a then-Democratic-majority Senate. Inspectors general are nominally independent public servants who audit, inspect and investigate their respective agencies.

The memorandum issued by the inspectors general to the Justice Department states that Clinton's account contained "hundreds of potentially classified emails." Clinton maintains that she never sent classified material using the account but that these documents were classified after she emailed them.

Clinton has so far released 55,000 pages of emails to the State Department, of which only 3,000 pages have been made public. Two dozen of these released emails were partially redacted because they had been classified, although they were not classified when Clinton emailed them.

It is unknown how many of Clinton's emails were never released to the State Department, as she has considered them wholly personal and therefore irrelevant to any investigation.

Significantly, the *Times* article in ~~the~~ story was edited between Thursday and Friday. It originally stated that the request was to criminally investigate "whether Hillary Rodham Clinton mishandled sensitive government information on a private email account she used as secretary of state." This was amended to state that the inquiry regards "whether sensitive government information was mishandled in connection with the personal email account Hillary Rodham Clinton used as secretary of state."

This change to the passive voice was made in response to complaints from the Clinton campaign, according to Michael Schmidt, one of the authors of the *Times* article.

The Justice Department issued a statement later in the day that the investigation was not criminal in character and that it was still considering how to proceed.

Later on Friday, the *Wall Street Journal* published a report citing a letter sent by the inspector general for the intelligence agencies to Congress stating that at least four emails released so far contained classified information, but that "none of the emails we reviewed had classification or dissemination markings."

Trey Gowdy (Republican of South Carolina), the chairman of the House Select Committee on Benghazi, issued a statement supporting a potential investigation.

The reports indicate continued sharp divisions within the state apparatus, though the real issues being fought out are not those that are publicly revealed. The latest criticisms of Clinton's handling of emails comes in the midst of a Republican-led campaign to blame Clinton for the deaths of four Americans, including Ambassador Christopher Stevens, in the September 11, 2012 attack on the consulate in Benghazi, Libya by Islamist militants.

In the background of the conflict over Benghazi are behind-the-scenes divisions and recriminations over State Department and CIA support for Islamic fundamentalist organizations involved in the campaign to overthrow Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and funnel arms to US-backed "rebels" in Syria.

Earlier this year, it was revealed that Clinton had received and passed on a series of memos from Sidney Blumenthal, a former White House aide and current paid advisor to the Clinton Foundation, who was at the time advising a group of business associates with an interest in exploiting opportunities in a post-Gaddafi Libya.

As the WWS has said previously with respect to Clinton's email use, "The exact contours of the divisions within the US ruling elite remain murky, and may not coincide with partisan conflicts between Democrats and Republicans, but erupt within the parties themselves. It is evident, for example, that the Obama White House was reluctant to come to Clinton's defense."

CNN reported yesterday that in March, John Kerry, Clinton's successor at the State Department, had asked the State Department inspector general for recommendations on practices relating to email retention and classification.



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