

Clinton On Emails: I Should Have Used The Government Account

BY KEN THOMAS AND JULIE PACE
Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS — Confronting a growing political furor, Hillary Rodham Clinton conceded Tuesday it was a mistake to exclusively use private email as secretary of state, but she defiantly rejected accusations that she created a security risk or violated the law. She also defended getting rid of tens of thousands of personal emails.

"I fully complied with every rule I was governed by," Clinton said in a 20-minute news conference that marked her first comments on the controversy.

Clinton's acknowledgment that she deleted emails she described as personal in nature is likely to fuel further criticism from Republicans who see the matter as harmful to the former secretary of state's all-but-certain presidential campaign. Because Clinton's emails were run off a personal server that she does not intend to turn over to the government, there is no way to independently verify the content of the discarded emails.

Clinton said she had exchanged about 60,000 emails in her four years as President Barack Obama's secretary of state. Half were work-related and none contained classified information, she said.

The controversy has presented a major test for Clinton and upended her careful blueprint for the rollout of her campaign. The clear front-runner for the Democratic nomination, Clinton had planned to spend March touting her work on women's issues and giving a handful of paid speeches before announcing her candidacy in early April.

Instead, she found herself standing before dozens of reporters at the United Nations addressing a matter that has revived questions of ethics and secrecy that have long trailed Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton. Her appearance came after her previously scheduled speech on women's rights at the UN. Before Tuesday's news



Former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton addresses the press after attending the annual Women's Empowerment Principles event at UN headquarters in New York on Tuesday. The potential 2016 U.S. presidential contender defended her use of a personal email account for official communications, saying it was "for convenience."

conference, Clinton's only comment on the email disclosures had been a late-night tweet last week saying she wanted the State Department to make her emails public. Her decision to weigh in further came as Democratic allies began publicly pushing her to do so.

Asked whether the email disclosures would affect her presidential ambitions, Clinton said, "I trust the American people to make their decisions about political and public matters."

The Republican Party's leading presidential prospects had no immediate response to Clinton's explanations. But in a signal that the issue was unlikely to fade soon, Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus blasted Clinton's comments as "completely disingenuous."

"No one but Hillary Clinton knows if she handed over every relevant email," Priebus said.

Clinton's comments also appeared unlikely to quell efforts by GOP lawmakers to use the matter to bolster their investigation into the deaths of four Americans at a U.S. facility in Benghazi, Libya, in 2012. Following the news conference, Rep. Trey Gowdy, the South Carolina

Republican leading the committee, said he planned to call her to testify at least twice.

A central question for Clinton over the past week has been why she chose not to use government email if she wasn't trying to skirt federal rules that require officials' communications to be archived.

She described her use of personal email as a matter of "convenience" and a way to avoid carrying two devices. She said that didn't appear to be an issue at the time, but that in hindsight, it would have been "smarter" to use a government account as well as her personal one.

Last month, Clinton told an audience in Silicon Valley that she uses multiple electronic devices.

"I have an iPad, a mini-iPad, an iPhone and a BlackBerry," Clinton said.

The email controversy stems from reports last week that Clinton had exclusively used both a private email address and a private server while at the State Department.

Clinton said repeatedly Tuesday that she had taken "unprecedented steps" to provide the State Department her work-related communications. She described the missing personal emails as ones

she wrote about her daughter's wedding, her mother's funeral, her yoga routine and other similar matters.

"No one wants their personal emails made public, and I think most people understand that and respect privacy," she said.

Clinton left the Obama administration in early 2013, but didn't turn over her written communications for nearly two years and only in response to a State Department request.

The email disclosures have raised questions about whether she fully complied with federal laws requiring government officials to preserve written communications involving official business. While Clinton insisted Tuesday that she was not violating any rules, she does appear to have gone against what the Obama White House has called "very specific guidance" that officials should use government email to conduct business.

She said she emailed her State Department colleagues on their government accounts and therefore expected her communications would be archived. She provided no evidence to support her assertions that her email system experienced no security breaches.

