

ABC's *Good Morning America*

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7:00:19 a.m. [TEASE]

24 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; FBI Searches Mar-a-Lago]

GEORGE STEPHANOPOULOS: Stunning news overnight, an FBI raid on the home of a former President. Breaking overnight, the FBI executes a search warrant at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's club and home in Florida while the former President was in New York. Federal law enforcement confirmed the action was related to allegations Trump improperly removed classified documents from the White House.

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Breaking Overnight; FBI Searches Trump's Mar-a-Lago Home;
Sources: Search Related to Handling of Classified Documents]

JONATHAN KARL: This may be the most politically explosive raid ever undertaken by the FBI. It's a stunning development. The FBI executing a search warrant at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago property in Palm Beach, Florida, the place Trump has called the southern White House.

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KARL: In January, the National Archives retrieved 15 boxes worth of White House documents from Mar-a-Lago with Trump's cooperation. Sources tell ABC News the Department of Justice had started a grand jury investigation in May into Trump's alleged mishandling of classified information. They subpoenaed the National Archives for the classified material it had retrieved from Mar-a-Lago.

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KARL: Republican leaders are lashing out at the FBI and the Justice Department. Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leader in the House, for example, putting out a statement saying, "the Department of Justice has reached an intolerable state of weaponized politicization." George?

STEPHANOPOULOS: Jon, you called it at the start the most politically explosive search probably in American history, but it's not the first time they've looked at Mar-a-Lago.

KARL: In fact, George, ABC News has learned that a contingent, much smaller contingent of FBI agents visited Mar-a-Lago this spring. Trump was actually there at the time. They met with his lawyers and they did retrieve some documents, apparently, however, they were not satisfied with what they received at that last visit.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Okay, Jon Karl, thanks very much. Let's bring in our chief legal analyst Dan Abrams. First, you gotta kinda take a breath. FBI raid on the home of a former President. Let's walk everyone through the process so they understand what would have to happen for that FBI search to take place.

DAN ABRAMS: Right, first thing is they have to go to a judge, right? They have to be able to prove that there's probable cause that a crime was committed and that there could be evidence at this specific home. They have to be specific in the warrant. The judge has to then sign off on that. But even before that happens —

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, that's what I want to get to.

ABRAMS: — yeah, Even before that happened, you have got to believe that the highest levels of the Justice Department signed off.

STEPHANOPOULOS: The White House says they didn't know about it, but clearly Christopher Wray, the FBI director would have known about it.

ABRAMS: No doubt Christopher Wray knew about it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: I guess the open question would be did Merrick Garland — the attorney general — know about it or his deputy, Lisa Monaco?

ABRAMS: I've got to believe Merrick Garland knew about this. You have to. I mean, when you're talking about going to the former President of the United States's home, the implications are so significant that you have to believe that Merrick Garland knew about it and — and specifically that they wouldn't tell the President of the United States about it. I mean, it's for the same reason that Merrick Garland needs to know about it is the reason that I think they want to make sure that the President doesn't know about it and isn't involved.

STEPHANOPOULOS: We — we believe they took documents away from — from Mar-a-Lago. There are questions about mishandling of classified information. That, of course, is a crime.

ABRAMS: Yep.

STEPHANOPOULOS: It could prevent the President from running again although that law is at issue but there has to be something more, right?

ABRAMS: I — I completely agree with you that to send this kind of FBI team to the former President's home, there has to be something more than just a Presidential Records Act violation. They have to know something that we don't know about yet and I think that's why it's really important to pause here. We haven't seen the warrant. We don't know what the possible crime is and I'm not convinced that it's simply just a records act violation.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Well, then let's flip that around. If it is indeed just a Records Act violation —

ABRAMS: I would think that's overreach. I think if it's just literally that the President has documents that he was legally obligated to turn over and there's nothing more, I would think that would be a mistake on the part of the Justice Department but we have seen great care by this Justice Department not to go too far, which is further why I don't believe that it's just that.

STEPHANOPOULOS: That would be different from destroying documents or lying about whether you had the documents.

ABRAMS: Correct, but, again, proving that you destroyed the documents is a different issue than simply going there and trying to retrieve documents that the government believes belongs to it.

STEPHANOPOULOS: What a case.

ABRAMS: Unbelievable. I mean, stunning. And that so few people knew about it that it was coming as well.

STEPHANOPOULOS: Dan Abrams, thanks very much.

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KARL: This may be the most politically explosive raid ever undertaken by the FBI. It's a stunning development. The FBI executing a search warrant at Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago property in Palm Beach, Florida, the place Trump has called the southern White House.

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KARL: Trump's Republican allies are lashing out at the FBI and at the Justice Department. Kevin McCarthy, the Republican leader in the House, for instance, putting out a statement saying, "the Department of Justice has reached an intolerable state of weaponized politicization."