Hillary Emailgate: How One Twitter User Proved The "Intent" That The FBI Missed After Months "Investigating"

by Tyler Durden
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Earlier this week, a twitter user named "Katica" seemingly proved the "intent" of the Hillary campaign to destroy and/or tamper with federal records by revealing the Reddit thread of Paul Combetta (aka the "Oh Shit" guy; aka "stonetear"). But what's most crazy about this story is that "Katica" was able to discover the greatest "bombshell" of the entire Hillary email scandal with just a couple of internet searches while the FBI, with unlimited access to government records, spent months "investigating" this case and missed it all. The only question now is whether the FBI "missed" this evidence because of gross incompetence or because of other motivating factors?

Now, courtesy of an opinion piece posted on The Daily Caller, we know exactly how "Katica" pieced her "bombshell" discovery together...the folks at the FBI may want to take some notes.

Per the twitter discussion below with @RepStevenSmith, "Katica" discovered Combetta's Reddit thread on September 16th. But while she suspected that Paul Combetta and the Reddit user known as "stonetear" were, in fact, the same person, she had to prove it...
...which she was able to do easily enough with a couple of extra searches. First there is this Facebook pic which refers to Combetta as "Stone Tear."
Then, there was this website thanking "Paul Combetta" who could be reached at "stonetear@gmail.com."
And then there is Paul Combetta's Etsy account where his username was, yet again, "Stonetear." The account has since been deleted.

And then there is this "stonetear" Reddit post where Combetta talks about why he loves living in Rhode Island...
...And wouldn't you know it, **Paul Combetta just happens to own a house in Rhode Island.**

And that's how one twitter user discovered the "bombshell" that has blown the Hillary email scandal wide open. It took "Katica" just a couple of days to discover evidence that eluded the FBI's months of "investigations." **Perhaps the FBI should do some simple Google searches before they officially close their next case.**

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Hello all- I may be facing a very interesting situation where I need to strip out a VIP's (VERY VIP) email address from a bunch of archived email that I have both in a live Exchange mailbox, as well as a PST file. Basically, they don't want the VIP's email address exposed to anyone, and want to be able to either strip out or replace the email address in the to/from fields in all of the emails we want to send out.

I am not sure if something like this is possible with PowerShell, or exporting all of the emails to MSG and doing find/replaces with a batch processing program of some sort.

Does anyone have experience with something like this, and/or suggestions on how this might be accomplished?
True. I’ve seen people roll their own Transport Agents for hubs that can do rewrites, but that always looks a bit overkill.

Expanding on what /u/Gatehead said, you could give the VIP a "relay" mailbox, i.e. VIP@seriousbusiness.com forwards to steve@dontgiveoutmyemail.com. All your users would mail VIP and Exchange would pass it in the backend so that the forwarding email address was not exposed. Meeting Forward Notifications might give it away though, I've never had the requirement of the sender can't know who the end recipient is so I never actually quantified that behavior.

The Relay mailbox thing is a good solution, but you just know the VIP is going to respond to emails that get forwarded to his personal email by using his personal email, which would of course result in the personal email getting added. I'd just give him a regular mailbox and ask him to use that if he wants his private address to be private. Ultimately, the privacy of the VIP's personal email address is something the VIP should be responsible for, not the people that person emails.

There is no supported way to do what you're asking. You can only delete emails after they're stored in the database. You can't change them. If there was a feature in Exchange that allowed this, it could result in major legal issues. There may be ways to hack a solution, but I am not aware of any.

As a PST file or exported MSG files, this could be done though, yes? The issue is that these emails involve the private email address of someone you'd recognize, and we're trying to replace it with a placeholder address as to not expose it.

As a PST file, probably not. MSG files maybe, but you would need a utility to do it, and it would be a one off kind of thing where you'd have to manually modify each email. Moving forward, though, I would recommend that you create a mailbox for the VIP if they communicate with your environment on a regular basis. That way they aren't using their personal email and you don't have to worry about hiding it on future emails. There might not be much you can do about the past ones besides deleting them from all the mailboxes in your environment, which is possible.

