



Missing Clinton Administration Hard Drive

Updated May 28, 2009

Background: The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) learned in late March 2009 that an external hard drive containing copies of Clinton Administration Executive Office of the President (EOP) data was missing from a NARA processing room. The external drive was being used for routine recopying to ensure preservation of the records. Approximately 113 4mm tape cartridges were copied onto a two terabyte Western Digital MY BOOK external hard drive. This small portable hard drive measures 6.5 x 2.1 x 5.4 inches and weighs 2.5 pounds.

Questions and Answers

1. How long has the hard drive been missing?

The missing hard drive was last seen sometime between October 2008 and the first week of February and was discovered missing on or about March 24, 2009.

2. Are the Clinton Administration records that were stored on the Hard Drive permanently lost?

No original records have been lost. NARA has the original tapes and a backup hard drive.

3. How did NARA learn that the hard drive was missing?

Work on examining the hard drive was halted because the processing office wanted to investigate using automated tools to generate inspection reports. This would have reduced the amount of time that staff needed to spend validating the data on the hard drive. Staff time was shifted to other projects until an acceptable automated tool was found in mid March. Staff discovered the hard drive was missing when the hard drive analysis project restarted.

4. What are the records on the hard drive?

The 4mm tapes that were copied onto the hard drive generally comprised “snapshots” of the contents of hard drives of departing EOP employees, and therefore contain a mix of system and working files. The drive contains both federal and Presidential records, depending on which EOP office the files came from.

5. What types of personally identifying information (PII) was stored on the hard drive?

Because some of the EOP offices engaged in personnel related work (e.g., the Office of Administration and the Presidential Personnel Office (PPO)) or maintained electronic files containing privacy information, such as White House entry information or electronic address books, the external drive contains personally identifying information (PII), including names and social security numbers for former Clinton Administration staff and visitors to the White House complex.

6. What steps were taken when the hard drive was discovered missing?

NARA staff members began a comprehensive search for the missing hard drive on March 24. When the staff concluded that the hard drive could not be found, they informed NARA senior officials on April 2, 2009, including the Acting Archivist of the United States, the Inspector General (IG), and the Senior Agency Official for Privacy/General Counsel. NARA's Inspector General then opened a criminal investigation. NARA also informed the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team of the Department of Homeland Security, the White House Counsel's Office, staff of our House and Senate Oversight Committees, and the representative of former President Clinton.

7. What actions will NARA take regarding the individuals who may have had their personally identifying information (PII) compromised?

NARA will notify these individuals of the potential breach and will provide them with a year of credit monitoring. NARA is currently reviewing the data on a copy of the missing hard drive to compile a list of those individuals who may have had their personal information compromised. Because of the extremely large volume of data on the drive, we do not know yet the number of individuals whose privacy has been affected. As individuals are identified, they will be notified.

8. What is the National Archives doing about the situation?

NARA has taken several steps to improve internal controls in the following areas: physical control of records, office access, and treatment of personally identifiable information (PII).

9. Was the hard drive stolen? We do not know whether the drive was stolen, lost, or otherwise misplaced. NARA's Inspector General is conducting a criminal investigation. NARA will offer a reward of up to \$50,000 for information that leads to the recovery of the drive. Anyone with information concerning the missing external hard drive should call the United States Secret Service Washington Field Office at 202-406-8800. This Hot Line is manned and operated by representatives of the United States Secret Service.

10. How can I find out more information concerning this breach? For more information you may wish to contact the NARA Breach Response Call Line, which can be reached at 1-877-281-0771 or 301-837-3769. Alternatively, you may contact us via e-mail at breach_response@nara.gov or by mail in Room 3110 at the address above. Someone from NARA will respond to your inquiry.