

## **Immigration agency assailed over leak probe**

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### **Body**

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The union representing **Immigration** and Customs Enforcement officers is accusing the **agency** of unfairly targeting an agent investigators apparently suspect of **leaking** information about controversial arrest quotas to the media.

Officials with the American Federation of Government Employees National Council 118 said Friday that they suspect that the agent is being harassed because his surname is Asian, as is that of the reporter from The Washington Post who wrote about the quotas. The union declined to identify the agent.

**In a story published in March**, Post reporter Spencer S. Hsu and the Center for Investigative Reporting wrote about an e-mail that a senior ICE official sent to agents announcing new arrest quotas. ICE distanced itself from the e-mails and said it has since clarified its policy to agents.

"ICE leaders got caught doing something they shouldn't have been doing, and now they want revenge and are targeting their own employees," Council 118 President Chris Crane said Friday.

Crane said the agent, who does not want to be identified for fear of retribution, has been questioned about the matter by ICE's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR). The agent has filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Crane said.

ICE spokesman Brian Hale said Friday that "senior leadership in ICE did not pursue or request any investigation into this matter." Hale declined to comment further on who might have asked OPR to investigate the **leaks**. He also declined to comment on the allegation that the agent was targeted because of his Asian surname.

OPR **probes** allegations of misconduct, but Crane said it unfairly targets rank-and-file workers.

Allegations of whistleblower retribution at ICE come amid a clampdown on **leaks** and exposure to the media across the Obama administration. The Defense Department is limiting media access to military officers after Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal's comments to Rolling Stone magazine. It also charged an Army intelligence officer this month **with leaking a controversial video** of a U.S. airstrike in Iraq. Former National Security **Agency** official Thomas A. Drake was **indicted in April** on charges of **leaking** classified information to a Baltimore Sun reporter.

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The Internal Revenue Service is facing criticism for [not paying rewards to whistleblowers](#) who come forward with information on tax-evasion schemes.

"Some of these prosecutions wouldn't have happened when [George W.] Bush was president, because there would have been a more partisan backlash," said Stephen M. Kohn, executive director of the National Whistleblowers Center. "The problem when you have a Democratic president -- it's not like Obama is signing the indictment, but it mutes the criticism."

Federal whistleblowers face greater risks because of a weak Office of Special Counsel (OSC), which lacks permanent leadership almost two years after Scott J. Bloch resigned, Kohn said. Bloch resigned in 2008 after years of misconduct investigations and is scheduled to be sentenced Tuesday on a misdemeanor charge of contempt of Congress.

Rep. Darrell Issa (Calif.), ranking Republican on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, said Friday that the lack of stable leadership at the independent OSC is "weakening an important whistleblower protection."

Issa's comments were made in a letter sent Friday to President Obama about the lack of permanent leadership in at least 15 offices of inspector general.

The White House did not respond to requests for comment.

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