

## **Top secret Clinton emails include talk on drone op**

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**Washington:** The two emails on Hillary Rodham Clinton's private server that an auditor deemed "top secret" include a discussion of a news article detailing a US drone operation and a separate conversation that could point back to highly classified material in an improper manner or merely reflect information collected independently, US officials who have reviewed the correspondence told The Associated Press.

The sourcing of the information could have significant political implications as the 2016 presidential campaign heats up. Clinton, the front-runner for the Democratic nomination, agreed this week to turn over to the FBI the private server she used as secretary of state, and Republicans in Congress have seized on the involvement of federal law enforcement as a sign that she was either negligent with the nation's secrets or worse.

On Monday, the inspector general for the 17 spy agencies that make up what is known as the intelligence community told Congress that two of 40 emails in a random sample of the 30,000 emails Clinton gave to the State Department for review contained information deemed "Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information", one of the government's highest levels of classification.

The two emails were marked classified after consultations with the CIA, which is where the material originated, officials said.

The officials who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity work in intelligence and other agencies. They would not detail the contents of the emails because of ongoing questions about classification level. Clinton did not transmit the sensitive information herself, they said, and nothing in the emails she received makes clear reference to communications intercepts, confidential intelligence methods or any other form of sensitive sourcing.

The drone exchange, the officials said, begins with a copy of a news article that discusses the CIA drone programme that targets terrorists in Pakistan and elsewhere. While a secret programme, it is well-known and often reported on. The copy makes reference to classified information, and a Clinton advisor follows up by dancing around a top secret in a way that could possibly be inferred as confirmation, they said. Several officials, however, described this claim as tenuous.

But a second email reviewed by Charles McCullough, the intelligence community inspector general, appears more suspect. Nothing in the message is "lifted" from classified documents, the officials said, though they differed on where the information was sourced from. Some said it improperly points back to highly classified material, while others countered that it was a classic case of what the government calls "parallel reporting" -- different people knowing the same thing through different means.

The emails came to light on Tuesday after Senator Chuck Grassley reported that McCullough found four "highly classified" emails on the unusual homebrew server that Clinton used while she was secretary of state. Two were sent back to the State Department for review, but Grassley said the other two were, in fact, classified at the closely guarded "Top Secret/SCI level".

Clinton spokesperson Jennifer Palmieri has stressed that Clinton was permitted to use her own email account as a government employee and that the same process concerning classification reviews would still be taking place had she used the standard 'state.gov' email account used by most department employees. The State Department, meanwhile, stressed that it wasn't clear if the material at issue ought to be considered classified at all.

Clinton says she exchanged about 60,000 emails in her four years as secretary of state. She turned over all but what she said were personal emails late last year. The department has been making those public as they are reviewed and scrubbed of any sensitive data.

The State Department advised employees not to use personal email accounts for work, but it was not prohibited.

- AP