



# Society of Environmental Journalists

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May 14, 2013

Eric H. Holder, Jr.  
Attorney General of the United States  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Attorney General Holder,

The Society of Environmental Journalists strongly condemns the Department of Justice's overly broad investigation of the Associated Press' news gathering operations as an infringement of First Amendment press freedoms.

By secretly seizing telephone records for more than 20 phone lines used by AP journalists and offices, including cell and home phone lines, DOJ has unjustifiably targeted facilities and phones used by more than 100 journalists, and obtained the names of sources and confidential information about the news gathering operations.

The Obama administration has been aggressive in seeking to stop leaks and control the flow of information. Its investigation into a leak that led to stories about a failed terrorist plot to blow up an airplane on Christmas Day 2011 was known from public testimony by administration officials. But the government's collection of information from AP phone lines in New York, Washington, Hartford, Conn., and the AP's main House of Representatives Press Gallery number, far exceeded the scope of any justifiable investigation.

The Associated Press says it regards the Justice Department's secret investigation as a serious interference with its constitutional rights to gather and report the news, and SEJ agrees. As requested by the AP, DOJ should fully explain its actions, return all records of conversations and calls to the AP and destroy all copies of those call records.

Beth Parke  
Executive Director

Joseph A. Davis  
Director, FOI Watchdog Project



*Strengthening the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media  
to advance public understanding of environmental issues*