

# The FBI Leaks Begin: Emails At Center Of Hillary Criminal Probe Revealed

By [Zero Hedge](#)

Global Research, June 11, 2016

[Zero Hedge](#) 10 June 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

*The ongoing criminal probe surrounding Hillary's email server has been marked by opacity and lack of virtually any disclosure, not to mention a major turf war between the FBI and the DOJ, which is why many were surprised when overnight the [WSJ revealed](#) that at the center of the probe over Hillary's handling of classified information are a series of emails between American diplomats in Islamabad and their superiors in Washington about whether to oppose specific drone strikes in Pakistan.*

As the [WSJ writes](#), the 2011 and 2012 emails **were sent via the "low side"—government slang for a computer system for unclassified matters**—as part of a secret arrangement that gave the State Department more of a voice in whether a Central Intelligence Agency drone strike went ahead, "*according to congressional and law-enforcement officials briefed on the Federal Bureau of Investigation probe.*" Note the last and recall that two months ago we noted that according to Chuck Grassley, an FBI "source" [may leak what the FBI has uncovered](#) so far, to wit:

Is there going to be political interference? If there's enough evidence to prosecute, will there be political interference?" Grassley wondered aloud on Friday. "**And if there's political interference, then I assume that somebody in the FBI is going to leak these reports** and it's either going to have an effect politically or it's going to lead to prosecution if there's enough evidence.

It appears that this is precisely what may have happened, and the "source" used the WSJ as the distribution platform. And now that we (don't) know the "who", here is the "what."

The CIA drone campaign in Pakistan, though widely reported in Pakistan, is treated as secret by the U.S. government. Under strict U.S. classification rules, U.S. officials have been barred from discussing strikes publicly and even privately outside of secure communications systems. **The State Department said in January that 22 emails on Clinton's personal server at her home have been judged to contain top-secret information and aren't being publicly released.** Many of them dealt with whether diplomats concurred or not with the CIA drone strikes, congressional and law-enforcement officials said.

As the WSJ adds, some of the [drone-related] emails were then forwarded by Clinton's aides to her personal email account, which routed them to a server she kept at her home in suburban New York when she was secretary of state, the officials said. Investigators have raised concerns that Clinton's personal server was less secure than State Department

systems.

The vaguely worded messages didn't mention the "CIA," "drones" or details about the militant targets, officials said. The still-secret emails are a key part of the FBI investigation that has long dogged Mrs. Clinton's campaign, these officials said. **They were written within the often-narrow time frame in which State Department officials had to decide whether or not to object to drone strikes before the CIA pulled the trigger,** the officials said.

This is an issue, and potentially a criminal one, because "law-enforcement and intelligence officials said State Department **deliberations about the covert CIA drone program should have been conducted over a more secure government computer system designed to handle classified information.** State Department officials told FBI investigators they communicated via the less-secure system on a few instances, according to congressional and law-enforcement officials. It happened when decisions about imminent strikes had to be relayed fast and the U.S. diplomats in Pakistan or Washington didn't have ready access to a more-secure system, either because it was night or they were traveling."

There is also the question whether leaked emails may have tipped off drone strike targets about an imminent CIA assassination attempt.

The WSJ adds that emails sent over the low side sometimes were informal discussions that occurred in addition to more-formal notifications through secure communications, the officials said.

One such exchange came just before Christmas in 2011, when the U.S. ambassador sent a short, cryptic note to his boss indicating a drone strike was planned. That sparked a back-and-forth among Clinton's senior advisers over the next few days, in which it was clear they were having the discussions in part because people were away from their offices for the holiday and didn't have access to a classified computer, officials said.



Another interesting tangent: the turf war between the CIA and the State Department at the time. WSJ has more:

In 2011, Pakistani officials began to push back in private against the drone program, raising questions for the U.S. over the extent to which the program still had their consent. U.S. diplomats warned the CIA and White House they risked losing access to Pakistan's airspace unless more discretion was shown, said current and former officials. Within the administration, State Department and military officials argued that the CIA needed to be more "judicious" about when strikes were launched. They weren't challenging the spy agency's specific choice of targets, but mainly the timing of strikes.

