



Daily Climate News and Analysis

Hacked E-Mails Controversy Irrelevant in Copenhagen

Attendees 'Astonished' by Gullibility of American Public to Skeptics' Campaign

by David Sassoon - Dec 17th, 2009



One of Denmark's leading businessmen and philanthropists, speaking privately at a reception here earlier this week, voiced a sentiment about the hacked e-mail controversy shared widely among attendees from around the world at this global climate conference.

"How can a few e-mails — which were stolen after all — have such an influence upon what Americans believe about global warming? The science is so consistent and deep. It is astonishing this is possible in the richest nation in the world."

A U.S. NGO representative offered an explanation: It is the unfortunate effectiveness of a right-wing propaganda machine in the U.S. that is able to manipulate the beliefs and passions of a sizable segment of the population and render them embarrassingly gullible.

The plausibility of the explanation was underscored by the fact that the propaganda machine has virtually no traction in Copenhagen. The issue of the hacked e-mails came up at a press conference during the first days of the meeting, with media pressing Rajendra Pachauri, head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for answers, but that was the beginning and the end of any serious discussion of the subject.

"One can only surmise that those who have carried this out have obviously done it with a very clear intention to influence the process in Copenhagen," Pachauri said, "but I'm happy to observe that, barring a few isolated voices, people over here are totally convinced of the solidity of the findings we have in the [IPCC 4th Assessment Report](#)."

Still, as the conference enters its final days, hacked e-mail operatives are mounting efforts to stir up the controversy.

Sen. James Inhofe of Oklahoma, the Republican Party's senior skeptic in Congress and a promoter of the stolen e-mails-as-controversy theme, flew into Copenhagen for a brief press conference this morning to claim that Congress would not approve climate legislation, contradicting his Senate colleagues. Then he turned around and flew the 4,000-plus miles back home.

Yesterday, in front of the entrance to the media center, a person in a polar bear costume brandishing an electronic megaphone disrupted conversations in the cavernous hall, thronged with conference-goers. "Phil Jones, has anyone seen Phil Jones?" the bear asked, referring to the head of a British climate research institute who stepped aside in the wake of the hacked e-mail controversy.

The question was met with a chorus of boos, and the bear did not stay very long, but it was a media stunt manufactured for U.S. consumption, lasting long enough for FoxNews.com to snap a picture and [run a sympathetic story](#).

"I wasn't getting anywhere with conventional attempts for an interview," the man inside the bear costume admitted to FoxNews.com, "so I decided to use the environmentalist trick of dressing up as a polar bear to catch attention."

Also spotted inside the media center was Marc Morano, Inhofe's former chief of staff and now head of Climate Depot, a web site that has been fanning the flames of the e-mail controversy. He was providing an interview to another reporter from Fox (see photo), the news organization owned by Rupert Murdoch that has become the chief megaphone of skeptic propaganda.

In a story headlined [Copenhagen Climate Conference to Create 'Huge' Carbon Footprint](#), Fox's teaser reads: "When an estimated 16,500 delegates, activists and reporters descend upon Copenhagen Monday for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, a lot of hot air will follow." The reporter's sources? Patrick Michaels of the [Cato Institute](#) and Herb London of the [Hudson Institute](#).

In another story called [Copenhagen 'Circus' Turning Into Feel-Good Jamboree, Critics Say](#), who were the critics mentioned in the headline? Myron Ebell, from the [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#), and Roger Bate of the [American Enterprise Institute](#).

These reports that rely on the perspective of the skeptic fringe have little to do with what is really going on in Copenhagen, where the arrival of 115 heads of state this week is transforming the climate talks into a climate summit. Tens of thousands of representatives of NGOs are also here to press for solutions, covered by hundreds of media outlets, besides Fox.



In the midst of this unprecedented global effort to address climate change, the hacked e-mail controversy has no relevance, and in contrast to the prevailing reality here, appears puny and preposterous. The only nation to raise official concern about it has been Saudi Arabia.

"I would have been concerned if they hadn't made an issue out of it," Pachauri said, in response to a question from New York Times reporter Andrew Revkin. "I mean, wouldn't you expect that? Oil and politics mix very well. I'm not sure if oil and science mix very well."

Pachauri calmly and in good humor fielded questions from reporters and reminded them of an aspect of the story that has received little attention.

"I think this was an illegal act, and it seems to me the only issue that has to be dealt with as far as this occurrence is concerned is to find who's behind it."

It is a question that the media has hardly pursued in the scandal it has dubbed "Climategate," after Watergate, the scandal that eventually forced President Nixon's resignation. Who was behind the Watergate break-in had been the key question of the day.

Pachauri also allayed concerns that the e-mails could have tainted the results of the definitive 4th Assessment Report of the IPCC, explaining in detail the IPCC procedures which he described as "very robust, very reliable, extremely transparent, and whatever we do is done in a completely objective and open manner."

A reporter pressed him further: "Are you saying that there is no question mark over any of the science in the 4th Assessment Report?"

"Yes, I would say that categorically," Pachauri replied.

"The persons who have worked on this report and those who have been the victims of this terrible and illegal act are outstanding scientists. They have contributed enormously over the 20 or 21 years of the existence of the IPCC, and I believe they are being unfairly targeted through this illegal act of stealing purely private communications.

"I hope the global community understands the gravity of the situation."



([Click here to see a video](#) of the full session with Rajendra Pachauri. Please note due a technical error, the first two and half minutes lack audio, but remarks about the hacked email controversy begin at the 6:15 and questions from reporters begin at 10:00.)

See also:

[Skeptics Exaggerating Science Scandal to Derail Copenhagen Climate Talks](#)

[What Those Hacked Climate E-Mails Really Say](#)

[AP Review of Climate E-Mails: Science Not Faked, Just Not Pretty \(AP\)](#)

Bookmark/Search this post with:

[◀ previous](#) [up](#) [next >](#)

Post new comment

Your name: *

E-mail: *

The content of this field is kept private and will not be shown publicly.

Homepage:

Subject: