

Department of State Records in the National Archives

The records of the Department of State are the primary source materials for documenting American foreign policy and relations with other countries. Many of the records, especially reports from American diplomatic and consular representatives abroad, are also useful for studying events in foreign countries and areas.

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Introduction to the Records, and Preparing for Research at NARA

The information on the following pages provides a general description of Department of State records and finding aids in the National Archives, and it is essential that you understand this information before beginning your research, whether you come to NARA in person, whether you attempt to search for descriptions online in the Archival Research Catalog (ARC), or whether you plan to request a specific search by mail.

Although most records in the National Archives are explained in terms of record groups and series, Department of State records may best be understood when described in the following categories:

I. Central Files (in Record Group 59)

The largest and most important category of Department of State records; consists of the main series of records maintained in the Department of State. The files include Department of State communications with U.S. diplomatic and consular offices in foreign countries, with foreign diplomatic and consular offices in the United States, with other U.S. Government agencies and the public, as well as internal documentation.

II. Headquarters Decentralized Files. (Also in Record Group 59)

This category covers records originally filed in the Department of State, but not as part of the central files. This includes records of organizational units and records relating to certain functions, special subjects, events, or individuals. Many of these records consist of the so-called "Lot Files."

III. Foreign Service Post Files (Record Group 84)

The third main category of records, Foreign Service Post Files, are records created and originally maintained at American diplomatic and consular posts overseas and at U.S. missions to international organizations, such as the United Nations.

IV. Other Record Groups (for specialized topics)

The fourth category covers specialized Department of State records, records from agencies over which the Department of State had policy guidance, and the records of defunct agencies that became the responsibility of the Department of State.

Microfilm

Many Department of State records described here are available on National Archives Microfilm Publications. The Diplomatic Records microfilm catalog is divided into five parts. First is the introduction. Part II is a brief description of each publication, arranged by record group. Part III is a list of publications of Decimal File records, part of the central file, 1910-63. Part IV is a list of publications by country or area. Part V is a roll-by-roll breakdown, usually with dates or file numbers, of each publication listed, arranged by publication number.

To search this catalog online:

1. From the main Microfilm Catalog page, click Advanced Search (next to the Search button)
2. In the right-hand column, under Subject Catalog, select "Diplomatic Records"
3. Enter any related Subject Terms in the line above, such as a country name
4. Hit "Search"

I. Central Files (Record Group 59)

For most research topics, the central files are the largest and most important category of Department of State records. The files include Department of State communications with U.S. diplomatic and consular offices in foreign countries and with foreign diplomatic and consular offices in the United States, and correspondence with other U.S. Government agencies and the public. The central files also include internal memorandums and reports. Despite the proliferation of decentralized files in the period after World War II, the so-called "Lot Files," research in almost all topics relating to U.S. foreign policy and foreign affairs should begin with the central files of the Department of State.

Record keeping in the Department of State changed over the years. As a result, how you use the records will depend on the dates of the subject of your research. There are records from five major periods of record keeping:

- 1789 to 1906 - Records are arranged by series, or type of records, thereunder chronologically.
- 1906 to 1910 - NUMERICAL AND MINOR FILE - The Numerical File is arranged numerically in 25,892 primary numbered subject case files while the much smaller Minor File is arranged alphabetically by subject.

- 1910 to Jan. 1963 - DECIMAL FILE - Records are arranged by subject according to a pre-determined decimal subject classification. There were two different iterations of the decimal file, covering different periods of time (1910-1949 and 1950-January 1963).
- Feb. 1963 to June 1973 - SUBJECT NUMERIC FILE - Records are arranged by subject according to a pre-determined subject-numeric classification scheme.
- July 1973 to Present - STATE ARCHIVING SYSTEM (SAS) -- Records exist in electronic format, on microfilm, and on paper. Both the declassified finding aids and the declassified electronic records are available through AAD, Access to Archival Databases. Only the records dating through 1976 are in the National Archives. Later records remain in the custody of the Department of State. Access to records held by the Department is possible only through a Freedom of Information Act request directed to that agency.

1789 to 1906

Records: The records are divided into three main categories: Diplomatic, Consular, and Miscellaneous. Each category is further divided into a number of series, or types, of records in which the documents are generally arranged chronologically by date sent.

