



## Years later, investigation goes nowhere

By Martin Matishak  
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Roughly two years after Attorney General Eric Holder launched a high-profile investigation into U.S. national security leaks, no one has been charged with leaking unauthorized material and the administration has offered no information on the probe.

The Justice Department says the investigation, launched with much fanfare in June 2012, is still taking place. But a spokesman could provide no update on whether people illegally leaked information about U.S. drone strikes targeting militants or on a U.S. cyberattack on Iran.

That's left outsiders wondering if the case is being slid under the rug now that attention over the leaks has died down.

"The easiest-case way to make it go away is by saying it's ongoing therefore we can't answer any questions about it — stretch it out long enough and it ceases to be politically relevant" said Julian Sanchez, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute.

"If they can keep this going to 2016 the political will to be pushing on it" will dissipate, he added.

The leaks outraged lawmakers in both parties when they took place less than six months before the presidential election. Republicans charged that the leaks were meant to make President Obama look stronger on national security, and that they were likely made intentionally by high-ranking administration or White House officials.

"I don't think it's an accident that you have three stories within about 45 days that paint the Obama administration as being effective in the war on terror at our national security detriment," Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) said at the time.

Democrats also criticized the leaks, which Senate Intelligence Committee Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) said were the worst she'd seen in Washington.

Holder appointed two high-profile U.S. attorneys to investigate and criminally prosecute any "unauthorized disclosures of classified information."

But there have been no signs since then that progress has been made in the probe.

A strategy of announcing a probe but then letting it slowly die out “wouldn’t surprise me,” said Joe Newman, communications director for the Project on Government Oversight, which has criticized the administration for being too aggressive in going after whistleblowers.

He voiced concern about the “selective process” the administration applies in deciding which informants should be pursued and what their punishment should be, citing the cases of WikiLeaks source Chelsea Manning, who was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

“It wouldn’t be unusual for the administration to just let this one go,” Newman said during a phone interview.

The White House shot back at charges in 2012 that the leaks were designed to strengthen Obama’s reelection effort, calling the claims “offensive.” The White House also rejected calls for it to appoint a special prosecutor.

Holder ordered Ronald C. Machen Jr., the U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia, and Rod J. Rosenstein, the U.S. attorney from the District of Maryland, to lead separate criminal investigations by the FBI.

Some Republicans questioned whether Machen would be independent in his investigation; he’d volunteered for Obama’s 2008 campaign and donated money to Obama.

The Federal Bureau of Investigations did not respond to a request for comment about the probe.

Last week a spokeswoman for the House Judiciary Committee said the panel had not received an update on the case from the Justice Department, while aides to the House Intelligence Committee declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.