I think maybe I wasn't clear enough in the original post. I have these emails available in a PST file. Can I rewrite them in the PST? I could also export to MSG and do some sort of batch find/replace. Anyone know of tools that might help with this?
tool I know of. Having that functionality would create the ability to screw with discovery (I mean, there could be mitigation with versioning, but that would need other configuration)

While it may not be a read-only part of the envelope (I'm not actually sure), the only tool that MIGHT be able to do what you want is MFCMapi, and I don't think you want to play with that for this job. The chance of getting it wrong would be pretty high I think and it is not a particularly friendly tool. I'm not sure it could be scripted with it either.

My recommendation would be what /u/borismkv said. Making a mailbox for VIP and telling them to use that. Forwarding to VIP's mailbox would be ripe for them to just respond directly instead of responding through his relay mailbox.

As for your existing messages, if the current users absolutely cannot see the existing messages, you'll need to do a search and export and just forcibly remove the messages from their mailboxes. It's not clean and not advised by me, but if they don't want VIPs address out there it will need to be removed. I would do a search with his email address as the query with -LogOnly -LogLevel Full and see what kind of results you get.
After years of searching by Congressional investigators, FBI agents and investigative journalists, the timeline of Hillary Clinton's email scandal still contained gaps in which the buck could be passed. Paul Combetta, the IT tech from Platte River Networks, was Hillary Clinton's fall-guy. The Clinton campaign said Mr. Combetta acted alone when he used BleachBit deletion software to permanently destroy 33,000 supposed yoga, recipe and marital communications on Hillary's private email server, pursuant to a 60-day email retention policy. The data was so ruined that "even God" couldn't read it.

Then came "Stonetear," whose actions could become the modern-day equivalent of Watergate in this campaign. On September 16, 2016, Twitter user @GOPpollanalyst (https://twitter.com/GOPPollAnalyst), who goes by the online name "Katica," sent me this **bombshell** via direct message to my @RepStevenSmith (https://twitter.com/RepStevenSmith) congressional parody account:
The July 24, 2014 Reddit post contained this request for advice about “stripping out” the email address of a “VERY VIP” email account, which was posted just one day after the July 23, 2014 agreement between the State Department and Congress to release Hillary Clinton’s emails:

Katica also found a December 10, 2014 Reddit post in which “Stonetear” requested help implementing a 60-day email “purge” policy.

Assuming that “Stonetear” was discussing Hillary Clinton's emails, these finds appear to be the smoking gun in the Clinton email scandal. The posts prove intent to obstruct the production of evidence to Congress, either through deception or deletion, and that these events took place after the evidence was requested. There is no legitimate reason for anyone to act this way if the emails merely contained information about yoga poses and wedding invitations.

But is “Stonetear” really Paul Combetta? Katica found a number of data points to strongly suggest they are one and the same:

- He owns a house (https://rehold.com/South+Kingstown+RI/TERN+RD) in Rhode Island.
- His Reddit posts (http://archive.is/7T1Py) mention living in Rhode Island.
- He had multiple IT forum entries (http://archive.is/https:/www.reddit.com/user/stonetear*) on Reddit mentioning various tech issues.
- There was a Facebook photo (https://theconservativetreehouse.com/2016/09/20/day-2-hillarys-i-t-guy-paul-combetta-aka-stonetear-the-reddit-and-the-timeline/) with a caption saying that one of the men in the photo is “Stonetear,” and Paul Combetta
- There is a (now deleted) Etsy account (http://imgur.com/gallery/WzdFu) where the username is “Stonetear” and the user's name is Paul Combetta.

Considering all of this together, either Paul Combetta is “Stonetear” or he has a lookalike who works in IT, goes by the same username and lives in Rhode Island, which is extremely unlikely. While the social media posts linking “Stonetear” and Combetta were already convincing, the “Stonetear” Reddit posts also fit perfectly into the Clinton email scandal timeline.

