

# The New York Times<sup>1</sup>

November 21, 2009

## *Hacked E-Mail Is New Fodder for Climate Dispute*

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

Hundreds of private e-mail messages and documents hacked from a computer server at a British university are causing a stir among global warming skeptics, who say they show that climate scientists conspired to overstate the case for a human influence on climate change.

The e-mail messages, attributed to prominent American and British climate researchers, include discussions of scientific data and whether it should be released, exchanges about how best to combat the arguments of skeptics, and casual comments — in some cases derisive — about specific people known for their skeptical views. Drafts of scientific papers and a photo collage that portrays climate skeptics on an ice floe were also among the hacked data, some of which dates back 13 years.

In one e-mail exchange, a scientist writes of using a statistical “trick” in a chart illustrating a recent sharp warming trend. In another, a scientist refers to climate skeptics as “idiots.”

Some skeptics asserted Friday that the correspondence revealed an effort to withhold scientific information. “This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud,” said Patrick J. Michaels, a climatologist who has long faulted evidence pointing to human-driven warming and is criticized in the documents.

Some of the correspondence portrays the scientists as feeling under siege by the skeptics’ camp and worried that any stray comment or data glitch could be turned against them.

The evidence pointing to a growing human contribution to global warming is so widely accepted that the hacked material is unlikely to erode the overall argument. However, the documents will undoubtedly raise questions about the quality of research on some specific questions and the actions of some scientists.

In several e-mail exchanges, Kevin Trenberth, a climatologist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, and other scientists discuss gaps in understanding of recent variations in temperature. Skeptic Web sites pointed out one line in particular: “The fact is that we can’t account for the lack of warming at the moment and it is a travesty that we can’t,” Dr. Trenberth wrote.

The cache of e-mail messages also includes references to journalists, including this reporter, and queries from journalists related to articles they were reporting.

Officials at the University of East Anglia confirmed in a statement on Friday that files had been stolen from a university server and that the police had been brought in to investigate the breach. They added, however, that they could not confirm that all the material circulating on the Internet was authentic.

But several scientists and others contacted by The New York Times confirmed that they were the authors or recipients of specific e-mail messages included in the file. The revelations are bound to inflame the public debate as hundreds of negotiators prepare to negotiate an international climate accord at meetings in Copenhagen next month, and at least one scientist speculated that the timing was not coincidental.

Dr. Trenberth said Friday that he was appalled at the release of the e-mail messages.

But he added that he thought the revelations might backfire against climate skeptics. He said that he thought that the messages showed “the integrity of scientists.” Still, some of the comments might lend themselves to being interpreted as sinister.

In a 1999 e-mail exchange about charts showing climate patterns over the last two millennia, Phil Jones, a longtime climate researcher at the East Anglia Climate Research Unit, said he had used a “trick” employed by another scientist, Michael Mann, to “hide the decline” in temperatures.

Dr. Mann, a professor at Pennsylvania State University, confirmed in an interview that the e-mail message was real. He said the choice of words by his colleague was poor but noted that scientists often used the word “trick” to refer to a good way to solve a problem, “and not something secret.”

At issue were sets of data, both employed in two studies. One data set showed long-term temperature effects on tree rings; the other, thermometer readings for the past 100 years.

Through the last century, tree rings and thermometers show a consistent rise in temperature until 1960, when some tree rings, for unknown reasons, no longer show that rise, while the thermometers continue to do so until the present.

Dr. Mann explained that the reliability of the tree-ring data was called into question, so they were no longer used to track temperature fluctuations. But he said dropping the use of the tree rings was never something that was hidden, and had been in the scientific literature for more than a decade. “It sounds incriminating, but when you look at what you’re talking about, there’s nothing there,” Dr. Mann said.

In addition, other independent but indirect measurements of temperature fluctuations in the studies broadly agreed with the thermometer data showing rising temperatures.

Dr. Jones, writing in an e-mail message, declined to be interviewed.

Stephen McIntyre, a blogger who on his Web site, [climateaudit.org](http://climateaudit.org), has for years been challenging data used to chart climate patterns, and who came in for heated criticism in some e-mail messages, called the revelations “quite breathtaking.”