The Diplomatic Correspondence is arranged by country in four primary series of records: (1) The Department's instructions to U.S. Ministers and Ambassadors. These records are available on two microfilm publications. The first is for diplomatic and consular instructions, 1791-1801, arranged chronologically (M-28, 5 rolls), and the second is for diplomatic instructions, 1801-1906, arranged by country (M-77, 175 rolls); (2) Diplomatic despatches, or reports, received in the Department of State. These records are available on 42 separate microfilm publications, arranged by name of the country from which the reports came; (3) Notes from the Department to Foreign Legations and Embassies in Washington. These records are available on one microfilm publication (M-99, 99 rolls), arranged by country; (4) Notes to the Department from Foreign Legations and Ministers and Embassies in Washington. These records are available on 52 separate microfilm publications arranged by name of country with which the U.S. had diplomatic representation.

Most of the Consular Correspondence consists of despatches from U.S. consular officials, arranged by city, and thereunder chronologically. There is a separate microfilm publication for each city in which the United States had consular representation. Department of State instructions to consuls are arranged in one large chronological file instead of by city. The records for only one time period, 1801-1834, are available on microfilm (M-78, 7 rolls). There are also Notes to Foreign Consuls in the United States (M-663, 4 rolls) for the period 1853-1906 and Notes from Foreign Consuls in the United States for the period 1789-1906 (M-664, 11 rolls). Both series are arranged chronologically.

The third category is the Miscellaneous Correspondence. This includes records that do not come under the headings of the diplomatic and consular records. It

includes correspondence with other U.S. government agencies and the public. The records are divided into two series, each arranged chronologically. The Domestic Letters (M-40, 171 rolls) consist of copies of letters sent from the Department of State. The Miscellaneous Letters (M-179, 1,310 rolls) are the letters and other communications received by the Department.

Finding aids: Registers for diplomatic instructions and notes from the Department, 1870-1906, are on rolls 11-18 of M-17. Registers for diplomatic despatches and notes to the Department, 1870-1906 are on rolls 1-10 of M-17. Registers for consular despatches received, 1870-1906, are on rolls 19-44 of M-17. The registers for the Domestic Letters, 1802-1811, and 1840-1906, are on rolls 57-71 of M-17. The registers for the Miscellaneous Letters, 1860-1906, are on rolls 45-56 of M-17.

1906 to 1910: Numerical and Minor File

Records: From August 1906 to early 1910, records previously filed in the separate series described above plus internal Departmental documentation were brought together in numbered subject case files and alphabetically arranged subject files. There is no arrangement to the numbers; as each new case was begun, it was given the next number in sequence. There are over 25,000 numbered files. Records on routine matters were filed in the Minor File, which is arranged alphabetically by country for diplomatic matters, by city for consular matters, and by name of correspondent for letters to and from other sources. The entirety of the Numerical and Minor Files are available on microfilm (M-862, 1,241 rolls) with a descriptive pamphlet.

Numerical File Numbers:

As each subject case was opened, it was given the next number in sequence without regard to subject. For example, File 5275, dealing with political relations between the United States and Greece, is followed by File 5276 on the American Consular Agency at Sunderland, England. And in some cases there are multiple files on essentially the same subject. Records on political relations between the United States and Greece are in Files 5275, 13321, and 19189. The first document in the file bears the case number without any other designation. Subsequent documents are given a unique enclosure number separated from the file number with a slant (/) mark.

Finding aids: A Card Index arranged alphabetically by name or country or city, indicates the file number. It is available on microfilm (M-1889, 86 rolls). In addition, there are "Purport List" document listings arranged according to the subject categories in the Decimal File established in 1910.

1910 to January 1963: Central Decimal File

For the period from early 1910 through January 1963, records are arranged by subject according to a predetermined decimal subject classification scheme. In general, the records are arranged in broad categories by country and thereunder by subject. There were two major versions of the decimal classification scheme: the

first covered the period 1910-49 and the second covered the period 1950-January 1963. The files are divided into seven chronological file segments: 1910-29, 1930-39, 1940-44, and 1945-49, 1950-54, 1955-59, and 1960- January 1963. The 1938 edition of the filing manual covers most records of the 1910-49 period. During the late 1940s, the Department issued revised sections of the filing scheme to cover new subjects, such as the United Nations. The revised filing manuals issued in 1950, 1955, and 1960, cover the blocks of files beginning in each of those years. The files include despatches, telegrams, airgrams, instructions, diplomatic notes, reports, correspondence, memorandums, and related documentation.

Decimal File Subjects

Under the decimal file classification scheme used between 1910 and 1949, the records are arranged in nine subject classes: 0 (General. Miscellaneous), 1 (Administration), 2 (Extradition), 3 (Protection of Interests), 4 (Claims), 5 (International Congresses and Conferences), 6 (Commerce), 7 (Political Relations of State), and 8 (Internal Affairs of States). Many of the records in classes 7 and 8 for the 1910-1944 period are available as National Archives Microfilm Publications.

