

PUBLIC INTEREST DECLASSIFICATION BOARD MEETING

Monday, December 14, 2009

AGENDA

LOCATION: Department of State
Room 1205

TIME: 9:15 AM –11:45 AM
(Executive Session)

I. Welcome (5 minutes)

II. 2. Overview of FRUS project plan and HAC role (15 minutes)
(HAC and HO)

Possible questions

- What is FRUS? What does the HAC do?
- How has FRUS changed from Eisenhower administration (66 volumes) to the Reagan administration (38 volumes planned)?
- What role does the HAC play in advising the Historian's Office in improving the volumes?
- Can the Historian's Office research and write about key classified events or policies that may take much longer to be declassified?

III. Current Issues and Challenges (45 minutes)
(HAC, PIDB, and HO)

Possible [questions]:

- Is the declassification process working? What would improve the declassification process? Does the High Level Panel adjudicate all concerns?
- What are the challenges related to conducting research on the Reagan administration (sheer number of classified records? access issues? increasing focus on multiple equity records? vice presidential records? how to decide what the volume topics should be)?
- Nixon administration: 1.5 million pages of NSC records (450,000 classified)
- Reagan administration: 8 million pages of just classified records?
- What will the impact of the digital age have on both the Historians and their work processes (e.g. will the nature of the volumes need to change) as well as on end users of FRUS (e.g. will the way in which FRUS is used change)?

- How will the Historians/HAC ensure that our nation's most significant policy decisions have been researched and captured?
- What are the implications of "official" vs. "unofficial" release and reclassification of widely known records?

IV. Break (10 minutes)

V. Envisioning a New System (60 minutes)
(Mr. Faga)

- Current Classification system was created before World War II
 - Based on the concept of "need to know" that limits distribution "Paper-based"
 - Classified information usually remained tightly controlled within an office or agency ("Silo/Smokestack Effect")
 - Safeguarding means locking the file cabinet or vault
- Proposed amendment to the Executive Order
- Need for wholly new Executive Order
 - Must be based on the concept of information sharing across government
 - "Born digital"
 - Must focus on disseminating information electronically
 - Must ensure that critical historical information is preserved and archived (records management) and declassification is automatic
- Concepts for a new framework include:
 - Horizontal information sharing
 - Firmer definitions on core concepts of classification (e.g. "damage to national security" and "protection of sources and methods")
 - Precedent setting
 - Advantageous release (for decision advantage)
- Capturing our classified history early

Possible questions:

- What suggestions do you have that could be used to create a new system?
- What does the HAC believe should be the definitions of the core concepts?
- How can the challenges of trying to declassify 8 million pages at the Reagan Library be addressed or avoided in a new Presidential Library?
- How would precedent-setting affect the work of the FRUS? Would it help?
- Is there value in organizing, researching, and documenting an event contemporaneously?

- Even if it is classified? Are there specific actions that would limit classification at creation?
- What could a new classification system include that would facilitate information sharing?
- How will historians and others use "historical" information in the future (e.g. how will students and others access, research, and compile records that are digital?)

VI. Conclusion