The CIA initially chafed at the idea of giving the State Department more of a voice in the process. Under a compromise reached around the year 2011, CIA officers would notify their embassy counterparts in Islamabad when a strike in Pakistan was planned, so then-U.S. ambassador Cameron Munter or another senior diplomat could decide whether to "concur" or "non-concur." Mr. Munter declined to comment. Diplomats in Islamabad would communicate the decision to their superiors in Washington. A main purpose was to give then-Secretary of State Clinton and her top aides a chance to consider whether she wanted to weigh in with the CIA director about a planned strike.

With the compromise, State Department-CIA tensions began to subside. Only once or twice during Mrs. Clinton's tenure at State did U.S. diplomats object to a planned CIA strike, according to congressional and law-enforcement officials familiar with the emails. U.S. diplomats in Pakistan and Washington usually relayed and discussed their concur or non-concur decisions via the State Department's more-secure messaging system. But about a half-dozen times, when they were away from more-secure equipment, they improvised by sending emails on their smartphones about whether they backed an impending strike or not, the officials said.

**The time available to the State Department to weigh in on a planned strike varied widely, from several days to as little as 20 or 30 minutes. "If a strike was imminent, it was futile to use the high side, which no one would see for seven hours,"** said one official.

Adding to those communications hurdles, U.S. intelligence officials privately objected to the State Department even using its high-side system. They wanted diplomats to use a still-more-secure system called the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Community Systems, or JWICs. State Department officials don't have ready access to that system, even in Washington. If drone-strike decisions were needed quickly, it wouldn't be an option, officials said.

The big question, of course, is whether any of these emails were intercepted, and leaked, tipping off locals about upcoming air strikes: "U.S. officials said there is no evidence Pakistani intelligence officials intercepted any of the low-side State Department emails or used them to protect militants." State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the agency "is not going to speak to the content of documents, nor would we speak to any ongoing review."

In other words, a potential leak could have come at just the worst possible time, and potentially tipped off the target of CIA strikes.

As is widely known, the email issue has dogged Clinton for more than a year. Despite her success in nailing down the Democratic presidential nomination, polls show many voters continue to doubt her truthfulness and integrity. Her campaign manager has acknowledged the email matter has hurt her. Republican rival Donald Trump has attacked Clinton repeatedly on the issue, calling her "Crooked Hillary," saying what she did was a crime and suggesting the Justice Department would let her off because it is run by Democrats.

So is this a criminal offense? According to the WSJ, several law-enforcement officials said they don't expect any criminal charges to be filed as a result of the investigation, although a final review of the evidence will be made only after an expected FBI interview with Clinton this summer. One reason is that government workers at several agencies, including the departments of Defense, Justice and State, have occasionally resorted to the low-side system to give each other notice about sensitive but fast-moving events, according to one law-enforcement official.

When Clinton has been asked about the possibility of being criminally charged over the email issue, **she has repeatedly said "that is not going to happen." She has said it was a mistake to use a personal server for email but it was a decision she made as a matter of convenience.**

But what may be the punchline, is that as the WSJ writes, beyond the campaign implications, **the investigation exposes the latest chapter in a power struggle that pits the enforcers of strict secrecy, including the FBI and CIA,** against some officials

at the State Department and other agencies who want a greater voice in the use of covert lethal force around the globe, because of the impact it has on broader U.S. policy goals.

While Hillary's fate is yet to be determined, this episode reveals something else about the future of US usage of drone strikes:

Under pressure to address critics abroad, Mr. Obama pledged to increase the transparency of drone operations by shifting, as much as possible, control of drone programs around the world to the U.S. military instead of the CIA. An exception was made for Pakistan. But even in Pakistan, Mr. Obama recently signaled a shift. The drone strike that killed Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour last month was conducted by the military, not the CIA, and the outcome was disclosed. While the CIA still controls drones over the tribal areas of Pakistan near Afghanistan, the pace of strikes has declined dramatically in recent years. U.S. officials say there are fewer al Qaeda targets there now that the CIA can find.

And now we eagerly look forward to whatever the next batch of emails the "*law-enforcement officials briefed on the Federal Bureau of Investigation probe*" reveal in the coming weeks.

The original source of this article is [Zero Hedge](#)  
Copyright © [Zero Hedge](#), [Zero Hedge](#), 2016

---

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Zero Hedge](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)