

gwb43.com for dummies

Submitted by [lambert](#) on Tue, 04/03/2007 - 10:15am

Departments:

[Department of Now It All Makes Sense](#) [1]

Thread:

[Republicans vs. the Constitution](#) [2]

[Republican Lawbreaking](#) [3]

Tags:

[Karl Rove](#) [4]

[gwb43.com](#) [5]

[UPDATE Now this story [makes the LA Times](#) [6].]

Why are we all so obsessed with [the \[the doctored image of a\] Coptix brochure Rove carried at Porkers](#) [7]? (Love the name!) Let's dolly back and look at the big picture, because the technical details are obscuring the real story. Because, as always, it would be irreponsible not to speculate.

The bottom line: Rove is trying to out-Nixon Nixon. Nixon didn't destroy the tapes. But already, Rove *may* have destroyed his email (or at least put it beyond the reach of any discovery process*). Put yourself in Karl's shoes:

You're Karl Rove. You want to put all your email beyond the rule of law.

[Specifically, you want to put your email beyond the reach of [the Presidential Records Act](#) [8], which "ensures that a complete historical record will be transmitted to the national Archives and preserved after a President?s term in office has ended.]

So what do you do? You decide to privatize your email.

[Isn't this behavior rather remarkable?]

You take several steps.

1. First, you don't use a public, government domain for your email. You use a private domain owned by the Republican National Committee (RNC): [gwb43.com](#), for [over 90% of your mail](#) [9] (citing National Journal).

[Isn't this behavior rather remarkable? When I was in my corporate cube, I certainly didn't consider telling all my contacts, inside the corporation or out, "Oh, I use my Yahoo account for all my business, not the corporate account." Ignoring the fact that the IT department would be very unhappy about the security breach, anyone might think that I wanted to prevent all my mail from ever appearing in the corporate archives! And corporations tend to be unhappy about that, because anyone who does that can't be held accountable for what they do in the corporation's name. Until the indictments arrive, of course.]

2. Second, you make sure that mailserver that sends, receives, and archives your mail is not under public control, but under private control. This you accomplish by using servers under the control of your party at the Republican National Committee.

[Isn't this behavior rather remarkable? As I understand it, governments generally take great care to make sure that high level communications are secure** -- and the White House is at the highest level, and Rove is a high official, involved in every aspect of government policy, both foreign and domestic. If the RNC servers are "hardened" against intrusions from foreign intelligence agencies, that's a security breach in itself; that knowledge should surely be highly classified, and not in the hands of the system administrators of a campaign organization. And if the RNC servers are *not* hardened, then Rove's behavior is a massive security breach.]

Privatizing your email archives has a number of advantages, too. First, if you are subpoenaed for any *White House* records (as in that pesky Fitzgerald investigation) you can say, truthfully, that there are no such records *in the White House*--because, of course, they are on the RNC servers. Second, the archives can be wiped--one would assume--with a single, untraceable phone call.

3. Third, you find a private company (Coptix ^[10]) that you've done campaign work with to administer the nameservers that will route your mail to gwb43.com from whoever sent it. (All email works that way.) This nameserver, too, then, is under control of somebody beholden to you, for all the reasons that the mailserver is.

[Isn't this behavior rather remarkable? After all, the government does have nameservers--nameservers that are secure, too, and won't let pesky bloggers use whois to trace.]

Note that all the facts outlined in steps 1, 2, and 3 -- the private gwb43.com domain, the private RNC servers, and the private nameservers -- all already matters of public record, and not just in the blogosphere, either.

Note also that the photograph that we have of Rove with the brochure of gwb43.com's nameserver company (step #3, *supra*) strongly suggests Rove's *personal* involvement in privatizing his email.

However, remarkable though the facts in this case surely are, nobody--at least in the press--is trying to connect them and hazard even a guess as to what they might be. Granted that since the story is Rovian, it's insanely obfuscated from a technical and a business standpoint. But shouldn't somebody at least be trying?

So let me try to connect--only connect--once more once:

My narrative goes this way:

Rove wanted to put all White House electronic communication beyond the rule of law. So he privatized it (steps 1, 2, and 3, *supra*). End of story. And if we can get our hands on it, the whole secret history of the administration will be ours.

We in the blogosphere have been after the details of how the privatization was done: the vendors and the technical detail. Because God is in the details. We're doing today's equivalent of analyzing the magnetic patterns on the reels from Nixon's taping system).

But this is not a technical story, any more than Watergate was a story about tape decks. It's a story of how a Presidency is systematically putting itself beyond the rule of law.

NOTES

* I find it hard to believe that Rove would wipe *everything*. The data is simply too good to let go; think of the blackmail potential alone. What he might do is transfer the live archives onto a DVD, then wipe the live archives. Rove would have to believe that nobody else is thinking the same way, though. For this and other reasons, data is a lot harder to destroy than one would think. But that wouldn't prevent Rove from trying.

** It would be the irony of ironies if the NSA's massive warrantless email surveillance program picked up Rove's traffic at gwb43.com. Or maybe that traffic was put on a stop-list so NSA didn't read it? Somebody should find out about that.

NOTE Hat tip to Xan for the headline.

UPDATE What Congress needs to do is subpoena all the mail at gwb43.com. Violations of the Presidential Records Act would be a good reason.

What the press needs to do is find the Alexander Butterfield, because there is one. Data doesn't move from point A to point B my magic; people set up the systems to do it. A system administrator who's knowledgeable in these private transactions would be ideal. And now you know the vendors to start with.

UPDATE On rereading this, I'm not completely clear where the RNC servers are physically located. Would a traceroute help? Readers?

UPDATE In terms of the indictments, commenter [Blueskize](#) [11] reminds us of an important point that I should have included:

The big question here is whether official WH correspondence sent via unofficial email addresses are being archived as required by law. J. Scott Jennings was clearly acting in an official capacity when he corresponded via gwb43.com with Kyle Sampson at DOJ.

[UPDATE Welcome, [Wonkette readers](#) [12]. Note that what follows is all a matter of public record. It is in no way dependent on the [doctored photo and disinformation](#) [13] planted by Coptix in a classic Rovian ploy. In fact, the ploy may have been designed to distract attention from this information. Xan explains:

This is a prime example of a Rovian-red-cape-waving operation, exactly the same in purpose and almost identical in style to the way they managed to chop off the investigation into Bush's desertion from the Texas Air National Guard.

The objective is to get everybody distracted with what looks like the "smoking gun" piece of evidence, and then prove that that evidence is fake. The fact that they made the fake themselves is supposed to get lost in the shuffle as the whole underlying story is discredited.

The guys who planted this disinformation keep changing their stories. It's an April Fool's joke that ran from March 30 to April 4. It's a practical joke. They're mad because the RNC got revealed as their client for gwb43com.s nameserving. It's a viral marketing ploy. With Republicans, changing stories mean just one thing: [They're lying](#) [13].

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[3] http://www.correntewire.com/thread/republican_lawbreaking

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[11] <http://www.thecarpetbaggerreport.com/archives/10226.html#comment-199695>

[12] <http://wonkette.com/politics/top/about-that-karl-rove-picture-with-the-sleestaks--249411.php>

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