



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

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April 20, 2022

Maurice King
Department of the Defense
Department of the Navy
1000 Navy Pentagon, 5E170
Washington, DC 22350
maurice.king@navy.mil

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 Allegedly, records were being reviewed and removed by private naval organizations for historical reference purposes.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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence V. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

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

Enclosure