



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 11, 2017

## Assange: Obama Administration Destroying Documents in Final Days

The Obama administration, in its waning days, is busily destroying public records to protect its image, charged WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

“Past administrations of both Democrat and Republican players have engaged in mass destruction of records as they left office,” Assange [said](#) in a livestreamed press conference Monday. “We are told that destruction of records is occurring now in different parts of the Obama administration in different departments or agencies.”



“One understands the political motivation for it,” he explained, “but to eliminate small political risks by destroying major elements of history is, frankly, an obscenity.”

One needn’t go far back in history to find [examples](#) of administrations that “lost” or destroyed documents or e-mails, often those with political implications.

The most famous recent example, of course, is Hillary Clinton, who maintained a private, unsecured e-mail server while serving as President Barack Obama’s secretary of state and did not turn it over to the government for archiving after leaving office. Obama later [lied](#) about his knowledge of this server, the existence of which enabled Clinton to [withhold documents](#) related to the Benghazi debacle from congressional investigators.

The Obama administration also [destroyed](#) all e-mails related to the operation that culminated in the alleged death of Osama bin Laden.

The George W. Bush administration, which destroyed videos documenting the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA) torture of detainees, claimed to have lost some 22 million e-mails over the course of six years, including all e-mails from the office of Vice President Dick Cheney during certain periods. In reality, the administration “had simply shut down the Clinton [administration’s] automatic e-mail archive,” supposedly because of a server switch, wrote [Newsweek](#).

The Clinton administration, *Newsweek* explained, had set up the archive in the wake of a lawsuit “that prevented 6,000 White House e-mail backup tapes from being erased” near the end of the George H.W. Bush administration. That administration, like the Reagan administration (which installed the first White House e-mail system) before it, did not maintain e-mail archives despite the 1978 Presidential Records Act’s mandate that all presidential and vice presidential records be preserved. A large number of executive branch e-mails — the Bush administration sent about 200 million — were, therefore, lost to posterity, undoubtedly saving certain Reagan and Bush administration figures from embarrassment, and possibly legal action, in their retirement.

This is not to say the Clinton administration was a model of records preservation. Numerous documents related to the Whitewater investigation were later found in the personal residence of the Clinton White



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House. And unlike Reagan — who also got key documents related to the Iran-Contra affair shredded while he was in office — and the two Presidents Bush, Bill Clinton has managed to get records destroyed or disappeared even after leaving office. In 2003, Clinton's national security adviser, Sandy Berger, smuggled five terrorism-related classified documents out of the National Archives and destroyed them, for which he was fined \$50,000 and sentenced to five years' probation. Last year, it emerged that documents related to the probe by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) into the death of Clinton's Deputy White House Counsel Vince Foster had [vanished](#) from the National Archives, as had a [two-terabyte hard drive](#) from the Clinton administration.

Given all this, it would hardly be surprising to discover that Obama, despite his promise of the "most transparent" administration in history, was, as Assange asserts, even now trying to cover his tracks by destroying documents. Contrary to the repeated claims of Obama's supporters, his administration did have [plenty of scandals](#) that he would surely like to forget — and probably some that he hopes never come to light.

"Our philosophy is that such information [presidential records] is a part of history. It belongs, legally and philosophically, to the American people and more broadly, insofar as the United States interacts with the world, it belongs to the people of the world," Assange said. "It is part of human history, and the destruction of major archives of human history, frankly, should be formally listed as a crime against humanity because those archives belong to humanity."

WikiLeaks is offering a \$30,000 reward for information leading to the arrest or exposure of any Obama administration figures involved in the destruction of documents. Assange urged "system administrators in the Obama administration" to "take the data now" and then give it to "WikiLeaks or other journalists at your leisure."

"Get hold of that history and protect it," Assange said, "because that is something that belongs to humanity and does not belong to a political party."



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