From 1950 to 1963, the records are arranged in ten subject classes: 0 (Miscellaneous), 1 (Administration), 2 (Protection of Interests), 3 (International Conferences, Congresses, Meetings and Organizations), 4 (International Trade and Commerce), 5 (International Informational and Educational Relations), 6 (International Political Relations), 7 (Internal Political and National Defense Affairs), 8 (Internal Economic, Industrial, and Social Affairs), and 9 (Communications, Transportation, Science).

Under both versions of the decimal file, each region, country, colony, or other designated geographic entity was assigned a "country number" used as part of the file number for documents in the files. The "country numbers" were two-digit numbers (the United States was "11"), or a combination of a two-digit number followed by a letter (Saudi Arabia was "90f" and "86a" for the 1910-49 and 1950-63 files respectively). "Country numbers" were added and deleted over time and in some cases, the number assigned to a given country, colony, or geographic entity was changed.

For the study of U.S. foreign relations, the most important records **are** found in classes 6, 7, and 8 for the 1910-49 period and classes 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 for the 1950-63 period. Depending upon the specifics of your research topic, other files may contain important documents, too.

Decimal File Numbers:

711.1215/462. Documents indexed and filed until June 1944, were given a unique enclosure number, the number after the slash mark, in each file category. This example indicates the 462nd document in the subject file for political relations (7) between the United States (11) and Mexico (12) about boundary questions (15). In many cases, the reply to an incoming or outgoing communication was given the same enclosure number as the document to which it responds. Some enclosure

numbers include an alphabetical or fractional designator, for example 711.61/470½ and 862.00/169a.

851.00/11-2049. Beginning in June 1944, documents were given an enclosure number, the number after the slash (/) mark, based on the date of the document. This method of filing also was applied to documents of earlier dates that were indexed and filed after the new procedure went into effect. Under this system, more than one document can have the same file number, so additional information, such as telegram or despatch number, is necessary to identify specific documents. The example given indicates a document dated November 20, 1949, in the file internal (8) political affairs (00) of France (51). In some cases, a document may be given the same date enclosure number as an earlier document to which it responds.

At times a word may be added to an existing file number to further refine the subject of the file. For example, for the period of World War II, file "840.48" deals with the general subject of calamities and disasters in Europe. In 1938, the Department of State established the file "840.48 Refugees" for documentation dealing with the issue of refugees in Europe.

Finding Aids

The filing manuals issued by the Department of State and the source notes in the volumes of Foreign Relations of the United States published by the Department of State will assist with identifying basic Decimal File numbers (the numbers and words before the slash (/) mark) or individual documents (both the file number and the number after the slash (/) mark) of interest.

Filing Manuals:

- 1910-1949
- 1950-1954
- 1950-1954
- 1960-January 1963

Other Finding Aids

1. Purport Lists and Cards. Created by the Department of State. A record of the documents in each file, arranged in the same order as the records, showing the file and document number, date, from and to, and the gist or "purport" of the document. Lists or cards are available for each segment, 1910- January 1963. M-973 includes the lists for 1910-29 (rolls 1-223), 1930-39 (rolls 224-431), 1940-June 1944 (rolls 432-602), and cards for July-December 1944 (rolls 603-654). Purport cards for the 1945-49 segment are not on microfilm but are available for research. The Purport Cards for 1950-January 1963 are classified and are not available to researchers. NARA reference staff can perform very limited searches in the classified index for researchers.
2. Source Cards. Created by the Department of State. For each segment 1910-January 1963 there are cards arranged by the source of the communication (country or city or other organization, thereunder to or from, thereunder by

date), or by the Department of State office originating a memorandum. The Source Cards for 1910-1949 are available for research. The Source Cards for 1950-January 1963 are classified and are not available to researchers. NARA reference staff can perform very limited searches in the classified index for researchers.

3. Name Cards. Created by the Department of State. For each segment 1910-January 1963 there are cards which serve as a finding aid for communications from or about private persons or organizations. Name cards help to identify files of interest, but the name card coverage is limited; name cards do not exist for every name mentioned in the records, or there may be only one name card showing a file that may contain many documents. The Name Cards for 1910-1959 are available for research. The Name Cards for 1960-January 1963 are classified and are not available to researchers. NARA reference staff can perform very limited searches in the classified index for researchers.
4. Box Lists. NARA has created box lists for the records in each segment of the Decimal File. These lists are used to identify the specific boxes researchers want to use in the Research Room.

