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Loretta Lynch dodged questions Wednesday about Hillary Clinton posed by the House Appropriations Committee. | AP Photo

Lynch non-committal on Clinton email prosecution

By **JOSH GERSTEIN** | 02/24/16 12:32 PM EST

Attorney General Loretta Lynch declined Wednesday to discuss how she would make a decision about whether to prosecute Democratic presidential candidate and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton over classified information found on her private email server.

However, Lynch did say the investigation and the Justice Department's review of the matter would follow the usual process and procedure for such matters.

"This will be conducted as every other case and we will review all the facts and all the evidence and come to an independent conclusion as to how to best handle it," Lynch said during a House Appropriations Committee hearing Wednesday morning.

Rep. John Carter (R-Texas) told Lynch that some of his constituents wanted him to raise the issue with her because they were concerned that the probe might be tainted by politics.

"If the FBI makes the case that Hillary Clinton mishandled classified information and put America's security at risk, will you prosecute the case? Do you know of any efforts underway to undermine the FBI investigation," Carter asked.

Lynch didn't say anything new about the inquiry, except to confirm that she has yet to receive any request from her staff to act one way or another on the case.

"With respect to our investigation into how information was handled by the State Department, how they handled classified information, as I'm sure you know that matter is being handled by career, independent law enforcement agents, FBI agents as well as the career, independent attorneys in the Department of Justice. They follow the evidence. They look at the law. And they'll make a recommendation to me when the time is appropriate," Lynch said.

Lynch said concerns about improper pressure on prosecutors or agents were unfounded, at least to her knowledge

"I'm also aware of no efforts to undermine our review or investigation into this matter at all," she said.

It's unclear what pressure Carter may have been alluding to, but after President Barack Obama commented last fall that he saw no evidence that the email situation endangered national security, some FBI agents said the president's comments were inappropriate because they appeared to predict the outcome of an ongoing investigation.

The FBI has been looking into Clinton's email set-up since last summer. The State Department has determined that more than 1,750 emails in Clinton's account are classified, including dozens at the "Secret" level and 22 at the "Top Secret" level. Clinton has disputed those classifications and insisted that none of the messages were marked as classified when they were sent.

It's unclear whether the FBI inquiry, which began as a look at a potential counterintelligence breach, is now focused on Clinton personally, her staff or others.