



Did feds spy on CBS reporter?

By Cory Bennett
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Did the government hack a former CBS reporter's computer and phone?

That's what Sharyl Attkisson alleges in her new book *Stonewalled*. She says the administration targeted her for pursuing stories critical of President Obama, particularly for her reporting following the 2012 attack on an American diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya.

She says a technical expert examined her computer and was "shocked" and "flabbergasted" by the spyware and malware on the device.

"Worse than anything Nixon ever did," the expert told her, pointing to an IP address that indicated a government device was at the root of the issue.

Attkisson, who left CBS in March after almost 20 years, said the network hired an outside computer analyst who confirmed the findings.

"I see evidence that shows a deliberate and skilled attempt to clean the log files of activity," the analyst told her, according to excerpts from her book published in *The Washington Post*. The skill required for this is "far beyond the abilities of even the best non government hackers," the analyst told her.

Another security expert, Don Allison of Kore Logic, examined Attkisson's computer for the book and found what Attkisson calls "an undeniable link to the U.S. government." CBS has declined to confirm his findings due to a confidentiality agreement.

The Justice Department has said it has no knowledge of such surveillance efforts. CBS has declined to comment on the spying claims several times.

Some security experts are skeptical of Attkisson's claims that the government hacked her computer, spied on her and dropped classified documents on her computer in a possible attempt to frame her and her sources.

Julian Sanchez, a research fellow focusing on tech policy at the libertarian Cato Institute, tweeted that the involvement of Kore Logic "is the ONLY reason I hesitate at all to just dismiss this as nonsense."

“Literally every other fact about this story sounds like the what the crazy people who call in when I talk surveillance on C-SPAN say,” Sanchez [tweeted](#).

Robert Graham, a researcher with Errata Security, said Attkisson’s evidence is contradictory. If the hackers were “far beyond” top-notch non government hackers, how could the person examining her computer trace an IP address back to the government?

“Both can't be true,” Graham said. “Hiding one's IP address is the first step in any hack.”

Attkisson also described using her computer and having data disappear from the screen “at hyperspeed before my very eyes.”

Graham said that sounds like “something kids do to scare people, not what real ‘sophisticated’ hackers do.”

Richard Bejtlich, chief security strategist for security firm FireEye and nonresident senior fellow at the Brookings Institute, backed Graham’s take.

“I largely concur,” he tweeted.