

Report: Justice Department Blocked FBI Investigation of Clinton Foundation

Despite emails that clearly show Clinton Foundation operatives sought favors from the U.S. State Department for its donors while Hillary Clinton was secretary of state, the Justice Department's public integrity unit declined to give the FBI permission to investigate the foundation.

As CNN's Daniella Diaz, Pamela Brown and Elise Labott reported Wednesday:

Early this year as the investigation into Clinton's private email server was in full swing, several FBI field offices approached the Justice Department asking to open a case regarding the relationship between the State Department and the Clinton Foundation, according to a law enforcement official. At the time, DOJ declined because it had looked into allegations surrounding the Clinton Foundation around a year earlier and found there wasn't sufficient evidence to open a case.

In a hearing last month on Capitol Hill, FBI Director James Comey declined to say whether the Clinton Foundation was under investigation, saying: "I'm not going to comment on the existence or non-existence of any investigation."

For there to be criminal conflict of interest there would have to be evidence showing a government employee received something of value in exchange, such as a job post-employment or money. There doesn't appear to be anything so far suggesting that in the newly released, heavily redacted emails from Judicial Watch. But those emails do raise questions about whether the relationship between the State Department and Clinton Foundation was too cozy, particularly

after Clinton pledged she would not be involved with the foundation when she became secretary of state, in an effort to prevent an inappropriate relationship.

In a case where there's a possible conflict of interest that's not necessarily criminal, the inspector general can look into it and take an administrative remedy if necessary. The State Department OIG has been looking into connections between the State Department and Clinton during her term as secretary of state since earlier this year, but has not said anything about the matter.

The revelation adds to the continuing controversy surrounding Clinton's use of a private, non-secure email server while secretary of state. Judicial Watch, a conservative government watchdog group, has multiple Freedom of Information Act lawsuits pending against the State Department, seeking work-related emails from that server.

Tuesday, the group released nearly 300 pages of those emails. It is likely those emails were the reason why the FBI sought to expand its investigation, as was reported by FOX News in January.

"The agents are investigating the possible intersection of Clinton Foundation donations, the dispensation of State Department contracts and whether regular processes were followed," Catherine Herridge reported. She also quoted one of her sources as saying, "Many previous public corruption cases have been made and successfully prosecuted with much less evidence than what is emerging in this investigation."

That no investigation was allowed paints an even more disturbing picture, not only for Clinton, but for Attorney General Loretta Lynch and the Justice Department.