

ON AUGUST 8, THERE WERE AT LEAST 73 ITEMS WHERE THE FBI HAD SEEN 50-55 BOXES ON JUNE 3

There's a propensity when reporting on an FBI investigation to believe that things being reported by the press as new news that the FBI doesn't know about. We don't know what the FBI doesn't know, and so if it's new to us, there's a propensity to believe it's new to people who have the advantage of subpoena power.

But I'd like to point to details that have long been public that suggest the FBI knew boxes had been moved out of Trump's storage room in advance of Jay Bratt's glimpse at it on June 3.

On May 6, 2021, NARA General Counsel Gary Stern told Pat Philbin that he understood Trump had taken 24 boxes of documents to Mar-a-Lago.

It is also our understanding that roughly two dozen boxes of original Presidential records were kept in the Residence of the White House over the course of President Trump's last year in office and have not been transferred to NARA, despite a determination by Pat Cipollone in the final days of the Administration that they need to be. I had also raised this concern with Scott during the final weeks.

Side note: This email was before a bunch of boxes, potentially *other* boxes, were moved from a Virginia storage facility to Mar-a-Lago.

In any case, when Trump returned 15 boxes of documents in January 2022, NARA (and so the FBI) would have known there were at least 9 boxes missing.

On June 3, 2022, Jay Bratt and three FBI agents went to Mar-a-Lago to retrieve – they were told – the balance of the documents Trump stole. They were handed not 9 boxes, but a folder.

They were also shown the storage room where Trump had been storing *some of* his stolen documents. Here's part of how the FBI described the room in the August 5 affidavit to search Trump's beach resort:

The agents and DOJ COUNSEL were permitted to see the STORAGE ROOM and observed that approximately fifty to fifty-five boxes remained in the STORAGE ROOM. [five lines redacted] Other items were also present in the STORAGE ROOM, including a coat rack with suit jackets, as well as interior decor items such as wall art and frames.

In the same affidavit, the FBI said Trump's residential suite, Pine Hall – which must have been discussed in the prior seven mostly-redacted paragraphs – was one of the places Trump may have stored the still-missing classified records.

When the FBI searched Mar-a-Lago on August 8, they used A-labels for all the items of investigative interest found in what has since been confirmed as the storage closet (see this post for pictures of how this looks in practice, from the search of Josh Schulte's apartment in 2017). The series goes up through at least 73.

While it's possible the FBI found Trump's coat rack to be of investigative interest, it's far more likely that the labeled items were all boxes, because the FBI wasn't authorized to seize coat racks.

So on June 3, four witnesses, several highly-trained, estimated or counted 50 to 55 boxes in the storage room.

On August 8, there were at least 73 items of investigative interest – probably boxes – in the

storage room.