

Twitter gave at least 32 of Trump's private messages to special counsel

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Twitter gave the special counsel prosecuting Donald Trump for alleged election subversion access to at least 32 of the former president's private messages. The company, now known as X, turned over the messages after receiving a search warrant, CNN first reported on Friday, citing newly unsealed filings to the US circuit court of appeals. It was revealed in August that federal prosecutors had received access to "some volume" of Trump's direct messages, but the details were not known at that time. In the aftermath of the 2020 election, Trump routinely used his account to spread misinformation and make false claims about so-called election fraud. The quantity of direct messages provided by Twitter was revealed in a court filing in which the company sought to appeal a judge's ruling fining the company \$350,000 for missing a deadline to comply with the search warrant. The court authorized the search warrant in January 2023, according to the filings, as well as a nondisclosure order, and gave the company 10 days to provide the requested materials. The government was seeking data from October 2020 through January 2021 – "a time span that includes the November 2020 presidential election and the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol". But the issue soon turned into a legal battle between Twitter and the US government. Twitter sought to vacate or change the nondisclosure order before providing the requested materials. The company said it would not meet the deadline because it had not received enough notice to do so, and then argued it would not comply with the nondisclosure order without changes due to the "intense publicity around the investigation". Twitter also said it was concerned Trump would seek to assert executive privilege over parts of his account – arguments federal prosecutors dismissed. "Indeed, the materials Twitter produced to the government included only 32 direct-message items, constituting a minuscule proportion of the total production," prosecutors wrote. Maintaining secrecy was crucial in the investigation, prosecutors wrote, adding that Trump had sought to undermine or influence the investigation into his alleged mishandling of classified information, which included publicizing the existence of the Mar-a-Lago warrant. "These are not hypothetical considerations in this case," prosecutors wrote in the brief. "Following his defeat in the 2020 presidential election, the former President propagated false claims of fraud (including swearing to false allegations in a federal court filing), pressured state and federal officials to violate their legal duties, and retaliated against those who did not comply with his demands, culminating in violence at the US Capitol on January 6."