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## Three Things You Absolutely Must Know About Climategate

Posted By [Iain Murray](#) On November 24, 2009 @ 12:42 am In [Computers](#), [Environment](#), [Media](#), [Politics](#), [Science](#), [Science & Technology](#), [US News](#), [World News](#) | [277 Comments](#)

They're calling it "Climategate." The scandal that the suffix -gate implies is the state of climate science over the past decade or so revealed by a thousand or so emails, documents, and computer code sets between various prominent scientists released following a leak from the Climate Research Unit (CRU) at the University of East Anglia in the UK.

This may seem obscure, but the science involved is being used to justify the diversion of literally trillions of dollars of the world's wealth in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by phasing out fossil fuels. The CRU is the Pentagon of global warming science, and these documents are its Pentagon Papers.

Here are three things everyone should know about the Climategate Papers. Links are provided so that the full context of every quote can be seen by anyone interested.

First, the scientists discuss manipulating data to get their preferred results. The most prominently featured scientists are paleoclimatologists, who reconstruct historical temperatures and who were responsible for a series of reconstructions that seemed to show a sharp rise in temperatures well above historical variation in recent decades.

In 1999, Phil Jones, the head of CRU, wrote to activist scientist Michael "Mike" Mann that he has just "completed Mike's Nature trick of adding in the real temps ... to hide the decline" ([0942777075](#) <sup>[1]</sup>). This refers to a decline in temperatures in recent years revealed by the data he had been reconstructing that conflicted with the observed temperature record. The inconvenient data was therefore hidden under a completely different set of data. Some "trick."

Mann later (2003) announced that "it would be nice to try to 'contain' the putative 'MWP,' even if we don't yet have a hemispheric mean reconstruction available that far back" ([1054736277](#) <sup>[2]</sup>). The MWP is the Medieval Warm Period, when temperatures may have been higher than today. Mann's desire to "contain" this phenomenon even in the absence of any data suggesting that this is possible is a clear indication of a desire to manipulate the science. There are other examples of putting political/presentational considerations before the science throughout the collection.

Secondly, scientists on several occasions discussed methods of subverting the scientific peer review process to ensure that skeptical papers had no access to publication. In 2003, Tom Wigley of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado, complained that paleoclimatologist Hans von Storch was responsible for "the publication of crap science 'in order to stimulate debate'" and that they "must get rid of von Storch" ([1051190249](#) <sup>[3]</sup>) as an editor of the journal *Climate Research* (he indeed subsequently resigned).

In 2005, Michael Mann said that there was a "fundamental problem w/ GRL now," referring to the journal *Geophysical Research Letters* published by the American Geophysical Union (AGU), because "they have published far too many deeply flawed contrarian papers in the past year or so" and "it is probably best to do an end run around GRL now where possible." Tom Wigley responded that "we could go through official AGU channels to get him [the editor of GRL] ousted" ([1106322460](#) <sup>[4]</sup>). A few months later, the editor of GRL having left his post, Mann comments, "The GRL leak may have been plugged up now w/ new editorial leadership there" ([1132094873](#) <sup>[5]</sup>).

Having seemingly succeeded with *Climate Research* and *Geophysical Research Letters*, the most recent target of the scientists' ire has been *Weather*, a journal of the Royal Meteorological Society (RMS). Phil Jones commented in March 2009, "I'm having a dispute with the new editor of *Weather*. I've complained about him to the RMS Chief Exec. If I don't get him to back down, I won't be sending any more papers to any RMS journals and I'll be resigning from the RMS" ([1237496573](#) <sup>[6]</sup>).

This issue is all the more important because the scientists involved in these discussions have repeatedly accused their critics of being irrelevant because they fail to publish in the peer reviewed literature. For example, in October this year, Mr. Mann told Andy Revkin of the *New York Times*:

[L]egitimate scientific skepticism is exercised through formal scientific circles, in particular the peer review process. Those such as [Stephen] McIntyre [the target of much of the criticism in the CRU Papers] who operate almost entirely outside of this system are not to be trusted.

If you are saying on the one hand that you will not take notice of someone until they have been published while on the other you are working behind the scenes to stop any such publication, I would venture to suggest that you are not operating with any degree of *bona fides* either towards the media or the legitimate scientific process.