But several scientists whose names appear in the e-mail messages said they merely revealed that scientists were human, and did nothing to undercut the body of research on global warming. “Science doesn’t work because we’re all nice,” said Gavin A. Schmidt, a climatologist at NASA whose e-mail exchanges with colleagues over a variety of climate studies were in the cache. “Newton may have been an ass, but the theory of gravity still works.”

He said the breach at the University of East Anglia was discovered after hackers who had gained access to the correspondence sought Tuesday to hack into a different server supporting [realclimate.org](http://realclimate.org), a blog unrelated to NASA that he runs with several other scientists pressing the case that global warming is true.

The intruders sought to create a mock blog post there and to upload the full batch of files from Britain. That effort was thwarted, Dr. Schmidt said, and scientists immediately notified colleagues at the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit. The first posts that revealed details from the files appeared Thursday at The Air Vent, a Web site devoted to skeptics’ arguments.

At first, said Dr. Michaels, the climatologist who has faulted some of the science of the global warming consensus, his instinct was to ignore the correspondence as “just the way scientists talk.”

But on Friday, he said that after reading more deeply, he felt that some exchanges reflected an effort to block the release of data for independent review.

He said some messages mused about discrediting him by challenging the veracity of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin by claiming he knew his research was wrong.

“This shows these are people willing to bend rules and go after other people’s reputations in very serious ways,” he said.

Spencer R. Weart, a physicist and historian who is charting the course of research on global warming, said the hacked material would serve as “great material for historians.”

# The Wall Street Journal<sup>2</sup>

NOVEMBER 24, 2009, 7:18 A.M. ET

## *Global Warming With the Lid Off*

### REVIEW & OUTLOOK1

“The two MMs have been after the CRU station data for years. If they ever hear there is a Freedom of Information Act now in the U.K., I think I’ll delete the file rather than send to anyone. . . . We also have a data protection act, which I will hide behind.”

So apparently wrote Phil Jones, director of the University of East Anglia’s Climate Research Unit (CRU) and one of the world’s leading climate scientists, in a 2005 email to “Mike.” Judging by the email thread, this refers to Michael Mann, director of the Pennsylvania State University’s Earth System Science Center. We found this nugget among the more than 3,000 emails and documents released last week after CRU’s servers were hacked and messages among some of the world’s most influential climatologists were published on the Internet.

The “two MMs” are almost certainly Stephen McIntyre and Ross McKittrick, two Canadians who have devoted years to seeking the raw data and codes used in climate graphs and models, then fact-checking the published conclusions—a painstaking task that strikes us as a public and scientific service. Mr. Jones did not return requests for comment and the university said it could not confirm that all the emails were authentic, though it acknowledged its servers were hacked.

Yet even a partial review of the emails is highly illuminating. In them, scientists appear to urge each other to present a “unified” view on the theory of man-made climate change while discussing the importance of the “common cause”; to advise each other on how to smooth over data so as not to compromise the favored hypothesis; to discuss ways to keep opposing views out of leading journals; and to give tips on how to “hide the decline” of temperature in certain inconvenient data.

Some of those mentioned in the emails have responded to our requests for comment by saying they must first chat with their lawyers. Others have offered legal threats and personal invective. Still others have said nothing at all. Those who have responded have insisted that the emails reveal nothing more than trivial data discrepancies and procedural debates.

Yet all of these nonresponses manage to underscore what may be the most revealing truth: That these scientists feel the public doesn’t have a right to know the basis for their climate-change predictions, even as their governments prepare staggeringly expensive legislation in response to them.

Consider the following note that appears to have been sent by Mr. Jones to Mr. Mann in May 2008: “Mike, Can you delete any emails you may have had with Keith re AR4? Keith will do likewise. . . . Can you also email Gene and get him to do the same?” AR4 is shorthand for the U.N.’s Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change’s (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report, presented in 2007 as the consensus view on how bad man-made climate change has supposedly become.

