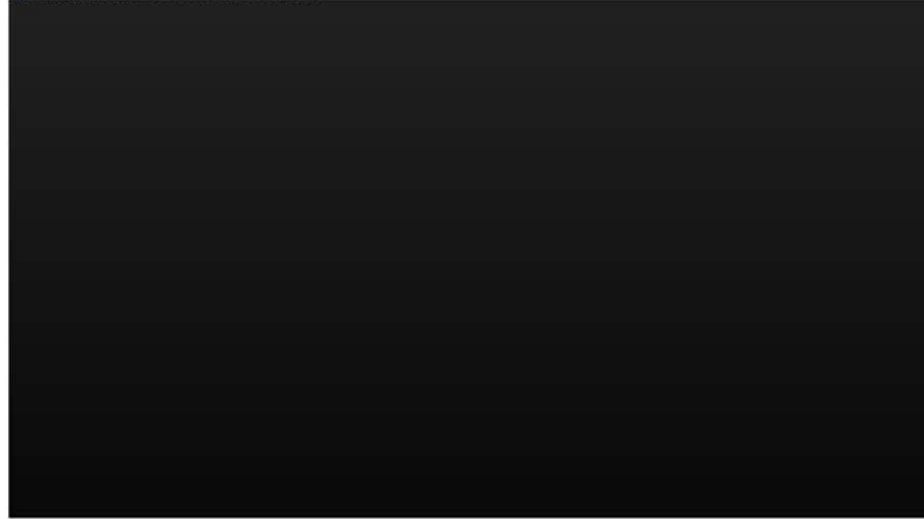




Clinton aides' BlackBerrys likely destroyed

By Julian Hattem - 08/19/15 02:05 PM EDT



State Department BlackBerry devices issued to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's aides Cheryl Mills and Huma Abedin have likely been destroyed or sold off, the department said in a court filing on Wednesday.

Mills and Abedin "were each issued BlackBerry devices," department Executive Secretary Joseph Macmanus **wrote in the filing.**

The department, however, "has not located any such device," and believes that they would have been destroyed or removed from the department's control.

"Because the devices issued to Ms. Mills and Ms. Abedin would have been outdated models, in accordance with standard operating procedures those devices would have been destroyed or excessed," Macmanus added.

State Department spokesman John Kirby confirmed later on Wednesday afternoon that the two former officials' devices were returned to the department after they left office.

"They belong to the United States government, and when you leave an agency you just turn it in," Kirby said. "So yes, they were turned in. Where they are now I couldn't begin to tell you.

"It's also likely, because this was a while ago, that those devices may have been destroyed," he added. "I don't have the records of it because they were old and outmoded and often times we purchase new devices" in those circumstances.

In the same court filing, the State Department **confirmed its previous claim** that Clinton used a personal BlackBerry during her time in office that was not issued by the federal government.

The State Department "does not believe that any personal computing device was issued by the department to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and has not located any such device at the department," Macmanus wrote.

News of the Clinton aides' devices adds to the growing scrutiny on the Democratic presidential front-runner and two of her top advisors, both of whom have been drawn into the fire surrounding the Clinton email furor.

The criticism has been a major drag on Clinton's presidential campaign, and has provided a nearly endless supply of ammunition to her critics — including **some Democrats.**

Wednesday's filing came as part of a lawsuit from the conservative organization Judicial Watch, which is looking for documents related to Abedin's employment arrangement while she served in the State Department.

"The questions just keep popping up," Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton said in a statement. "Every time the State Department tries to justify its stonewalling, one more bit of information arises."

A hearing in the case before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia is scheduled for Thursday afternoon.

This story was updated at 3:17 p.m.

TAGS: Hillary Clinton, Huma Abedin

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