New Low In Relations Between Obama, Congressional GOP

BY JULIE PACE AND ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Relations between President Barack Obama and congressional Republicans have hit a new low.

There has been little direct communication between Obama and the GOP leadership on Capitol Hill since Republicans took full control of Congress in January. Obama has threatened to veto more than a dozen Republican-backed bills. And House Speaker John Boehner infuriated the White House by inviting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress without consulting the administration first.

But the dispute over Obama's high-stakes nuclear negotiations with Iran has put the relationship perhaps beyond repair.

The president and his advisers are seething over Republican efforts to undermine the sensitive discussions with Iran, most recently by sending an "open letter" to the country's leaders warning that any nuclear deal could expire the day Obama walks out of the Oval Office. "I cannot recall another instance in which senators wrote directly to advise another country — much less a longtime foreign adversary — that the president does not have the constitutional authority to reach a meaningful understanding with them," Vice President Joe Biden, who spent nearly four decades in the Senate, said in an unusually harsh statement.

For their part, Republican lawmakers call their outreach to a hostile nation a reasonable response to an

administration they say has spurned Congress and ignored its prerogatives at every turn. It's the starkest sign yet that Republicans see an adversary, not a potential partner, in Obama's White House — even on foreign policy issues where partisan differences have traditionally been somewhat muted.

"The mutual efforts to work together under this administration have just disappeared, so I think there's a sense now that extraordinary things occasionally need to happen to be sure that the president understands how strongly the Congress feels," said Sen. Roy Blunt, R-Mo.

The dismal state of the relationship has largely sunk the slim prospects for bipartisan cooperation in Obama's final two years in office, with one exception being work on international trade agreements that the White House and Republicans have long supported. And with Obama firmly eyeing his legacy, even his own advisers have conceded that a president who took office vowing to bridge partisan divides is virtually powerless to influence his political opponents.

"We don't have the ability to communicate with them," Dan Pfeiffer, Obama's recently departed senior adviser, said in an interview with New York magazine. "They are talking to people who agree with them, they are listening to news outlets that reinforce that point of view, and the president is probably the person with the least ability to break into that because of the partisan bias there."

Not surprisingly, each side blames the other for letting things get so bad.

Ukrainian Town: A City Of Ruins

BY NATALIYA VASILYEVA
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DEBALTSEVE, Ukraine — When the wind picks up, the rattle of the corrugated iron roof of a destroyed gas station can sound like artillery. Four charred tanks sit stranded nearby, machine oil splattered on the ground, while a pick-up truck lies on its side surrounded by shrapnel.

Debaltsve, the center of one of the fiercest battles of Ukraine's war, lies in ruins three weeks after it was captured by Russia-backed separatists.

The struggle for the strategic rail hub — a sleepy town with a pre-war population of 25,000 people — became one of the darkest pages in the ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has already killed more than 6,000 people. The town is crucial because it provides a direct link between the two main rebel cities of Donetsk and Luhansk. So vital was the prize that the ceasefire deal brokered by Russia, Ukraine and Western powers did nothing to slow the rebel onslaught.

At least 179 Ukrainian troops were killed in the battle, along with uncounted hundreds of civilians.

Heavy artillery rained down on Debaltsve for one month beginning in mid-January. Those four weeks wreaked such devastation that the whole town has been turned into one heap of rubble.

Today it is as unrecognizable as the streets next to the Donetsk airport where fighting raged for nine months. Entire blocks of flats in Debaltsve are deserted, the sun shining through the upper floors as if the roof had been blown away by a tornado.

The only crowded place at Debaltsve on a recent morning was a grocery store where rebels distributed free bread: one loaf per person. Of about 100 people in line, most were old and frail and appeared not to have washed for days. At the railroad station, a few yards away, a Grad rocket was stuck in a refrigerator car. Some power lines were snapped, hanging from the poles like branches of a willow tree.

Across the road, a burly man in a black Cossack hat gave orders to his subordinates as he sat outside an orange tent pitched on the main town square. Rebel emergency workers have been working in these tents since their forces captured the city on Feb. 18, helping local residents with blankets and water and charging mobile phones. Alexander Afendikov, the city's self-appointed mayor, said they are trying to return Debaltsve to normal life as quickly as possible.

