



Campaign 2000

Media Reality Check

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Democrat Stumbled Over Fox Question About Mysteriously Vanishing Year Of White House E-Mails

Gore: "I'm Not an Expert on Computers"

On Wednesday Al Gore, who last year boasted how he "took the initiative in creating the Internet," denied any knowledge of how his subpoenaed e-mails were lost by conceding, during a Fox News Channel interview, "I'm not an expert on computers."

Last week, in a Jerry Seper story bannered across the front page of the June 9 *Washington Times*, but which was nearly completely ignored by the TV networks, the White House claimed that a problem with its computer back-up system meant e-mail sent to Gore's office between March 1998 and April 1999 could not be retrieved.

Former White House official Sheryl Hall asserted missing e-mails involved the Monica Lewinsky scandal, Republican FBI files, the DNC fundraising scandal, and the political manipulation of Commerce Department trade junks.

Coverage? No network show touched the revelation of vanishing evidence on Thursday or Friday. On Sunday, Tony Snow raised the development with Rep. Dan Burton on *Fox News Sunday* and Burton mentioned it on *Meet the Press*, but Tim Russert did not pursue the comment.

Now back to Wednesday: On FNC's *Special Report with Brit Hume*, reporter Wendell Goler narrated a piece which provided excerpts from his interview earlier in the day with Gore. Hume segued to Goler's re-cap of an earlier interview: "Vice President Gore meanwhile has had some missing data of his own to deal with, that year's worth of e-mails that were somehow not preserved and that investigators would like to see. Fox News White House correspondent Wendell Goler asked him about that and other things in an interview from Scranton, Pennsylvania where Gore was campaigning. Well Wendell, what did you get?"

Goler relayed: "Brit, the guy who says he helped invent

the Internet says he's not a computer whiz, at least not enough to have picked up on the fact that e-mails to his office weren't being saved in 1998 and 1999. Congressional investigators say those e-mails might have shed light on Gore's involvement in a number of their investigations, but in his first broadcast comments on the subject, Gore told Fox News that all he knew was that the system briefly broke down."

Gore stumbled, shrugged his shoulders, paused, shook his head, and chuckled nervously over Wendell Goler's question about his missing White House e-mails. Perhaps because no other reporter has asked him about it.

Gore hemmed and hawed on tape: "The problem I asked about was three days of e-mails that disappeared [nervous chuckle] and computers crash, and that's what happened and I asked them to make sure it didn't happen again [pauses and shrugs]. And I don't know about the back-up tapes. I read about that in the papers recently. I

don't know anything about why that happened or, [pausing] or how it happened. I'm not an expert on computers."

Gore was uncomfortable responding to the e-mail question, perhaps because no other reporter has asked him about it. CNN avoided the topic in its interview with Gore on Wednesday's *Inside Politics*. Viewers saw a nearly six-minute-long excerpt of the interview, but not a word from questioner Jeanne Meserve about e-mail or his rental house problems. Instead, she asked about his efforts to gain credit for the good economy, if the surplus provides a rationale for Bush's tax cut, if the Los Alamos mess means Bill Richards on is off the veep list, and if he considers Ralph Nader a threat. — *Brent Baker and Tim Graham*

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; **Brent Baker, Tim Graham**, Editors; **Jessica Anderson, Brian Boyd, Geoffrey Dickens, Ted King, Paul Smith, Brad Wilmouth**, Media Analysts; **Kristina Sewell**, Research Associate; **Liz Swasey**, Director of Communications. See Gore's nervous FNC interview at www.mrc.org/news/biasvideo.html