

PUBLIC INTEREST DECLASSIFICATION BOARD

Minutes of the Meeting

November 21, 2008

On Friday, November 21, 2008, the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) held a public meeting from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in Room 105 of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. Those members in attendance included: Martin Faga, Chair of the PIDB; David Skaggs; Ronald Radosh; William Studeman; and Herbert Briick. Others attending included: William J. Bosanko, Executive Secretary of the PIDB; William Cira, AJ Lutz, William Carpenter, Christopher O. Hofius, and Julie A. Agurkis, of the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), serving as the PIDB support staff. Many members of the public were in attendance of the public meeting.

I. Welcome and Opening Remarks, Chair (Martin Faga)

Mr. Faga opened the meeting at 9:35 a.m. He introduced and turned the floor over to Mr. Thibodeau.

II. Electronic Records Archive Project Update (Ken Thibodeau, Director)

Mr. Thibodeau provided the Board with an update on NARA's Electronic Records Archives Project (ERA). He reported that the project is focused on redesigning the life cycle management of records and will provide access to both electronic and paper records. Mr. Thibodeau said that ERA will be capable of accepting all formats of electronic records and, once in operation, will allow agencies to use the system for online transferring of electronic records to NARA. The Board asked if ERA will include a declassification component. Mr. Thibodeau said that there is not a declassification function yet, but when funds become available, one will be developed. By January 2011, ERA will reach full operational capability for unclassified records. All agencies will be required to use the system for records management processes.

III. The National Declassification Initiative (NDI) and 9/11 Commission Archival Processing Update (Michael Kurtz & Steve Tilley)

Dr. Kurtz began by discussing the 9/11 Commission archival processing project and reported that documents have undergone line-by-line archival review and NARA is hoping to release 900,000 pages of Memoranda for the Record created by the 9/11 Commission in January 2009. The Board asked about the withdrawal of records. Mr. Tilley said that the withdrawals were kept to a minimum and a majority of those withholdings were for privacy reasons rather than for reasons of national security. Mr. Tilley stated that the emphasis on the NDI and priority processing of the 9/11 Commission records has created a backlog in NARA FOIA requests.

The Board asked Dr. Kurtz for suggestions on the creation of a new Executive order on Classified National Security Information. Dr. Kurtz said that current exemptions from automatic declassification need to have tighter definitions and the declassification guide process needs to be reformed.

Dr. Kurtz stated that the NDI began in March 2006 as a voluntary program to deal with referrals and quality assurance issues. He reported that, at the current rate, the NDI is a 41-year project, as it has evolved into a 100% review process. He stated that at this rate, the initiative is not sustainable. Dr. Kurtz emphasized that the current Executive Order needs to be changed before a National Declassification Center (NDC) is possible. He informed the Board that NARA intends to have a robust proposal for the NDC which would provide reviewers with a centralized process for increased efficiency.

IV. Open Forum

The Chair opened the floor to the public. There was no public comment.

V. Meeting Adjourned at 12:34 p.m.