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POLITICSNATIONAL SECURITY

National Archives Says Some Trump Administration Records Are Still Missing

Some White House staff had conducted business that wasn't forwarded to official electronic accounts, archives says



By *Siobhan Hughes* [Follow](#)

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WASHINGTON—The National Archives and Records Administration said that it hasn't recovered all the presidential records that were supposed to be turned over at the end of the Trump administration.

Some White House staff had conducted official business using accounts that weren't forwarded to their official electronic accounts, the National Archives said in a Sept. 30 letter to House Oversight and Reform Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney (D., N.Y.).

“While there is no easy way to establish absolute accountability, we do know that we do not have custody of everything we should,” acting Archivist of the United States Debra Steidel Wall wrote.





The National Archives' efforts to obtain records after the chaotic last days of the Trump administration—both presidential records from everyday business and classified material—have been in the spotlight since the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Aug. 8 search of former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. The archives obtained one box of papers from Mr. Trump in January; others were handed over in June before the FBI seized another tranche of material in August.

The archives had told Ms. Maloney in February that some electronic records from former Trump White House officials were missing. In the new letter, the archivist wrote, "NARA has been able to obtain such records from a number of former officials and will continue to pursue the return of similar types of Presidential records from former officials."

The letter also said that, as appropriate, the National Archives would consult with the Justice Department on whether to initiate action to recover records that may have been removed in potential violation of the Presidential Records Act.

Still, the National Archives declined to say whether Mr. Trump had turned over all presidential records. Ms. Maloney had pressed Ms. Steidel Wall to obtain a written certification from Mr. Trump that he had surrendered all presidential records or classified materials, hadn't made any copies, and hadn't turned the documents over to anyone other than the archives or the Justice Department.

"We respectfully refer you to the Department of Justice in light of its ongoing investigation," Ms. Steidel Wall wrote in the letter.

The letter came in response to a query from Ms. Maloney, who last month had asked her whether any Trump administration presidential records remained unaccounted for.

“Former President Trump and his senior staff have shown an utter disregard for the rule of law and our national security by failing to return presidential records as the law requires,” Ms. Maloney said in a statement on Saturday. “I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that all presidential records from the Trump White House are returned to the custody of the government and to make sure these abuses never happen again.”

A spokesman for Mr. Trump didn’t immediately respond to a request for comment.

Under the Presidential Records Act, the immediate staff of the president, the vice president and anyone whose function is to advise or assist either of those two executives must copy or forward to their official account any record created on a personal account.

The National Archives has a complex task in gaining custody of all the presidential records it is supposed to hold on behalf of the American public, based on a review of document handling through Mr. Trump’s four-year term. But it could have a greater advantage in accounting for classified material because of a meticulous record-keeping system that has traditionally been in place at the National Security Council, The Wall Street Journal has previously reported.

The Justice Department’s effort to investigate documents seized at Mr. Trump’s Florida estate has gotten bogged down in a legal battle between the former president and the federal government. A federal judge last month appointed a respected retired judge, known as a “special master,” to independently review the documents the FBI seized, including those marked classified.

While the Justice Department recently scored a win when an appeals court said it could resume reviewing roughly 100 documents marked as classified, the Justice Department is seeking to fast-track its appeal of the broader ruling, trying to challenge U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon’s decision to halt the criminal investigation for months so that the special master could review evidence.

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