Based on the FBI report (https://vault.fbi.gov/hillary-r.-clinton) and Katica's smoking gun discovery, it looks like the “shady sh*t” (http://dailycaller.com/2016/09/14/exclusive-emails-shed-new-light-on-clinton-tech-firms-internal-deliberations/) Combetta was involved in goes much deeper than just BleachBit:

- July 18, 2013: Platte River Networks signed a contract to manage Hillary's email server
• June 30, 2013: Emails from the server run by Bryan Pagliano were slowly migrated to a PRN server. By December 2013 the emails were being exclusively managed by the PRN server.

• July 2014: Clinton aide Cheryl Mills arranged for [name withheld by FBI] to export all .gov emails from the PRN server, which he then exported to Mills' and Clinton lawyer Heather Samuelson's laptops via ScreenConnect.

• July 23, 2014: House Select Committee reached an agreement with the State Department for production of Hillary Clinton’s emails.

• July 24, 2014: “Stonetear” posted on Reddit asking other tech professionals how to “strip out” and batch convert the emails of a “VERY VIP” client, for the sole purpose of concealing that “VERY VIP” client’s email address. According to the post, “they don’t want the VIP’s email address exposed to anyone.”

• Late September 2014: Mills and Samuelson asked [name withheld by FBI] to export all emails to them, not just those with .gov addresses. The FBI noted that [name withheld by FBI] made “inconsistent statements” over three interviews regarding the location from which he extracted the emails on the server.

• September to December 2014: Samuelsen reviewed Clinton’s emails using keywords and email header information, but did not review the content of each email.

• December 5, 2014: Clinton provided 55,000 work related emails to the State Department.

• December 2014: The month Hillary Clinton decided to implement an auto-deletion policy to purge emails older than 60 days, per her FBI interview.

• December 10, 2014: “Stonetear” asked Reddit users for help formulating a 60-day deletion policy, which involved automatically deleting emails 60 days old for “certain users” unless specifically saved.


• March 3, 2015: Congressional committee sent a written preservation request to Clinton’s lawyers for Clinton’s emails held on the PRN server.

• March 4, 2015: Congressional committee issued subpoena to Hillary Clinton for her emails held on PRN server relating to Benghazi events.

• March 9, 2015: Mills emailed [name withheld by FBI] at PRN and referenced Congress’ preservation request.

• March 25, 2015: President Clinton’s staff and employees of PRN held a conference call.

• Sometime between March 25 and 31, 2015: Combetta ([http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/09/us/politics/hillary-clinton-emails-investigation.html?snmp=nytimes-iphone&smid=nytimes-iphone-share]) realized he did not implement a 60-day email purge policy pursuant to Mills’ order in December 2014 and reportedly had an “oh sh*t” moment, after which he used BleachBit software to destroy Hillary Clinton’s emails on the PRN server. Combetta later told the FBI that he knew about Congress’ preservation request when he used the BleachBit program to purge Clinton’s emails.

On September 8, 2016, Congress discovered that Combetta was granted immunity [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/09/us/politics/hillary-clinton-emails-investigation.html] by the Department of Justice in relation to information he provided to the FBI in its investigation into the Clinton email server. On September 13, 2016, Combetta appeared before a Congressional oversight committee and invoked the Fifth Amendment.

Combetta appeared before a Congressional oversight committee and invoked the Fifth Amendment. DOJ told Congress it even exists, and Combetta did not bring it with him to the September 13, 2016 hearing. However, if incrimination, refusing to testify. We don’t know the scope of the DOJ’s immunity order because neither the FBI nor the immunity order applies to Congressional hearings and these facts, Combetta may be forced to testify [https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/6002] in a future hearing.

