

TRUMP EFFECT

# Feds tapped Trump lawyer Michael Cohen's phones

At least one phone call between a phone line associated with Cohen and the White House was intercepted, a source said.

by Tom Winter and Julia Ainsley / May.03.2018 / 4:59 PM ET

Federal investigators have wiretapped the phone lines of [Michael Cohen](#), the longtime personal lawyer for President Donald Trump who is under investigation for a payment he made to an [adult film star](#) who alleged she had an affair with Trump, according to two people with knowledge of the legal proceedings involving Cohen.

It is not clear how long the wiretap has been authorized, but NBC News has learned it was in place in the weeks leading up to the raids on [Cohen's offices](#), hotel room, and home in early April, according to one person with direct knowledge.

At least one phone call between a phone line associated with Cohen and the White House was intercepted, the person said.

Previously, federal prosecutors in New York have said in court filings that they have conducted covert searches on multiple e-mail accounts maintained by Cohen.

Spokespeople for the U.S. Attorney's Office and the FBI in New York declined comment.

Republican U.S. presidential nominee Donald Trump and former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani visit the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Aug. 16, 2016. [Eric Thayer / Reuters](#)

After the raid, members of Trump's legal team advised the president not to speak to Cohen, according to a person familiar with the discussion.

Two sources close to Trump's newest attorney, Rudolph Giuliani, say he learned that days after the raid the president had made a call to Cohen, and told Trump never to call again out of concern the call was being recorded by prosecutors.

Giuliani told Fox News Wednesday night that Trump repaid Cohen the \$130,000 he used to keep the adult film star, Stormy Daniels, from going public with allegations about her affair with Trump.

Giuliani is also described as having warned Trump that Cohen is likely to flip on him, something Trump pushed back on, telling Giuliani that he has known Cohen for years and expects him to be loyal, according to two sources with direct knowledge of the conversations.

Giuliani and a lawyer for Cohen did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The White House referred NBC News to outside counsel.

It is unclear what incriminating information Cohen could give prosecutors on Trump, if he chose to cooperate. He represented Trump and the Trump Organization in its business dealings for nearly two decades before Trump became president. Special counsel Robert Mueller is interested in any information that federal investigators in New York may pick up that would be relevant to his investigation into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia.

Cohen has previously said publicly that he would invoke his Fifth Amendment rights if subpoenaed to avoid incriminating himself before a grand jury and there is no indication from public filings that Cohen is cooperating in the probe.

The Cohen investigation is being led by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Manhattan and the FBI. Investigators are looking into the \$130,000 transaction between Cohen and adult film star Stormy Daniels, also known as Stephanie Clifford, who allegedly had an affair with Trump more than a decade ago, and a reported payment of \$150,000 from American Media Inc., publishers of the National Enquirer, to a second woman who allegedly had an affair with Trump, Playboy model Karen McDougal.

The White House has denied allegations of the affairs.

Investigators are also seeking information about the 2005 "Access Hollywood" tape in which Donald Trump was heard making vulgar boasts about women.

The bureau's interest in the "Access Hollywood" tape, on which Trump bragged to host Billy Bush that he would grab women "by the p---y," was first reported by the New York Times. "Access Hollywood" is an NBC Universal television program.

Material seized from Cohen's office, hotel room and home included [taped conversations](#), as well as cellphones and hard drives.

Cohen has asserted in court that much of the material gleaned in the raids should be protected from the eyes of prosecutors under attorney-client privilege.

Former U.S. Attorney Chuck Rosenberg, now an NBC News analyst, says there's a high bar for having a wiretap approved.

"The affidavits are typically highly detailed and carefully vetted by experienced lawyers," he said. "In all cases the wiretap must be approved by a federal judge."

Rosenberg said that wiretaps are usually approved for an investigation into a current crime and not solely for possible crimes that have been committed in the past.

"This is an exacting process where the government must demonstrate to a federal judge that there is an ongoing crime."