

# Parsing Clinton: Deflection, Deception, and Untruths



Hillary Clinton.(Bryan Thomas/Getty Images)

August 13, 2015 Having covered Bill and Hillary Clinton since the mid-1980s in Arkansas, it's not hard for me to imagine this conversation taking place at her campaign headquarters.

**Aide No. 1:** "Hillary's numbers are tanking. People don't like her. They don't trust her. What do we do?"

**Aide No. 2:** "Spin harder."

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**Aide No. 1:** "On it."

And out spews [these talking points](#) from Clinton communications director Jennifer Palmieri—650 words of deception, deflection, and untruths.

**"You might hear some news over the next few days about Hillary Clinton's emails. There's a lot of misinformation, so bear with us; the truth matters on this."**

Yes, it does. Go on.

**"Like other secretaries of State who served before her, Hillary used a personal email address, and the rules of the State Department permitted it."**

Unlike past secretaries of State, Clinton is running for president. When she took office in 2009, the government was still grappling with how to regulate email's growing dominance in public and private communications.

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While the State Department allowed the use of home computers in 2009, agency rules required that email be secured. Just nine months into Clinton's term, new regulations required that her emails be captured on department servers.

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Excellent!"

*Rick, Executive Director for Policy*

Her emails were not secured or captured on department servers. Tens of thousands were deleted.

In addition to skirting federal regulations, Clinton set a precedent that threatens the public memory. Archiving email on government servers preserves the actions and decision-making of public officials for release under the Freedom of Information Act, for congressional oversight, and for historical research. Clinton's actions are an assault on the principles of transparency and accountability.

Why is there no explicit prohibition on the exclusive use of a private server? Because, before Clinton, no public servant had the gall to use one. Her motive is unknown. While she said the goal was to avoid carrying multiple devices, Clinton joked this year that she was "two steps short of a hoarder. So I have an iPad, a mini iPad, and a Blackberry."

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(In March, a Clinton loyalist and credible source told me the email issue was relevant because of what it might reveal about the [Clinton Foundation](#), where gobs of corporate and foreign money mingle with the Clintons' charitable, personal, and political interests. "Follow the foundation money," the source said.)

**"Last year, as part of a review of their records, the State Department asked the last four former secretaries of State to provide any work-related emails they had."**

Palmieri makes this sound like a standard review. In fact, it was the result of a congressional investigation into the infamous Benghazi raid. Had it not been for the investigation, Clinton's rogue email operation likely would have remained secret.

**"... more than 30,000 emails. In fact, she handed over too many ..."**

Whoa, if true. Unfortunately, she didn't hand over enough.

More emails were deleted by Clinton than returned to government archives. Under [political and legal pressure](#), she finally gave the FBI her server this week. Her attorney says it has been wiped clean. How convenient.

**"No information in her emails was marked classified at the time she sent or received them."**

Not necessarily a lie. Definitely not the truth.

In March, she pledged unequivocally, "There is no classified material." Only after that was discovered to be false did Clinton and her team add the "*marked classified at the time*" caveat.

In other words, the integrity of "*There is no classified material*" depends on the meaning of "is." Clinton herself tried to redefine the truth last week ("[Parsing Clinton: What Is She Hiding?](#)").

What Clinton doesn't want you to know:

—Federal rules put the onus on government officials like the secretary of State to protect classified material, even when it's not marked as such.

—Government officials have been [convicted](#) of mishandling *unmarked* classified material.

—Any chain of events or excuses that led to the disclosure of these documents begins with Clinton's decision to go rogue with government email.

**"There is absolutely no criminal inquiry into Hillary's email or email server."**

The FBI is not calling it a criminal investigation. Clinton has not been named a target.

And yet: There is an FBI investigation into the existence of classified documents *she* had stored on *her* server—outside *her* department's secure system, in violation of *her* department's 2009 guidelines, and under *her* direction.

When your campaign's central argument is "*Our candidate is not a target*," you're losing.

**"Hillary has remained absolutely committed to cooperating."**

This line would be laughable if it wasn't so pathetic. From the start, Clinton has been committed to defying—not cooperating.

"The server will remain private," she vowed in March. Her attorney told Congress there was "no basis" to support a third-party examination of the server. Besides, he said, the server had been scrubbed. "There are no [hdr22@clintonemail.com](mailto:hdr22@clintonemail.com) emails from Secretary of State Clinton's tenure on the server for any review, even if such a review were appropriate or legally authorized," attorney David Kendall wrote Congress.

**"This kind of nonsense comes with the territory of running for president."**

No, it doesn't.

This kind of nonsense come with the territory of *a Clinton running for president*.

The original sin is her decision to seize control of public documents. Clinton owns every ugly twist and turn, including harsh media coverage and GOP overreach.

**"We're committed to getting the real story out there."**

No, you're not.