

# Throughout his presidency and following the failed coup, Trump illegally burned, shredded and hid White House documents

Jacob Crosse  
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New articles in the *Washington Post* have revealed that former President Donald Trump made numerous and likely illegal efforts to conceal and destroy White House records throughout his presidency and following his failed January 6, 2021, coup attempt.

On Monday, the *Post* reported, citing “three people familiar with the visit,” that Trump had “improperly removed multiple boxes from the White House” and kept them at his Florida compound for over a year. The documents in the boxes included memos, letters, notes, emails and other written communications, no doubt many of them implicating Trump and others in criminal activities.

The report claimed that representatives from the National Archives and Records Administration seized the documents from Trump’s compound last month.

Some of the items recovered from Trump’s complex and described by the *Post* include his correspondence with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un as well as a letter to him left by his predecessor, President Barack Obama. While Trump has never disclosed the contents of the letter left by Obama, following Trump’s election in 2016 the outgoing president had declared from the Rose Garden of the White House: “This is an intramural scrimmage ... We’re all on the same team.”

The news of Trump shielding documents at his resort/compound follows a report Saturday from the *Post* which enumerated Trump’s efforts to destroy documents. It cited “11 former Trump staffers, associates and others” who claimed Trump’s attempts to destroy records was “far more widespread and indiscriminate than previously known.”

Despite being warned multiple times by lawyers and staffers, including chiefs of staff Reince Priebus and

John Kelly, not to destroy documents, Trump persisted in the practice throughout his presidency.

Trump’s efforts to shield and destroy records are a clear violation of the Presidential Records Act. The legislation, which requires the president and his staff to retain all records, was passed by Congress in 1974 in the wake of the Watergate scandal and the resignation of Richard M. Nixon. Speaking to the *Post* on Trump’s activities, presidential historian Robert David Johnson said, “Since Nixon, there is no example of a president just pretending the law doesn’t exist.”

It is unclear exactly how many documents Trump destroyed. There is no question that some will never be recovered. Speaking to the *Post*, James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association, said, “We don’t know how much of it was or was not successfully taped back together.”

One source speaking to the *Post* hypothesized, “hundreds ... if not more, were likely torn up.” Another claimed that staff at the National Archives were “stunned” at the “unprecedented” number of documents received by the Archives that had been ripped to shreds.

A former “senior Trump White House official” told the *Post* that he and other White House staffers “frequently put documents into ‘burn bags’ to be destroyed, rather than preserving them, and would decide themselves what should be saved and what should be burned.”

Staffers described the routine work of White House officials dumping the contents of the “burn bags” onto a table in order to sift through, reconfigure and preserve necessary documents.

“He didn’t want a record of anything,” a former

senior Trump official told the *Post*. “He never stopped ripping things up. Do you really think Trump is going to care about the records act? Come on.”

In spite of Trump’s efforts, it has been revealed that among the documents transferred to the committee in the last month include two unsigned draft executive orders. The documents directed the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security, respectively, to seize voting machines and electronic records on the basis of lies about “foreign interference” in the 2020 election.

Also turned over to the committee were seven slates of fraudulent electors, submitted by pro-Trump Republican officials in Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, and held in the National Archives. The fake electors scheme was concocted by Trump coup lawyers Rudy Giuliani, Sidney Powell, Jenna Ellis and law professor John Eastman. The coup plan called for Vice President Mike Pence to use the pretext of the “competing electors” to refuse to certify the election on January 6.

Last week the National Archives announced in a letter that the agency would begin turning over some of former Vice President Mike Pence’s official records. Several of Pence’s aides and former staff, such as former Chief of Staff Marc Short and legal counsel Greg Jacob, have already testified before the House select committee.

The existence of these documents, and the efforts by Trump and his staff to shield them from public view, have further confirmed Trump’s efforts to hide the evidence of his campaign to overturn the election of Joe Biden. That these records were missing for over a year, but only recently reported as missing, testifies to the ongoing cover-up of Trump’s coup within the US government as whole.

More than eight months after its creation by Congress, the select committee has held one public hearing, last July, during which the Democrats alternated between heaping praise on the police and celebrating Wyoming Republican Rep. Liz Cheney, daughter of war-criminal Dick Cheney and warmonger in her own right, as a paragon of patriotism and a model of “bipartisanship.” Despite promising to hold “public prime-time hearings” beginning in February, the select committee has yet to announce those, or any other “business meetings,” as of this writing.



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