

Senator says FBI paid \$900K for iPhone hacking tool

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In this May 3, 2017 file photo, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa talks with the committee's ranking member Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. on Capitol Hill in Washington. Feinstein has said publicly that the FBI paid \$900,000 to break into an iPhone of one of the San Bernardino, California, shooters. (AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, File)

Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the Senate committee that oversees the FBI, said publicly this week that the government paid \$900,000 to break into the locked iPhone of a gunman in the San

Bernardino, California, shootings.

The FBI considers the figure to be classified information. It also has protected the identity of the vendor it paid to do the work. Both pieces of information are the subject of a federal lawsuit by The Associated Press and other [news organizations](#) that have sued to force the FBI to reveal them.

An FBI spokeswoman declined to comment Friday.

Feinstein cited the amount while questioning FBI Director James Comey at a Senate Judiciary Committee oversight hearing Wednesday.

"I was so struck when San Bernardino happened and you made overtures to allow that device to be opened, and then the FBI had to spend \$900,000 to hack it open," said Feinstein, D-Calif. "And as I subsequently learned of some of the reason for it, there were good reasons to get into that device."

Comey hinted at a ballpark range last year, saying the government paid more than he would earn in his remaining seven years on the job, an amount that would have been more than \$1 million. He has called the sum "worth it."

The federal government paid the money as it cut short an extraordinary court fight with Apple Inc., which was resisting a magistrate judge's order to help the Justice Department hack into the phone of Syed Rizwan Farook, who along with his wife killed 14 people in a San Bernardino attack in December 2015. The work phone was found after the shooting.



This July 27, 2014, file photo provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection shows Tashfeen Malik, left, and Syed Farook, as they passed through O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif. has said publicly that the FBI paid \$900,000 to break into an iPhone of one of the San Bernardino, California, shooters. (U.S. Customs and Border Protection via AP, File)

An unidentified third party came forward last March, ahead of a much-anticipated court hearing, with a solution to open the device.

The AP and other news organizations last year filed a public records lawsuit to learn how much the FBI paid, and the identity of the vendor.

The Justice Department has said in court filings that that information was properly classified. It argued that the information it withheld, if

released, could be seized upon by "hostile entities" that could develop their own countermeasures and interfere with the FBI's intelligence gathering.

Feinstein's spokesman, Tom Mentzer, would neither discuss the senator's remarks nor say whether she was offering an estimate or disclosing [information](#) obtained in an FBI briefing.



In this Nov. 18, 2016 photo, a faded photo collage showing images of the 14 victims who were killed in the Dec. 2, 2015, San Bernardino terror attack is adorned with artificial flowers at a makeshift memorial near the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino, Calif., where the shooting took place. Family members of San Bernardino terror attack victims are suing Facebook, Google and Twitter for providing platforms to aid terrorists. The lawsuit filed Wednesday, May 3, 2017, in Los Angeles federal court said the companies allowed the Islamic State terrorist group to spread propaganda, recruit followers and raise money. (AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File)

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