



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

OFFICE of INSPECTOR GENERAL

Date : February 25, 2015

Reply to : Office of Inspector General (OIG)

Subject : Management Letter No. 15-09 Security Concerns for NARA Holdings

To : William Mayer, Executive, Research Services (R)

The Office of Inspector General (OIG), Office of Investigations (OI) identified several concerns while investigating an apparent attempt to remove a NARA holding. These concerns involve: 1) an inadequate research room inspection of items the researcher was removing, 2) NARA did not ensure accurate dates were recorded on Reference Service Slips, 3) NARA's inability to identify the location of a NARA holding prior to providing it to a researcher, and 4) the use of outdated and inconsistent security guidance.

Background

On August 13, 2014, the Holdings Protection Team (HPT), Security Management Division (BX), notified the OI that on August 8, 2014, a private researcher left the 4th floor research room at NARA's College Park, MD facility (Archives II) with a VHS tape identified as NARA item number 306.9891, *Truman - Years of Decision* (Truman tape).¹ The Truman tape was laying in plain view on a cart when the researcher reported to the research room inspection area. However, research room personnel did not discover it. At the end of the inspection, the researcher knocked the Truman tape off their cart, retrieved it from the floor, and placed it under the document security bag on their cart. While in line at the first floor researcher exit inspection station the researcher removed the tape from their cart and exited the line with it in their hand. The security officer staffing the first floor researcher exit inspection station identified the Truman tape as a NARA holding and recovered it from the researcher. After the first floor exit inspection, papers fell from an unknown location on the researcher's cart. The security officer collected the papers from the floor, provided them back to the researcher, and the researcher left NARA.

Inadequate Research Room Inspection

Surveillance footage shows the Truman tape was lying in plain view on the researcher's cart during their exit inspection in the research room. The researcher even had to pick up the Truman

¹ The Truman tape was contained in NARA Record Group 306, Records of the United States Information Agency.

tape in order to open their laptop computer during the exit inspection. Further, at the end of the inspection the researcher knocked the Truman tape off their cart and picked it up off the floor prior to leaving. At no time did the exit inspection personnel identify the Truman tape. Further, no NARA staff ever physically came to the cart to perform any aspect of the inspection. There was only one monitor working the research room at the time.

Inaccurate Reference Service Slips Not Caught by NARA Staff

NARA staff provided us the researcher's Reference Service Slips (NA Form 14001), some of which were dated July 8, 2014. Based on researcher badge access reports, the researcher visited NARA on August 8, 2014 and there was no record of a visit on July 8, 2014.

A NARA supervisor stated staff erred by not carefully reviewing the Reference Service Slips to confirm the correct date the researcher requested NARA records. The supervisor stated NARA's research room staff is obligated to ensure accurate information is recorded on Reference Service Slips - such as the date of request. This is important to the OIG as we frequently rely on Reference Service Slips during investigations. Incorrect information can impede our ability to gather reliable and accurate data pertaining lost or stolen NARA holdings.

NARA Was Unable to Identify Where the Truman Tape Had Been Held

NARA was unable to tell the OI whether the Truman tape had been stored in Stack 450 (a closed stack) or within the Motion Picture, Sound, and Video Research Room self-service area (an open stack). A NARA supervisor agreed this was a concern, but stated NARA's new holdings database, the Holdings Management System (HMS), will track the physical location of items contained in this record group. Knowing the physical location of where NARA stores a holding is pertinent to the OI's ability to investigate theft because the OI needs the ability to establish the last known location of missing holdings.

Security Guidance is Outdated and Inconsistent

There is no readily available, up-to-date guidance for how researchers are supposed to use the locking green security bags at Archives II. There is a one-page sheet available online, but it still discusses property passes, which have not been issued to researchers for quite some time. The computer training at Archives II for new researchers does not address the security bags, and there is no handout or other written guidance available for researchers. This can lead to inconsistencies in how the security bags are used and what is required to be in them. For example, the online sheet implies all papers (aside from the now defunct property passes) must be placed in the bag. However, in the case at issue, as the researcher exited the first floor inspection desk, loose papers were seen falling onto the floor from the researcher's cart in the security video footage. These papers had not been in the security bag. After several moments,

the security officer collected these documents, viewed them², and provided them to the researcher who had then returned.

Further, the security officer post orders pertaining to document saves³ at the inspection station - *Post 5 Research Center Entry/Exit Controller, Archives II, Security Post Orders, March 16, 2013* – are outdated and offer conflicting direction. For example, the orders advise researchers are to return to the research room where document saves will be re-examined by research room staff. However, the post orders also advise a research room supervisor is to report to the inspection station to examine document saves. This also appears to conflict with the computer training for researchers, which states if there is an issue the security officer will send the researcher back to the research room. In the case at issue, the first floor security officer stated he attempted to have a research room staff member come to the security desk to collect the Truman tape, but was told the research room did not have adequate staffing to send someone.

Conclusion

We believe the issues noted in this investigation represent a serious risk to NARA's holdings and deserve attention. Please notify us within 30 days how, or if, you plan to address the concerns raised in this management letter. Also, please advise us when the physical location of records contained in NARA Record Group 306, Records of the United States Information Agency, has been fully uploaded into HMS.

If you have any questions concerning the information presented in this management letter, please do not hesitate to contact me at (301) 837-3000. As with all OIG products, we will determine what information is publicly posted on our website from this management letter. Should you or management have any redaction suggestions based on FOIA exemptions, please submit them to my counsel within two weeks from the date of this letter. Should we receive no response within this time frame, we will interpret that as confirmation NARA does not desire any redactions to the posted letter.



James Springs
Acting Inspector General

CC: Archivist David Ferriero, N

² An investigative archivist reviewed the video and determined they were the same size and shape as a researcher's copy of Reference Service Slips.

³ A "document save" occurs when NARA security officers identify a researcher in possession of a NARA holding when the researcher presents themselves for exit inspection.