"Every house has been if not destroyed, then damaged," Afendikov said. "Ninety-nine percent of the glazing has been shattered."

Jury: Pharrell, Thicke Copied Gaye Song

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A jury awarded Marvin Gaye's children nearly \$7.4 million Tuesday after determining singers Robin Thicke and Pharrell Williams copied their father's music to create "Blurred Lines," the biggest hit song of 2013.

Gaye's daughter Nona Gaye wept as the verdict was read and was hugged by her attorney.

"Right now, I feel free," she said outside court. "Free from ... Pharrell Williams and Robin Thicke's chains and what they tried to keep on us and the lies that were told."

The verdict could tarnish the legacy of Williams, a reliable hit-maker who has won Grammy Awards and appears on NBC's music competition show "The Voice."

He and Thicke are "undoubtedly disappointed," said their lead attorney, Howard King.

Racist Video Threatens University

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Almost a generation ago, the University of Oklahoma set out to raise its profile, seeking to build a regional school that served mostly students from the Southwest into a leading institution that attracted top scholars.

President David Boren made striking progress, achieving a reputation that now extends well beyond the Sooners football team that once defined the campus. But those improvements seem in peril after members of a fraternity were caught on video chanting a racial slur. The chant referenced lynching and indicated black students would never be admitted to OU's chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon.

Boren, a former Oklahoma governor and U.S. senator, acted swiftly. He immediately severed ties with the fraternity and ordered members to vacate their house. On Tuesday, he expelled the two students who appeared to be leading the chant for creating a hostile educational environment and promised others involved would face discipline.

"I have emphasized that there is zero tolerance for this kind of threatening racist behavior at the University of Oklahoma," Boren said in a statement.

Since taking the helm of the state's flagship university more than 20 years ago, Boren has made ambitious efforts to recruit top students and faculty.

France Mourns Deaths Of Its Athletes

VILLA CASTELLI, Argentina (AP) — Investigators picked through the wreckage of two helicopters Tuesday, removing cellphones, bits of paper and other charred and unrecognizable items, as France mourned the loss of prominent athletes in the dual crash in the Andean foothills.

The eight French nationals and two Argentine pilots on the two aircraft were killed when they collided and burst into flames shortly after taking off Monday near the remote settlement of Villa Castelli in northwestern Argentina.

Among the victims were Olympic champion swimmer Camille Muffat, Olympic bronze-medalist boxer Alexis Vastine and pioneering sailor Florence Arthaud. They were contestants on the reality TV show "Dropped," which was being shot in the sparsely populated region.

Expressions of grief poured in from French athletes and officials, including President Francois Hollande, who said he felt "immense sadness." The International Olympic Committee announced it would fly its flag at half-staff for three days.

French officials said they would work with Argentine investigators to determine the cause of the accident.

Obama Clamps Down On Student Loans

ATLANTA (AP) — Issuing a clarion call to Americans saddled by student debt, President Barack Obama urged student borrowers Tuesday to stand up for their rights, and announced a medley of modest steps to bring some order to a notoriously chaotic system.

Obama unveiled his "student aid bill of rights" before a gymnasium packed with nearly 10,000 students at Georgia Tech, where he said the nation must mobilize to bring about deeper changes to student loans. Not only should every American be able to afford college, Obama said, they also should be able to afford the loan payments that kick in with a vengeance once they graduate.

"We're trying to tackle this problem from every angle," Obama said. "We want to make this experience more affordable, because you're not just investing in yourselves, you're investing in your nation."

In the Oval Office ahead of his brief visit to Atlanta, Obama signed a presidential memorandum with policy tweaks that don't require new legislation from Congress — a plus as far as the White House is concerned. The memo targets third parties like Navient — formerly Sallie Mae — that contract with the government to collect on loans. Those companies will be required to better inform borrowers about repayment options and notify them when they are delinquent, the White House said.

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