

Bi-annual Report on Operations of the National Declassification Center

Reporting period: January 1, 2010 – June 30, 2010

This is the first report on the status of the National Declassification Center (NDC). NDC status reports will be issued bi-annually, approximately one week after the reporting deadlines of 30 June and 31 December.

The NDC was established by Executive Order 13526, “Classified National Security Information,” under the direction of the Archivist of the United States, to coordinate the timely and appropriate processing of referrals of 25-year old and older classified records of permanent historical value. The December 29, 2009 Presidential Memorandum accompanying EO 13526 specified a December 31, 2013 deadline for making available to the public the declassified records within the approximately 400 million pages currently backlogged at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and under the NDC purview.

In the 2009 Strategic Plan for NARA, the Archivist singled out this inter-agency center as reflecting “the ongoing challenge to balance the needs of national security and the right of citizens to have access to the records of their Government.”

Each NDC Status Report will contain the following three sections: a narrative highlighting events and activities from the reporting period; a description of the interagency cooperation during the reporting period; and a quantitative update that charts NDC progress on the backlog.

Highlights:

- **Openness and Public Comment:**
 - On May 29, we disseminated a draft Prioritization Plan that established priorities for declassification and interagency referral review. It invited public and historical community input into establishing NDC declassification, referral and processing priorities, and asserted that referrals in transferred Presidential records are a top NDC review priority. We continued accepting comments and suggestions via email and the NDC Blog through July 2, 2010, and we are currently reviewing the guidance in completing the final Prioritization Plan.
 - We established a website to provide timely information on the NDC and a Blog to encourage and facilitate public comment. Both are available at <http://archives.gov/declassification>.

- On June 23, at the National Archives Building, we held an Open Forum hosted by the Archivist of the United States to discuss the Prioritization Plan and the stand up of the NDC.

- **Process Improvement:**
 - During May 25 - 27, we held a three-day equity recognition training program to instruct reviewers on equities in the NARA backlog. Fifteen agencies presented equity briefings and more than 240 review personnel from 26 agencies attended.
 - We implemented the following improved business processes to improve efficiency and manage risk for the declassification of Federal records:
 - An evaluation process undertaken by teams consisting of an affected collection's Originating Agency, NARA, Department of Energy (DOE) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or other Intelligence Community member to assess the quality of past reviews and the potential sensitivity of the records.
 - A more detailed Quality Assurance sampling process by participating agency representatives to expand the parameters of the above assessment, when needed. Quality assurance was completed on 16, 216,112 pp during the reporting period.
 - Completion of all declassification processing prior to archival processing to avoid delays in making declassified records available to researchers.
 - We validated these new business processes and risk management strategies by successfully running four pilot projects treating 2,727,500 pp, 74 collections, and eight record groups.

- We completed preservation actions on all Federal classified special media records with a review deadline of 2011. These records are now in a format that can be reviewed by the equity-holding agencies.

- We established a classified special media lab to support Agency reviews of their classified equities in multiple special media formats.

- **Review:**
 - The draft Prioritization Plan is incorporating the interests of NARA researchers, the general public, and Federal agencies and the Public Interest Declassification Board recommendation that records of high public interest receive declassification priority. We are also factoring in the likelihood of declassification, including complexity and sensitivity of information and age of the records, in our prioritization structure.

- We prioritized certain collections within the Truman through Carter Presidential Libraries, as well as the China-associated materials within the Kissinger Personal Paper Collection, for completion of referral review through the Remote Archives Capture (RAC) project.
- During the reporting period, referral review was ongoing under the RAC program. The Truman through Carter Presidential Libraries have had scanned 3,353,657 pp for review under RAC. Since 1997, 1,753,956 pp have been completed for declassification review, and as of 30 June 2010, 1,599,701 pp remain. Over one million pages have been returned to the Presidential Libraries, and other pages are undergoing quality assurance reviews and library archival processing. These pages are not reported as part of the Federal accessioned-records backlog in the **Status of the Workload and Production** portion below.
- During the reporting period, agencies were continuing to do page-by-page equity review for their referrals in the Interagency Referral Center. 649, 221 referred pages were completed for equity review. Of those pages, 318, 647 pp were declassified and 330, 574 pp were exempted.
- **New issues and business processes under development:**
 - We recognize the need to track all records from accessioning to their final availability to the public in order to facilitate referral review for declassification and release. We are therefore looking to new IT system designs to support improved NDC processes, improved data collection, and integration.
 - We are intent on developing new and more efficient processes for interagency declassification review and processing of special media and electronic records.
 - At the same time, we are crafting better work processes for Freedom of Information Act/ Mandatory Declassification Reviews for classified Federal records to provide for more timely responses to public requests.

Interagency Cooperation:

Agencies from the Intelligence, Defense, Law Enforcement, and Diplomatic Communities participated in the twice weekly meetings of the NDC Program Management Team, successfully developing standard operating procedures and improved business processes. DOE began expanding its workforce commitment in order to assess all records in the backlog. The following agencies supported Evaluation Team and Quality Assurance Team activities: Army, Department of State, National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Air Force, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Department of Justice, with the heaviest participation by CIA and DOE.

The NDC Joint Referral Center, stood up in March by Department of Defense (DOD) to coordinate and facilitate the review and referral of the DOD subset to the *backlog*, are conducting a 100% quality assurance review of untabbed (non-exempted or referred) DOD records and a final review of DOD referrals to DOD components. The Armed Services, Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD), JCS, DIA,

NSA, and NARA are participating. This nascent project has completed 215,000 pp, releasing 110, 432 pp out right. These results will be reflected in the **Status of the Workload and Production** numbers below when the records are returned to NARA for final processing.

On June 24, we welcomed visiting archivists from the Netherlands and Belgium, who were very keen to learn about the processes and interagency activity of the NDC. Representatives from DOJ, JCS, Department of State and CIA discussed their work and described their review and referral process for the visitors.

Status of the Workload and Production:

This six-month report for the 1 January – 30 June 2010 period provides the status on the backlog prior to the complete implementation of the new business processes developed for the NDC and discussed above: the revised inter-agency Quality Assurance Sampling process went into effect in April; the remaining processes, although piloted and initiated, will be fully operational during the 1 July – 31 December 2010 reporting period. In the next report, the workload stages and production numbers will be more reflective of those new processes.

Total backlog pages as of January 1, 2010: 417, 916, 550 pp

Total pages released to the open shelves: 7, 830, 322 pp

Total backlog pages as of June 30, 2010: 410, 086, 228 pp