



Written by [Annalisa Pesek](#) on July 17, 2021

Arizona Audit: 74,000 Unaccounted-for Ballots. Is Decertification Coming?

As preliminary findings of the historic Maricopa County audit reveal substantial evidence of fraud during the 2020 presidential election, potentially altering the state's certified results from a Joe Biden to Donald Trump victory, Americans may finally be getting answers to what really happened in November 2020, gaining information that cannot be decried a "conspiracy theory."

On Thursday, Arizona Senate president Karen Fann held a [Senate hearing](#) — which not one mainstream media outlet covered — to provide an update on the months-long review of the roughly 2.1 million ballots cast in the state's largest county.

Accompanied by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Warren Petersen, Fann was issued reports during the nearly two-hour, live-streamed meeting by Ken Bennett, former Arizona secretary of state and Senate liaison for the audit, cybersecurity expert and CyFIR founder Ben Cotton, and Cyber Ninjas CEO Doug Logan.

Evidence presented outlined widespread discrepancies in ballot batch counts, as well as the mislabeling and mismanagement of ballot storage, including cut seals that were intended to ensure the validity of ballot batches. In addition, hundreds of mail-in ballots lack a chain of custody, images of envelopes with verifiable signatures are missing, and more than 74,000 counted mail-in ballots have "no evidence of ever being sent."

The discoveries made during the paper evaluation and voter data analysis parts of the audit — the forensic aspect is still underway — indicate Arizona may be the first state in the Union to decertify its 2020 presidential election results.

Likely to follow Arizona is Georgia, which is reporting its own [damning evidence](#) of fraud in Fulton County. Just today, Wisconsin lawmakers [announced plans](#) to seek a full forensic audit in the wake of the Georgia and Arizona updates. And the Republican-controlled Pennsylvania legislature also has requested a comprehensive review of election results but faces [intense pushback](#) from Democratic Governor Tom Wolf, who called a potential audit a "disgrace to democracy."

Biden prevailed in the state of Arizona by a mere 10,457 votes over Trump, yet the number of ballots in question today far surpasses the amount needed to declare Biden America's commander in chief.

These initial findings follow the completion of the full-hand recount of ballots cast in Maricopa County during the 2020 presidential and U.S. Senate races. That part of the review began in April and finished in late June.



Maricopa County ballots cast in the 2020 general election are examined and recounted / AP Images



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Now, as the Sarasota, Florida-based cybersecurity firm Cyber Ninjas concludes the forensic audit, the Arizona Senate is preparing for yet a third recount of its own, providing what the legislature hopes is a final measure of quality assurance to restore Arizonians' trust in the electoral process.

The Senate-led recount follows two audits by Maricopa County officials — which claimed the election was run seamlessly and fairly — and the current review by Cyber Ninjas, condemned by the Democrats as a “sham audit.”

In late June, Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs, a Democrat, [told CNN](#)'s Anderson Cooper: “I am concerned about what happens when this report comes out because we know, number one, the election that we certified — those certified results — are an accurate reflection of the will of the voters in Arizona and number two, there's nothing that can be done now to overturn the election even if this audit was valid.”

On Wednesday, Forbes [reported](#) that “Democrats in the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform — the main investigative arm of the U.S. House — have asked the company Cyber Ninjas to turn over a trove of documents as part of an investigation into the audit.”

While Hobbs may be right to say that the election cannot be overturned, Arizona could and — based on what is already known — absolutely *should* decertify its results, pending the final outcome of the completed audit.

What We Know So Far

During Thursday's hearing, Bennett remarked that “in many of the boxes we found very little existence of any ballot batch sheets that should be evidence of how many ballots were processed in the county's batches.” He continued, “Some batches had one ballot per batch; others had 1,000 ballots per batch.”

Bennett confirmed that it was not clear whether the unorthodox storage arrangement of ballots was a violation of any current state election procedure but suggested such procedures be closely examined and legislative reform carefully considered.

Moreover, Bennett noted hundreds of duplicate ballots were missing a serial number that should match or correspond to the original ballot.

“There may be some explanation as to why serial numbers get duplicated,” said Cyber Ninjas CEO Logan. “But so many of the issues we've encountered have made it very difficult, nearly impossible, to do the audit, and we are unable to say absolutely on many of these aspects.”

Noted Senator Petersen, “It is unfortunate the county has been recalcitrant [about working together]. It slows things down, it makes it more difficult and harder to get everything we need to finish the audit.... Some of these procedural things could be quickly addressed. If we don't get the items we are seeking, it will be an incomplete audit.”

