

The CIA may have misled Congress at least five times since 2001, two Democrats on the House Intelligence Committee said Tuesday.

Intelligence subcommittee Chairwomen Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) and Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) are leading an ongoing investigation into what they described as a practice of incomplete and often misleading intelligence briefings, which arose in the wake of CIA Director Leon Panetta's June 24 admission that intelligence officials failed to notify Congress about a top-secret program to assassinate al Qaeda leaders.

"That is an example of a failure to notify but we think a symptom of a larger disease," Schakowsky said on Tuesday.

"There have been many instances where we've come to a committee hearing, after having read in the paper of something that should have been notified to us, where it's followed up my mea culpas by the intelligence community," Schakowsky said. "And examples where the committee actually has been lied to.

"You can understand that the committee has felt very frustrated that the executive branch has not notified us of intelligence activity," she said. "We're in the process of reviewing several instances where the executive branch may have violated the [notification] requirements that are

in the National Security Act.”

One of the instances being closely examined by the two Democrats is the September 2002 briefing on enhanced interrogation techniques that became the basis for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s (D-Calif.) claim that the CIA lied to her. Findings on this point could bolster Pelosi’s case.

The Speaker came under fire after she said at a testy press conference in May that the CIA had lied to her and other members during a 2002 briefing about its use of waterboarding on detainees. Pelosi was the ranking member of the Intelligence panel at the time.

“We were told explicitly that waterboarding was not being used,” she said at the May press conference. “They [the CIA] misled us all the time.”

Republicans demanded proof from Pelosi of CIA lies, and the Speaker was also criticized for not objecting to waterboarding when she first learned about it.

Nadeam Elshami, a spokesman for the Pelosi, on Tuesday said that the Speaker's May statement speaks for itself.

In June, CIA Director Leon Panetta alerted the House Intelligence Committee about a top-secret program to assassinate top al Qaeda operatives that previously had not been disclosed to Congress. Later reports indicated that former Vice President Dick Cheney had ordered the CIA not to notify Congress of the program.

Panetta's revelation appeared to bolster Pelosi's statement from May, and Schakowsky and Eshoo identified "Director Panetta's June 24 notification" as one of the five instances linked to a complete communication breakdown between the intelligence community and Congress.

"It is the policy of the Central Intelligence Agency to be clear and candid with the United States Congress," CIA spokesman Paul Gimigliano said in response to a request for comment. "Director Panetta has made a relationship of trust, confidence and respect a top priority."

At least one of the CIA's obfuscations was already known. A 2008 CIA Inspector General's report determined that the agency withheld information from Congress relating to the shooting down of a plane carrying missionaries over Peru in 2001.

In addition, the CIA may have failed to properly notify Congress about the 2005 destruction of videotapes recording the interrogation of al Qaeda operatives by intelligence officials, Eshoo and Schakowsky said.

--By Jared Allen