



Office of the Chief
Records Officer for the
U.S. Government

Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.

April 20, 2022

Maurice King
Department of the Defense
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, 5E170
Washington, DC 22350

Dear Maurice King,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) was made aware of a potential unauthorized disposition of permanent records at the Department of the Navy's USS Charleston in the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. Allegedly, records were being reviewed and removed by private naval organizations for historical reference purposes. According to information we have received from a researcher who was attempting to FOIA specific records, the Navy is housing approximately 300 boxes of records in the cargo hold of the USS Charleston in Philadelphia Navy Yard. It is alleged that these boxes could contain Iowa Class battleship plans, manuals, and other materials that document these ships; engineering logs; and other federal records related to Navy ship development and design.

A *Business Insider* article documents that the Navy allowed a private, non-profit organization access to these boxes. It is unknown if this organization removed any federal records in addition to the spare parts documented in the article (attached). We are also in possession of an email documenting that the Navy allowed several private organizations to review the material "locate, tag, and photograph the items they desire when the ship goes to scrap, and the material is eventually removed. In addition, the groups were able to go into boxes that were not stacked or damaged and found a good deal of items they wanted such as ships drawings and manuals, valves, and dinner china."

Per 36 CFR 1226.26, permanent records cannot be donated or loaned. Agencies may donate only temporary records, eligible for disposal, to individuals, institutions, and other government agencies with NARA's written approval. However, per 36 CFR 1228.10, loans of permanent or

unscheduled records between federal agencies or to non-federal recipients require prior written approval from NARA.

NARA requests that the Navy investigate this matter to determine if the allegation of removal or alienation of records is accurate. In accordance with 36 CFR 1230.16, NARA also requests that you provide a response within 30 days regarding the findings of your investigation.

If records have been removed from the Navy's custody, this report must include a complete description of the records with volume and dates if known; a description of the office maintaining the records; a statement of the exact circumstances surrounding the removal, defacing, alteration, or destruction of records; a statement of the safeguards that have been or will be implemented to prevent future unauthorized disposition of historical records.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. This case will remain open until the Navy has provided accurate information and documentation that the issue has been completely resolved. If you have any questions, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,



LAURENCE BREWER
Chief Records Officer
for the U.S. Government

Enclosure



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June 26, 2023

Helena Gilbert
Department of Defense
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon
Washington, DC 22350

Dear Helena Gilbert,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) acknowledges receipt of the Department of the Navy's report on the potential unauthorized disposition of USS Iowa Class Battleship records. The records were stored onboard the ex-USS Charleston at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard.

According to the report, due to a misinterpretation of records management guidance, the records were erroneously transferred from the ex-USS Charleston to two private museums. We understand that Navy has recovered all of the records and is in the process of preparing them for transfer to NARA. We further understand that to prevent future incidents, Navy is revising its records management training to make it explicitly clear that no records can be donated to any private organizations without written permission from the Department of the Navy Directives and Records Management Division (DRMD) and NARA.

Based on this information, NARA is satisfied with the actions Navy has taken and considers this matter closed. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

LAURENCE BREWER
Chief Records Officer
for the U.S. Government