To date, Maricopa County officials and Dominion have denied subpoenaed requests by the Senate for access to routers used during the election as well as specific passwords to the voting machines.

Describing the procedures of the forensic audit, cybersecurity expert Cotton stated that “not a single bit of data was ever changed on any device that came into our possession. We have a bit-for-bit image of these machines as we received them. We did not change or alter any information in the equipment; if there is a change it would have been administered by the county.”

Earlier this month, Secretary of State Hobbs claimed the voting machines could not be used in another



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election because they had been tampered with by the election review process. Thus, “Maricopa County will spend nearly \$3 million to replace voting equipment that officials say was permanently tainted by the Arizona Senate’s election review,” [reported](#) the Phoenix-based outlet AZCentral.

Yet on Thursday, Fann pointed out that “Before and after an election, people are called in to certify whether the machines were tampered with. How does it make sense that the machines cannot now be certified?”

“The state did a process to make sure the machines were not tampered with,” confirmed Petersen. “But if that process doesn’t work, because an audit can tamper with the machines, then we need to rethink this process.”

Why Is the County Withholding Information?

Maricopa County officials have maintained that the 2020 election was legitimate yet refuse to comply with the audit. Why? What are they hiding?

Despite not having access to the county routers and Dominion passwords, the auditors are in possession of the following:

- 385 Dominion ICP2 tabulators;
- The Maricopa County EMS server (election management server);
- Physical devices correlating to the EMS workstation function, the adjudication function; and
- Eleven hard drives that contain cloned images of the EMS system of those hard drives.

“We have not received the [county] router configuration files and the router data,” said Cotton.

“Bennett has been in conversations with county officials who can provide us with that information, but in May, the county refused to give over the information stating the data on the routers would compromise law enforcement and private citizen data.”

Asked why it is important to look at this equipment and devices, Cotton said:

There are a number of things that we know for a matter of fact that occurred [on November 3]. We know from public statements that an element of the election was breached. The registration server that was public facing did have external access, so it was breached. The county knows this was a breach, and in a letter, they authorized that there was illegal access to that server.

“From a public response standpoint,” noted Fann, “Maricopa County officials have stated the election system was a closed system, and therefore could not comingle with the data of the law enforcement agency. Now that they have responded to the subpoena that they will not comply with the order for the routers shows that what they have told the American people has in fact not been true.”

“If the county did its own audits,” said Cotton, “why was this information not reported? I don’t have their scope, but the firms who conducted the audit for the county did not do a forensic study.”

“[In] every audit I have been a part of, we have been able to ask questions,” said Logan. “That has not been the case here, as Maricopa County will not answer our questions. It’s very important to match up these ballots. From an audit standpoint, it’s important the batches match.”

Also vital to the audit are the security logs found on the county routers.



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Cotton argued that the “security log [in possession] only goes back to February 2021. It is set to roll to maintain the constraints on data space, so the newest data is added to the log and the oldest deleted.” He continued, “when you are doing a security check, it’s common to look for blank passwords. There are 37,000 queries done on March 11, [2021], and the reason we need the log is because these queries deleted previous data.”

Regarding the ballot paper examination, Logan stated, “We have utilized artifact detection, and ballots are designed to be calibrated within 100 percent and we made our [voting checkdox] 300 percent. The average ballot was 1,000 and the worst calibration was nearly 3,000. If the ballot is offset it can change the vote. We should not have a problem with bleed through; this is ensured by VoteSecure paper, which Maricopa says it used.”

Logan highly recommended canvassing voter data, noting that for 74,000 mail-in ballots, there is no clear record of whether the ballot was actually sent.

“There should be more EB [executive ballot] 32s,” said Logan. “When you are looking at the data you received from an FOIA [Freedom of Information Act] request, we are not seeing the equivalent of EB 32s and 33s that match and how would that information be verified.”

Will Americans Receive the Truth?

To complete the forensic audit and complete the report, the auditors said they need access to report logs, as well as access to changes to voter rolls to understand why changes took place and to explain the break in the chain of custody.

“We have to get the chain of custody and routers or reports and logs,” demanded Petersen. “We need to get the tokens to the machine to see how they were configured. We need to hear back to know for certain, and we need to get the envelopes for the mail ballots.”

“At no time have we inferred there were intentional misdoings here,” said Fann. “But we do need to have this information and ask these questions so the people of Arizona can know that they have a safe and secure ballot.”

Fann concluded, “I am guessing we will be going back to court with the county; I do not know why the county is fighting this, but we will move forward and help you get whatever you need to finish this audit.”



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