



22 Million Bush-era E-mails Found

Computer experts have reportedly found 22 million White House e-mails from the years President George W. Bush was in office, while the Obama administration is still searching for more of the Bush administration's "lost" e-mail.

The cyber-searching was prompted by two private organizations that filed suit over the Bush administration's failure to abide by federal laws requiring electronic record keeping. The two groups are Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington and the National Security Archive. They say that the true extent of just how thoroughly the Bush White House failed to follow the law may never be known.



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The two organizations stated that the 22 million Bush-era e-mails had been mislabeled and thus were effectively lost. According to Kristen Lejniaks, an attorney for the National Security Archive, the Obama administration will be able to restore 94 calendar days of e-mail from backup tape. Another lawyer for the National Security Archive, Sheila Shadmand, stated that the Obama administration is putting forth a good effort to rectify "the electronic data mess left behind by the prior administration."

The lawsuits brought to light records indicating the Bush administration was aware of serious problems with their archiving system during the President's first term in office. The problems didn't become widely known until 2006 though, when federal prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald revealed them during his investigation of how the identity of CIA operative Valerie Plame was compromised.

Despite the recovery of the e-mails, the public won't be seeing them any time soon. They are subject to the U.S. National Archives' standard procedures for releasing presidential records, and thus the earliest they might be made available is 2014.

Meredith Fuchs, the National Security Archive's general counsel, noted that "many poor choices were made during the Bush administration and there was little concern about the availability of e-mail records despite the fact that they were contending with regular subpoenas for records and had a legal obligation to preserve their records."

The executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, Melanie Sloan, declared: "We may never discover the full story of what happened here. It seems like they just didn't want the e-mails preserved." Sloan added that the finding of the mislabeled e-mails "gives us confirmation that the Bush administration lied when they said no e-mails were missing."

For an administration that seemed bent on increasing surveillance over American citizens without cause and without warrants, the Bush White House seemed very averse to having its own activities monitored or recorded. Finding 22 million e-mails that were supposedly mislabeled by accident is not an



Written by [Steven J. DuBord](#) on December 16, 2009

inconsequential discovery.

It seems that the old adage about wondering who will watch the watchers applies here. Apparently President Bush wanted the power to snoop into everyone else's electronic communications without having his own being subject to scrutiny.

Before the Obama administration cries foul though, President Obama should rethink his support for the warrantless wiretapping program he has continued from the Bush era. Obama has no right to point fingers until he has done away with this program that is a clear violation of the U.S. Constitution — and "We the People's" right to privacy.

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