February 1963 to 1973: Subject-Numeric File

Beginning in February 1963, the central file is arranged according to a subject-numeric filing scheme. In general, the records are arranged by subject and thereunder by country. The records are divided into four chronological file segments: February-December 1963, 1964-66, 1967-69, and 1970-73. The files include telegrams, airgrams, instructions, diplomatic notes, reports, correspondence, memorandums, and related documentation. In July 1973, telegrams became part of the State Archiving System, the next recordkeeping system. Hardcopy documents, such as airgrams and memorandums continue in the Subject-Numeric File through December 31, 1973.

Arrangement of the Records

1. Broad categories. The records are divided into eight broad subject classes: Administrative, Consular, Culture and Information, Economic, Political and Defense, Science, Social, and Special (international organizations and conferences).
2. Primary subjects. Each broad subject class is divided into between 3 and 19 different primary subjects (for a total of 56) represented by abbreviations, which form the first element of the file number. For example, the Political and Defense subject class is divided into four primary subjects: CSM (Communism), DEF (Defense), INT (Intelligence), and POL (Political Affairs & Relations).
3. Country, area, or organization. In addition to the subject of the file, the records are further broken down by the country or region or organization. While the country, area, or organization is the second level on which files are divided, it is the third element of the file designation for a given document. Country, region, and organization names may be out in full or they may be abbreviated

using a common abbreviation (USSR for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and UN for the United Nations) or the first few letters of the name (POL for Poland and KOR N for North Korea). For many of the primary subjects there are general files that are not broken down by country, or area, or organization.

4. Subject number. Within each primary subject, records are further divided by subject according to a pre-determined numerical file designation such as 15-1 (Head of State. Executive Branch.) that appear between the primary subject abbreviation and the country or area abbreviation. Thus, the file number POL 15-1 SWE is for documents about political affairs and relations (POL) in Sweden (SWE), specifically about the Swedish Prime Minister (15-1).
5. Date. Documents under each file number are generally filed in reverse chronological order. In those cases where there are multiple folders for records under one file designator, the folders are filed in rough chronological order from earliest to latest.
6. Document numbers. File numbers on documents no longer include an enclosure number, as with the pre-July 1944 documents, or a date-file number, as with the post-June 1944 documents.

Sample Subject-Numeric File Numbers:

FN 9 US-FR Finance ("FN"), United States-France ("US-FR"), Foreign Investment (9)
POL 15-5 US Political Affairs and Relations ("POL"), United States ("US"), Constitution (15-5)
POL 27-14 VIET Political Affairs and Relations ("POL"), Vietnam ("VIET"), Truce, Cease-Fire, Armistice (27-14)
POL 27-3 VIET S Political Affairs and Relations ("POL"), Vietnam South ("VIET S"), Use of Foreign Country Forces (27-3)

Finding Aids

The filing manuals and the footnotes in the volumes published by the Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, help to identify relevant Subject-Numeric File numbers or individual documents.

Filing Manuals:

- 1963 - 1965
- 1965 - 1973

Other Finding Aids

1. Source Cards. Created by the Department of State. For each segment 1963-1973 there are cards arranged by the source of the communication (country or city or other organization, thereunder to or from, thereunder by date), or by the Department of State office originating a memorandum. The Source Cards are classified and are not available to researchers. NARA reference staff can

perform very limited searches in the classified index for researchers.

2. Name Cards. Created by the Department of State. For each segment 1963-1973 there are cards which serve as a finding aid for communications from or about private persons or organizations. Name cards help to find the right Decimal File number, but the name card coverage is limited; name cards do not exist for every name mentioned in the records, or there may be only one name card showing a file that may contain many documents. The Name Cards are classified and are not available to researchers. NARA reference staff can perform very limited searches in the classified index for researchers.
3. Box Lists. NARA has created box lists for the records in each segment of the Subject Numeric File. These lists are used to identify the specific boxes researchers want to use in the Research Room.

June 1973 to Present: State Archiving System (SAS)

On July 1, 1973, the Department began phasing in a new filing system. Records were no longer arranged by subject. Documents were indexed using an automated tool with most telegrams being stored electronically and hard-copy documents (beginning January 1, 1974) being stored on microfilm. Much more information about the records can be found in the associated FAQs.

You may gain access to the declassified telegrams and declassified index information about the microfilmed documents on the NARA website at <http://aad.archives.gov/aad/>. Paper copies of the declassified documents on the microfilm are available for use at the National Archives.