After a lot of discussion about the potential fallout of this decision, Katica and I decided the “Stonetear” information had to be released. Late Sunday night, we tweeted [https://twitter.com/GOPPollAnalyst/status/77691379971612672] the (then-live) short link to the Reddit “VERY VIP” post and four screenshots to Katica’s 2,000 followers, followed by an immediate retweet [https://twitter.com/RepStevenSmith/status/77692226361057280] of her post to my 16,000 followers.

The response was immediate. We stayed on the phone to monitor the uptick in retweets together, as well as to read and respond to the tech people who went onto Reddit and archived [http://archive.is/https://www.reddit.com/user/stonetear*] “Stonetear’s” posts (something neither of us non-techies even considered doing at the time). The Redditors also gave us input on the IT details contained in the Reddit posts and hunted down even more social media connections between “Stonetear” and Paul Combetta.

After a nearly sleepless night, the next morning we direct messaged and/or posted on as many threads of influential Twitter account holders, reporters and members of Congress as possible. The story broke shortly afterwards on several conservative websites, such as Conservative Treehouse ([https://theconservativetreehouse.com/2016/09/19/discovery-2014-reddit-archive-platte-river-networks-paul-combetta-oh-shit-guy-requesting-tech-help-to-strip-vips-emails/]) and the
Do You Agree Katica's Findings Were The Smoking Gun?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Your Email Address (Required)

Submit and See Results

Completing this poll entitles you to Daily Caller news updates free of charge. You may opt out at anytime. You also agree to our Privacy Policy and Terms of Use.

Later in the day, the story made it into US News and World Report, the first mainstream media outlet to cover the story, followed the next day by The Washington Post. By Tuesday, a congressional committee demanded Combetta submit to recorded interviews by this Friday or threatened to issue a subpoena.

All of this was caused by the amazing sleuthing of a student majoring in eDiscovery and litigation, then promoted by a Twitter parody account, then expanded upon and disseminated by an army of Reddit users. Nothing can be weirder than this election, but I hope this article proves that this revelation didn't involve a "conspiracy" between Putin and Trump—it was simply the crowdsourced efforts of people who are sick and tired of Hillary Clinton's corruption and cover-ups.

Tags: Clinton email server, Hillary Clinton, Jeff Marty, Reddit, Stonetear

An email exchange involving employees with the tech firm that managed Hillary Clinton's off-the-books email server provides new insight into the company's deliberations in the early days of the FBI's investigation of the former secretary of state.

The email chain, which was obtained by The Daily Caller, shows that an employee for Platte River Networks joked about accessing the email accounts of employees of the Clinton Executive Services Corp., a pass-through company owned by the Clintons.

The emails, which are dated Aug. 19, 2015, also show that PRN had a would-be corporate client back out of a deal at the last minute because of its involvement in the Clinton email fiasco.

PRN provided the email chain to the Senate Homeland Security Committee last year. TheDC obtained a copy from an aide with the House Oversight Committee, which held a hearing on Tuesday in which two PRN employees pleaded the Fifth.
One of those employees was Paul Combetta. A PRN network engineer, Combetta received immunity from the Justice Department in order to cooperate with the FBI's investigation. He also appears to have lied to investigators about the timing of his decision to use a software program called BleachBit to delete backup copies of Clinton's emails in March 2015, when they were under subpoena.

Combetta was asked on Tuesday during the Oversight hearing whether he was involved in the email chain.

Utah Rep. Jason Chaffetz, who chairs Oversight, asked Combetta specifically about an email in which a PRN employee wrote that they were “starting to think this whole thing is covering up some shaddy [sic] shit.”

The names of the sender and recipient of the emails are redacted, a decision seemingly made by PRN.

Combetta refused to answer Chaffetz's questions and invoked the Fifth.

PRN was first identified as being involved in the email quagmire last August, just after the FBI opened its investigation into the possible mishandling of classified information on Clinton's server.

