

Notes of May 21, 2007, Meeting with White House on Email Issues:

NARA attendees:

Lew Bellardo  
Gary M. Stern  
Sharon Fawcett  
Nancy Smith  
Sam Watkins  
Bob Spangler

White House attendees:

Chris Oprison, Associate White House Counsel  
Al Lichtman, Associate White House Counsel  
Phil Droege, Director, White House Office of Records Management (WHORM)  
Teresa Payton, Office of Administration Chief Information Officer  
Linda Gambatesa, Deputy Assistant to the President for Management Administration and  
Oval Office Operations  
Al Swindeman, Director, Office of Administration  
Liz Medalia, General Counsel, Office of Administration  
Keith Roberts, Deputy General Counsel, Office of Administration

Primary purpose of the meeting was to get a briefing from Office of Administration on the status of the problem relating to alleged missing White House emails from the EOP email system.

Chris Oprison explained that they believe the problem relates to gaps in emails on the EOP system from late 2003 to late 2005, but they could not assure that the problem does not extend beyond that timeframe, and even into the present. They first became aware of the issue of gaps in emails, i.e., not being properly archived, in 2005.

Their current process is that they are using Microsoft Exchange and then saving these emails to Personal Information Store (PST) file.<sup>1</sup> They also have disaster recovery tapes, i.e., backup tapes. They have identified approximately 27,000 such backup tapes covering that period, and they have not been recycling tapes since 2003. Their current belief is that the problem occurs only in the PST files that are supposed to be saving emails from MS Exchange/Outlook.

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<sup>1</sup> "PST" refers to a "Personal Information Store" file, an export of a single individual's mailbox from the email system. My understanding is that in lieu of ARMS-managed email like we have received in the past, EOP plans to supply PST files as a primary means of email export and transfer. It is in situations where that PST export process may not have been properly executed that backup tapes would be used instead. The backup tapes would include the entire server-based information store (i.e., *everybody's* email), so the equivalent of individual PST files would have to be exported from those backups in a separate reconstruction effort.

They stated that they currently do not believe that the ARMS emails, dating mostly from 2001-2003, have this gap problem (and ARMS continues to ingest the very small amount of LotusNotes emails that continue to be in operation).

Within the next month they are going to complete an audit of the PST files to determine the full extent of the problem. But they also stated that they expect to have an action plan ready by the end of the summer. We asked that they brief us when the audit is complete, and not wait for the action plan.

We asked if they could give us any more specifics on what they know so far: e.g., volume of missing email; whether it is particular to specific "buckets" representing particular EOP offices; does it involve both federal and presidential emails? They said that they could not at this point answer any of these questions. We asked them to confirm currently how many email systems existed for Bush EOP emails. They said there are two ARMS/Lotus Notes and the PST/Microsoft exchange systems.

We then asked about the RNC email issue. They are working with the RNC and looking at this issue. They stated that the RNC server is now fixed so that this will not happen again, and that the RNC has the old servers. They are exploring how they will try to capture the Presidential record emails. RNC has a list of people to which this issue would speak, back to 2002. This will be a separate restoration effort from the EOP email restoration.

They also stated that they were talking to EOP stakeholders to determine whether to implement Documentum as the prospective records management application for email. Sam offered to work with them on reviewing requirements and concept of operations documentation.

Chris asked what was NARA's bottom line interest? We said that at the end of the Administration, we wanted a complete set of Bush emails in a format that we could accept into ERA. We stressed that if they determine they need to do tape restorations projects (TRP) to recover missing emails, it needs to begin as soon as possible, so that they could complete it before the end of the Administration. Chris noted that a restoration project that involved de-duplication would be extremely expensive. We noted that Congress can fund the restoration project, just as it did during the Clinton Administration. Sam also offered that he still had contacts with the persons and contractors who did the Clinton TRP.

We agreed that even while the audit of the email system is ongoing, we should move ahead as quickly as possible with meetings for transition planning, including a specific meeting with the photo office, given the unusually large size of the digital photo collection (up to 100 terabytes). [The transition meeting is tentatively scheduled for the week of June 4.]

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