Finally, the scientists worked to circumvent the Freedom of Information process of the United Kingdom. Nowhere is this better evidenced than in the [email](#) <sup>[7]</sup> reproduced in full below (minus Dr. Jones' contact details):

*From: Phil Jones <p.jones@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx>  
To: "Michael E. Mann" <mann@xxxxxxxxxxx.xxx>  
Subject: IPCC & FOI  
Date: Thu May 29 11:04:11 2008*

*Mike,*

*Can you delete any emails you may have had with Keith re AR4?  
Keith will do likewise. He's not in at the moment – minor family crisis.  
Can you also email Gene and get him to do the same? I don't  
have his new email address.  
We will be getting Caspar to do likewise.  
I see that CA claim they discovered the 1945 problem in the Nature paper!!  
Cheers  
Phil*

The context in the subject header is clearly the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI), while AR4 refers to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. What is most important to know here is that, according to the [Taxpayers' Alliance](#) <sup>[8]</sup> in the UK, "at least one FOI request on exactly this correspondence had [apparently been submitted](#) <sup>[9]</sup> by a David Holland on May 5th 2008."

The Freedom of Information Act, however, explicitly forbids deletion of any material subject to a FOI request. The penalty for such a criminal act is a fine of up to £5,000. Presumably being found guilty of such an act, or even suggesting it, would also bring about significant disciplinary procedures at any reputable university. A complaint has been made to the British information commissioner.

This is, however, just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to attitudes toward FOI. Numerous other references are made about ways to avoid divulging information (the following summaries are by the blogger [Bishop Hill](#) <sup>[10]</sup>):

Tom Wigley discusses how to deal with the advent of FoI law in UK. Jones says use IPR argument to hold onto code. Says data is covered by agreements with outsiders and that CRU will be "hiding behind them." ([1106338806](#) <sup>[11]</sup>)

Jones says that UK climate organisations are coordinating themselves to resist FoI. They got advice from the Information Commissioner [!] ([1219239172](#) <sup>[12]</sup>)

Jones tells Mann that he is sending station data. Says that if McIntyre requests it under FoI he will delete it rather than hand it over. Says he will hide behind data protection laws. Says Rutherford screwed up big time by creating an FTP directory for Osborn. Says Wigley worried he will have to release his model code. ([1107454306](#) <sup>[13]</sup>)

There appears to be a prima facie case that there was a conspiracy to prevent the release of information subject to FOI.

There are many other disturbing revelations in the CRU Papers, including a [particularly disturbing assessment](#) <sup>[14]</sup> by a computer programmer of the state of CRU data. These have yet to be fully analyzed.

So what does this all mean? It does not mean that there is no warming trend or that mankind has not been responsible for at least some of the warming. To claim that as result of these documents is clearly a step too far. However, it is clear that at least one branch of climate science — paleoclimatology — has become hopelessly politicized to the point of engaging in unethical and possibly illegal behavior.

To the extent that paleoclimatology is an important part of the scientific case for action regarding global warming, urgent reassessments need to be made. In the meantime, all those responsible for political action on global warming should stop the process pending the results of inquiries, investigations, and any criminal proceedings. What cannot happen is the process carrying on as if nothing has happened.

This could prove to be climate science's Vietnam.

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URLs in this post:

- [1] 0942777075: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=154&filename=942777075.txt>
- [2] 1054736277: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=319&filename=1054736277.txt>
- [3] 1051190249: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=307&filename=1051190249.txt>
- [4] 1106322460: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=484&filename=1106322460.txt>
- [5] 1132094873: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=591&filename=1132094873.txt>
- [6] 1237496573: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=967&filename=1237496573.txt>
- [7] email: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=893&filename=1212073451.txt>
- [8] Taxpayers' Alliance: <http://www.taxpayersalliance.com/campaign/2009/11/cru-emails-reveal-inconvenient-truths-about-foi.html>
- [9] apparently been submitted: <http://www.climateaudit.org/?p=3193>
- [10] Bishop Hill: <http://bishophill.squarespace.com/>
- [11] 1106338806: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=485&filename=1106338806.txt>
- [12] 1219239172: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=914&filename=1219239172.txt>
- [13] 1107454306: <http://www.anelegantchaos.org/cru/emails.php?eid=490&filename=1107454306.txt>
- [14] particularly disturbing assessment: <http://www.devilskitchen.me.uk/2009/11/data-horribilis-harryreadmetxt-file.html>

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