The report of PRN's involvement brought the boutique tech firm a massive wave of unwanted attention. The employees involved on the email chain appear to have been concerned that the debacle was hurting the company’s reputation. And in hopes of repairing it, the person who sent the “shady shit” email suggested that going public with emails from Clinton Executive Services Corp. would “make us look a WHOLE LOT better.”

The employee wanted to show that PRN was acting on orders from the Clinton firm to configure the server to automatically delete records older than 30 days.

"If we had that email, we are golden," the sender wrote.

They continued:

Wondering how we can sneak an email in now after the fact asking them when they told us to cut the backups and have them confirm it for our records. I just think if we have it in writing that they told us to cut the backups, and that we can go public with our statement saying we have had the backups since day one, then we were told to trim to 30 days, it would make us look a WHOLE LOT better. Maybe we can draft something up to whomever you worked with over the phone to have them verify it.

The sender then joked: “They would have to have it in there [sic] inbox somewhere I imagine. Maybe it is now time to start reading some of their emails, LOL. Maybe not…”

It is unclear how, or if, PRN had access to Clinton Executive Services Corp. emails in addition to Hillary Clinton’s.

The PRN employee who responded said they would look back through their records for correspondence with Clinton Executive Services, which the Clintons use as a shell company.

They then offered commentary about the coverage of the email scandal up to that point.

“It’s up to lawyer crap now, so just sit back and enjoy the silly headlines,” the person wrote. “It wasn’t the law to be required to use government email servers at the state dept until john kerry believe it or not.”

The scrutiny provided by the scandal appears to have hurt PRN’s business.

“Pisses me off,” the employee responded.
“We were half a day away from signing a [redacted] deal with [redacted], and today I get an email saying we are going to hold off for a little bit due to their parent company is public, and their [sic] afraid of any backlash with their involvement and its impact to the shareholders/stock price,” the email reads.

“I guess this our ‘welcome to the big leagues’ moment,” reads the reply.

Other emails released separately on Monday provide insight into PRN's decision-making timeline regarding the email probe.

Those records, which were released by the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, show that PRN initially planned to cooperate with congressional requests for documents pertaining to Clinton's server but then reversed that decision days later.

On Oct. 6, 2015, a lawyer working for PRN told a lawyer for Datto, Inc., a tech firm it had contracted with to provide services for Clinton's server, that PRN would be complying with a request from the Senate Homeland Security Committee. (RELATED: Emails Show Tension Between Firms Handling Clinton's Private Server) (http://dailycaller.com/2016/09/12/emails-show-tension-between-firms-handling-hillarys-private-server/)

But days later, PRN's lawyer informed Datto's attorney that his client would not be complying with the Senate Committee's request.

PRN's decision to stop cooperating with anyone but Clinton has raised questions about whether the firm has sought to protect the candidate.

An invoice surfaced last year showing that PRN billed Clinton's accountant for non-tech work provided by Combetta. One line item on the Sept. 16, 2015 invoice is a charged for “federal interviews” for Combetta. (RELATED: Tech Firm Charged Clinton $250 An Hour For Technician's ‘Federal Interviews') (http://dailycaller.com/2016/09/11/tech-firm-charged-clinton-250-an-hour-for-employees-interviews-with-feds/)

If Clinton did pay the bill — a possibility which has not been confirmed — PRN and Combetta would have effectively been working for her during the interview with investigators.

Combetta's decision to delete backups of Clinton's emails last year has also raised questions about PRN's relationship with Clinton.

The tech worker made the deletions on March 31, 2015, days after speaking with members of Bill Clinton's staff and just before holding a conference call with Hillary Clinton's lawyers.

When asked by the FBI about his conversation's with Clinton's attorneys, Combetta's lawyer advised him not to answer the question and cited attorney-client privilege. An FBI report released earlier this year showed the Combetta gave conflicting answers in interviews in February and May about why he made the decision to delete backups of Clinton's emails.

Combetta has not responded to email and voice mail requests for comment.

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