

State Dept: Most official email not auto-archived until Feb.

March 13 2015, by Matthew Lee

The State Department said Friday it was unable to automatically archive the emails of most of its senior officials until last month, which could mean potential problems for historical record-keeping amid criticism of former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's use of a private email server while in office.

On the same day the department announced that it was temporarily shutting down parts of its unclassified Internet-linked systems, including [email](#), to harden security in the wake of several hacking attacks, spokeswoman Jen Psaki said that only Secretary of State John Kerry's emails had been automatically retained before February of this year. Kerry's emails have been automatically stored since he took the job in February 2013, she said.

Psaki suggested the inability to automatically retain the emails of all but its most senior official before last month was because the department lacked the technical capability to capture them unless individual employees took action on their own. She said she could not be more specific but that the department hoped to be able to automatically archive all employees' emails by the end of this year.

"Our goal is to apply an archiving system that meets these same requirements to all employee mailboxes by the end of 2016," she told reporters. "It's only natural that you'd start with the secretary, which we did in 2013, and that you would progress with other senior department officials." Officials whose emails are now being automatically archived

include the two deputy secretaries of state along with dozens of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries of state, Psaki said.

Psaki stressed that the department's inability to automatically archive emails does not mean the documents are no longer available to be produced for the public record in response to congressional demands or Freedom of Information Act requests. There are numerous other ways that documents, including emails, can be retained, although all require separate action on the part of employees. One of those methods was criticized earlier this week by the department's inspector general, who found that only a tiny percentage of emails was being retained that way.

The fact that all but Kerry's emails were not being automatically archived until February may fuel the controversy over Clinton's use of a private account and server.

Clinton said Tuesday she had copied her work-related messages to aides and officials with government accounts and addresses, and that meant they would be preserved as part of the historical record. While Friday's revelation does not necessarily mean that those messages were not retained in State Department servers, it suggests they were not automatically archived.

In a related case Friday, U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler ordered the State Department to provide the conservative organization Citizens United with records of overseas trips Clinton took during her time as secretary. Citizens United had sued State for information, including passenger manifests and expense records, regarding those flights.

Kessler ordered State to begin producing records by April 3 and then on a rolling basis every two weeks, with a "final full and complete production of records" by Aug. 1.

Meanwhile, the State Department said Friday that it would be shutting down portions, including email, of its main unclassified computer network to make improvements to its security and respond to "activity of concern" following at least one successful hack last year and numerous other hacking attempts before and since.

"Such activity is something we take very seriously," it said in a statement, adding that there had been "no compromise of any of the department's classified systems, nor of our core financial, consular, and human resource systems."

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