



# Introduction to the National Declassification Center



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## *AGENCY SERVICES BRIDG MEETING*

*JUNE 27, 2012*

*DON MCILWAIN*

*FOIA/MDR DIVISION*

*NATIONAL DECLASSIFICATION CENTER*



# Establishing the NDC



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- Executive Order 13526, signed by President Obama on 29 December 2009, directed the Archivist of the United States to establish a National Declassification Center (NDC) that would:
  - Streamline declassification processes.
  - Facilitate quality assurance measures.
  - Implement standard training for declassification reviewers.
- On 4 January 2010, less than a week after the President signed EO 13526, NARA established the NDC at Archives II in College Park, Maryland.



# Establishing the NDC



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- A Presidential Memorandum accompanying the EO provided guidance on where the NDC should focus first. Specifically, by 31 December 2013, the NDC must process for release or properly exempt, the approximately 408 million pages of previously reviewed archival Federal records accessioned to NARA (aka “The Backlog”)



# Tackling the Backlog



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- In order to eliminate the multi-million page backlog by the President's deadline, the NDC must
  - Share equity recognition information between agencies
  - Adopt a risk management approach in processing records for release
  - Conduct quality assurance surveys of previously reviewed records and take corrective action where needed
  - Eliminate the cycle of endless re-review and second guessing
  - Apply the Presidential Memorandum guidance of further referral protection for only: (a) the identity of a confidential human source or a human intelligence source; or (b) key design concepts of weapons of mass destruction.



# Quality Challenges



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Agency review programs have suffered from high volumes of records, inconsistent funding, and varying review methods and processes. These have resulted in

- ✦ Uneven quality of review.
- ✦ Confusing non-standard way to mark exemptions, referrals or exclusions.
- ✦ Inadvertent release and subsequent “reclassification” and re-review of records: the NDC Merry-Go-Round.
- ✦ Limited information sharing, especially equity recognition guidance, between agencies.
- ✦ Insufficient control and tracking of the movement of records, leading to duplication and possible inadvertent release.

# Key Processing Steps

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## ○ Assessment:

- The Evaluation Step samples 10% of 10% of the boxes in larger collections with completed Kyl-Lott (DOE RD/FRD) review focusing on referral for human source and Weapons of Mass Destruction
  - A second quality assurance sampling (QART) is available for disputed (questionable) record series.
- The Kyl Evaluation Step addresses those series with no evidence or documentation of Kyl review. Series are surveyed to determine if they satisfy the “Highly Unlikely” categorization; if so, they are forwarded to Evaluation. Otherwise Kyl page-level review satisfies all quality concerns. Current weekly average: 473K pages; Total completed: 11.3M pages
  - Pages identified as still requiring page-level review, highly unlikely certification, or explanatory documentation: **150M pages**

# Key Processing Steps

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- **Completed:**
- The Withdrawal and Indexing Step has benefited most from process and data capture efficiencies.
  - Pre-streamlining: 283,885 pp finalized/monthly
  - With streamlined data input: more than 3.2M pp finalized/monthly
  - Eliminated NDC re-boxing or archival descriptions.

Backlog pages as of NDC stand up on 1 January 2010: 372M pages

Backlog pages **Assessed** (completed evaluation or assigned to remand) (1 January 2010 – 2 June 2012): **334M pages**

[Backlog pages still requiring assessment: 37M pages]

Backlog pages successfully completing **Quality Assurance** (passed evaluation or QART, completed remand): **173M pages**

- Backlog pages **pending DOE QCR: 45.8M pages**
- Backlog pages **pending final segregation: 81M pages**
- Backlog pages **completing all processing: 46.2M pages**

