

In Leak Investigation, Tech Giants Are Caught Between Courts and Customers

Apple, under fire for turning over the data of two lawmakers to the Trump Justice Dept., said it did so unknowingly, while Google fought a request for New York Times data because it related to a corporate client.



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By Jack Nicas, Daisuke Wakabayashi and Katie Benner

June 11, 2021

On Feb. 6, 2018, Apple received a grand jury subpoena for the names and phone records connected to 109 email addresses and phone numbers. It was one of the more than 250 data requests that the company received on average from U.S. law enforcement each week at the time. An Apple paralegal complied and provided the information.

This year, a gag order on the subpoena expired. Apple said it alerted the people who were the subjects of the subpoena, just as it does with dozens of customers each day.

But this request was out of the ordinary.

Without knowing it, Apple said, it had handed over the data of congressional staff members, their families and at least two members of Congress, including Representative Adam B. Schiff of California, then the House Intelligence Committee’s top Democrat and now its chairman. It turned out the subpoena was part of a wide-ranging investigation by the Trump administration into leaks of classified information.

The revelations have now plunged Apple into the middle of a firestorm over the Trump administration’s efforts to find the sources of news stories. and the