

Will neither defend nor criticise FBI decision to reopen Hillary Clinton email probe: White House

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Washington: Just days ahead of the crucial presidential election, the White House has said that it will neither defend nor criticise the FBI for its decision to reopen probe in the alleged email scandal involving Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton.

File photo - White House Deputy Press Secretary Josh Earnest

Speaking to reporters here, White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, said that President Barack Obama has full confidence in FBI Director James Comey, who he believes is not trying to influence the elections.

"I'll neither defend nor criticise what Director Comey has decided to communicate to the public about this investigation," Earnest said.

He was responding to questions on a letter written by Comey to Congressional leaders last week that he is reopening the case against Clinton following finding of pertinent emails related to the case. The letter has created a firestorm ahead of the November 8 general elections, with the Clinton Campaign questioning the intent of the FBI Director less than 10 days before the crucial elections and has asked for more information from the FBI.

"What I will say is that the Department of Justice in our democracy is given expansive authority to conduct investigations. The Department of Justice is given subpoena power, they're allowed to compel witnesses to testify, they are able to collect evidence that's not readily available necessarily, they're even allowed to empanel a grand jury," Earnest said.

The FBI comes under the control of Department of Justice.

"It's important in the mind of the president that those authorities are tempered by an adherence to long-standing tradition and practice and norms that limit public discussion of facts that are collected in the context of those investigations. And the president believes that it's important for those norms and traditions and guidelines to be followed," he said.

"The good news is the president believes that Director Comey is a man of integrity, he's a man of principle and he's

a man of good character," Earnest said.

"That presumably is the reason that (the former US) President (George) Bush chose him to serve in a senior position at the Bush administration's Department of Justice," he said.

Responding to a question, he said, Obama does not believe that Comey is trying to influence the elections.

"The president doesn't believe that Director Comey is intentionally trying to influence the outcome of an election. The president doesn't believe that he's secretly strategising to benefit one candidate or one political party," he said.

- With PTI Inputs