In another email that seems to have been sent in September 2007 to Eugene Wahl of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Paleoclimatology Program and to Caspar Ammann of the National Center for Atmospheric Research’s Climate and Global Dynamics Division, Mr. Jones writes: “[T]ry and change the Received date! Don’t give those skeptics something to amuse themselves with.”

When deleting, doctoring or withholding information didn't work, Mr. Jones suggested an alternative in an August 2008 email to Gavin Schmidt of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, copied to Mr. Mann. "The FOI [Freedom of Information] line we're all using is this," he wrote. "IPCC is exempt from any countries FOI — the skeptics have been told this. Even though we ... possibly hold relevant info the IPCC is not part of our remit (mission statement, aims etc) therefore we don't have an obligation to pass it on."

It also seems Mr. Mann and his friends weren't averse to blacklisting scientists who disputed some of their contentions, or journals that published their work. "I think we have to stop considering 'Climate Research' as a legitimate peer-reviewed journal," goes one email, apparently written by Mr. Mann to several recipients in March 2003. "Perhaps we should encourage our colleagues in the climate research community to no longer submit to, or cite papers in, this journal."

Mr. Mann's main beef was that the journal had published several articles challenging aspects of the anthropogenic theory of global warming.

For the record, when we've asked Mr. Mann in the past about the charge that he and his colleagues suppress opposing views, he has said he "won't dignify that question with a response." Regarding our most recent queries about the hacked emails, he says he "did not manipulate any data in any conceivable way," but he otherwise refuses to answer specific questions. For the record, too, our purpose isn't to gainsay the probity of Mr. Mann's work, much less his right to remain silent.

However, we do now have hundreds of emails that give every appearance of testifying to concerted and coordinated efforts by leading climatologists to fit the data to their conclusions while attempting to silence and discredit their critics. In the department of inconvenient truths, this one surely deserves a closer look by the media, the U.S. Congress and other investigative bodies.

# The Washington Post<sup>3</sup>

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

## *Climate of denial Researchers show how not to respond to global warming skeptics.*

### Editorial

LAST WEEKEND was a good one for climate-change deniers. A hacker stole and released scores of documents, including personal e-mail exchanges, from a server at Britain's Climate Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia, a premier climate-change research center. "This is not a smoking gun; this is a mushroom cloud," proclaimed one skeptic.

Not quite. Assuming the documents are genuine — the authenticity of all has not been confirmed — critics are taking them out of context and misinterpreting at least one controversial e-mail exchange. None of it seriously undercuts the scientific consensus on climate change. But a few of the documents are damaging for other reasons.

According to one of the stolen e-mails, CRU Director Phil Jones wrote that he would keep papers questioning the connection between warming and human activity out of the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report "even if we have to redefine what the peer-review literature is!" In another, Mr. Jones and Pennsylvania State University's Michael E. Mann write about an academic journal and its editor, with Mr. Mann discussing organizing a boycott of the publication and Mr. Jones saying, "I will be emailing the journal to tell them I'm having nothing more to do with it until they rid themselves of this troublesome editor." Other e-mails speak of withholding data from climate-change skeptics. Many — including us — find global warming deniers' claims irresponsible and their heated criticism of climate scientists unconvincing. But the point of peer review is to let ideas stand or fail on their own, in public.

Whatever else comes out about the stolen documents, they have become examples of how not to react to climate-change deniers. You need not dig very far into the stolen documents to discover why climate researchers shouldn't overstate an already strong case. One discusses how scientists can't account for a recent, measured lack of warming — a fact that climate-change deniers use to ignore the massive body of evidence that global warming could be a dire threat. Really, it demonstrates that the Earth's systems are extremely difficult to predict in detail.

By our reckoning — and that of most scientists, policymakers and almost every government in the world — the probability that the planet will warm in the long term because of human activity is extremely high, and the probability that allowing it to do so unabated will have disastrous effects is unacceptably large. The case that governments should hedge against that outcome is formidable enough. Climate scientists should not let themselves be goaded by the irresponsibility of the deniers into overstating the certainties of complex science or, worse, censoring discussion of them.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup><http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/21/science/earth/21climate.html>

<sup>2</sup><http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704888404574547730924988354.html>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/24/AR2009112403549.html>