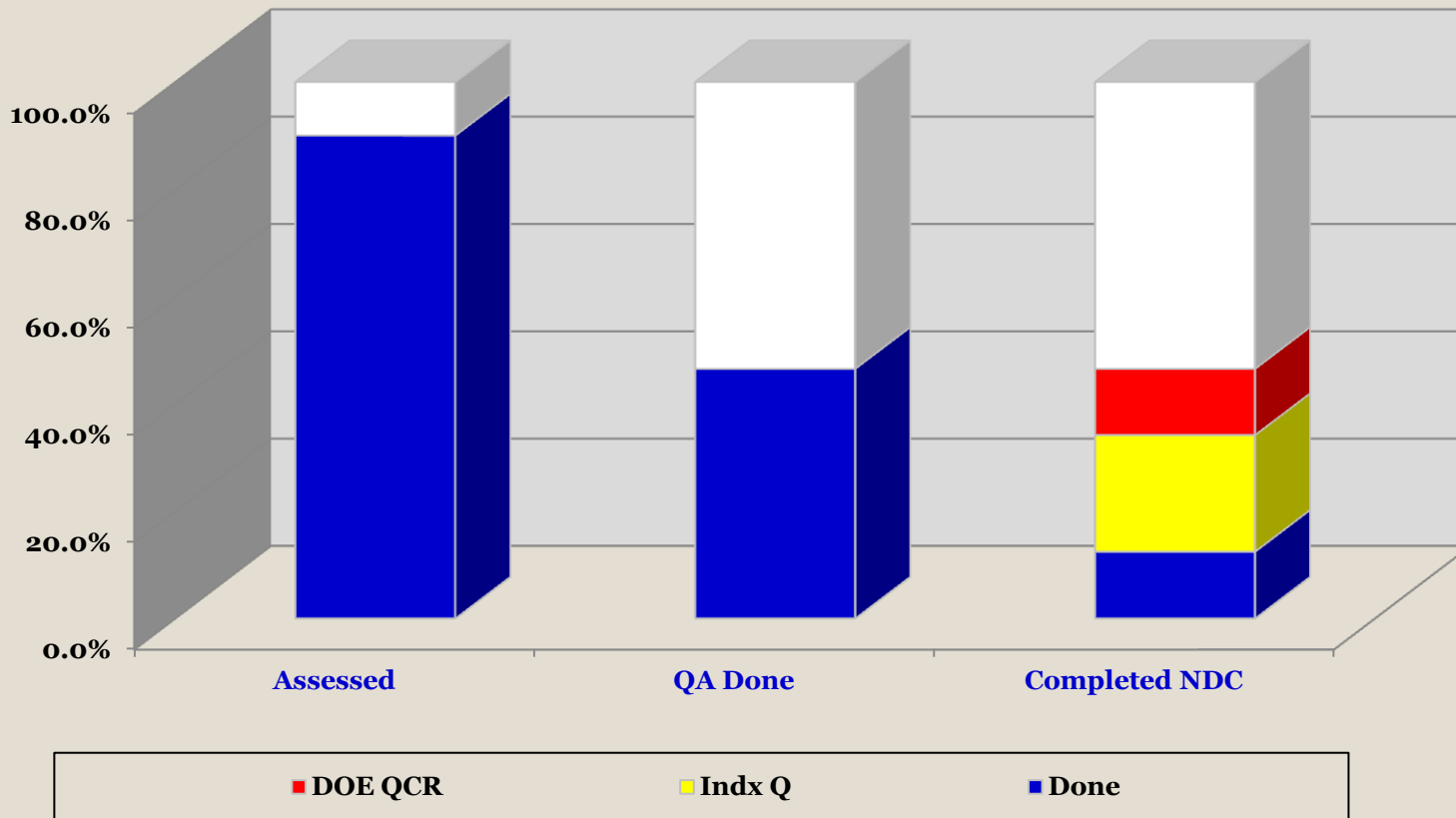
[38M pages declassified; average weekly release rate is 87%]



# The NDC Backlog Processing Success

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## NDC Production





# The NDC Organization



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- 78 NARA Staff Members
- Four Divisions:
  - Evaluation
  - Indexing/Declassification
  - Production/Workflow
  - FOIA/MDR
- An Example of Inter-agency Cooperation at its Best with Representatives from Army, CIA, DIA, DOE, DOJ, DOS, FBI, JCS, MDA, NASA, Navy, NGA, NSA, OSD, USAF, and WHS Participating

- Successfully fulfilling the President's goals
  
- Protecting what is sensitive and releasing the rest:
  - Improved communication between records management and declassification
  - Assistance in ensuring that review requirements are met prior to accessioning
  - Less risk of security violations



# SUCCESS



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- Supporting Open Government:
  - Public interaction and communication
  - Interagency communication and collaboration
- Building Bridges:
  - NARA Records management – declassification training course
  - Better FOIA/MDR processing
    - More focused requests
    - Leveraging technology to improve the consultation process



# QUESTIONS?



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For additional information or questions regarding NDC process, or an electronic copy of the Classified Records Check Sheet, contact:

Don McIlwain

301-837-0587

[don.mcilwain@nara.gov](mailto:don.mcilwain@nara.gov)