The National Archives has accessioned the records through 1976. Central file records dating after 1976 remain in the custody of the Department of State. You will need to file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request directly with the Department to request access to records in their custody.

Changes in the Central Files

From the early 20th Century to World War II, the Central Files are the primary source of documentation on U.S. foreign policy. Beginning in the 1940s, some documentation is found in the decentralized files, with a consequent diminishment of the Central Files. This is especially true of high-level offices such as the Executive Secretariat and the Policy Planning Staff, but also extends to operating bureaus and offices. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Department designated some bureaus and offices to maintain officially decentralized files, further diminishing the Central Files. In those cases, even though there are relevant file categories in the Central Files, most documentation was filed in the decentralized files.

II. Headquarters Decentralized (Record Group 59)

This category covers records originally filed in offices in the Department of State, not as part of the central files. These records can be a valuable complement to the

documentation found in the central files. Included are records of organizational units, records relating to certain functions, special subjects, events or individuals. Some documents duplicate items in the central file; many do not. Many of these records are the so-called "Lot Files."

Records

Most of the records of organizational units come from the various geographic area offices within the Department of State, such as the bureaus dealing with Europe, Africa, Western Hemisphere, Middle/Near East, South Asia, Asia and the Pacific, or the functional bureaus dealing with international organization affairs, politico-military affairs, intelligence and research, or public affairs. Other organizational records originated in major policy offices such as the Secretary of State, the Deputy Secretary of State, the under secretaries, the Executive Secretariat, and the Policy Planning Staff. Some of the specialized subject files deal with the War of 1812, the Civil War, George C. Marshall's Mission to China, atomic energy, disarmament, and the American Revolution bicentennial celebration, and there are records of officials such as Charles E. Bohlen, Arthur Z. Gardiner, Myron Taylor (Personnel Representative of the President to Pope Pius XII), and U. Alexis Johnson. Among the records relating to functions are those dealing with the administration of the Department of State and the Foreign Service, appointments to governmental positions, territorial papers, extraditions, and the Great Seal of the United States.

From the early 20th Century to World War II, the Department filed the majority of the policy-related documentation in the Central Files, and they are the primary source of documentation on U.S. foreign relations. Beginning in the 1940s, the volume of documentation expanded while the Department's filing practices changed, resulting in the preservation of decentralized files dealing with foreign policy matters. This is especially true of high-level offices such as the Executive Secretariat and the Policy Planning Staff, but also extends to operating bureaus and offices. Beginning in the late 1950s, the Department designated some bureaus and offices to maintain officially decentralized files. In those cases, even though there may be relevant file categories in the Central Files, most documentation was filed in the decentralized files.

When the Department of State retired records from agency offices, each body of records was assigned a control number, the "Lot File" number, usually the last two digits of the fiscal year combined with the numerical order of transfer; Lot 59D539 indicates the 539th transfer from a departmental office in calendar year 1959. A "Lot File" may remain intact once it is accessioned by the National Archives. In many cases, numerous Lot Files that constitute segments of a single series retired at different times are combined into one archival series, such as the nine Lot Files combined to form the series "Conference Files, 1949-1963" in the records of the Executive Secretariat. In other cases, a Lot File may be split into more than one series.

Among the major Departmental organizations for which there are records are:

The Secretary of State (S)
The Deputy Secretary of State (D)

Under Secretary of State (U)
Under Secretary for Economic Affairs (E)
Under Secretary for Management (M)
Under Secretary for Political Affairs (P)
Under Secretary for Security Assistance (T)
The Counselor (C)
The Chief of Protocol (S/CPR)
Policy Planning Staff (S/P)
Bureau of Administration (A)
Bureau of African Affairs (AF)
Bureau of Inter-American Affairs (ARA)
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs (EA)
Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB)
Bureau of European Affairs (EUR)
Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs (FE)
Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (NEA)
Bureau of Legislative Affairs (H)
Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA)
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (CU)
Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (HA)
Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR)
Bureau of International Organization Affairs (IO)
Office of the Legal Adviser (L)
Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES)
Bureau of Public Affairs (PA)
Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs (PM)
Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs (SCA)
Bureau of International Scientific and Technological Affairs (SCI)

Finding Aids

A. Records Accessioned Before 1985

These records are generally dated before 1950. They are all fully described in Inventory 15, Inventory of the General Records of the Department of State. Records of interest can be found by using the table of contents and subject index.

B. Records Accessioned After 1985

These records are usually dated after 1950. Some of those series have been described in ARC. In addition, some of the ARC descriptions include a folder list for the records.

III. Foreign Service Post Files of the Department of State (Record Group 84)

U.S. Embassies, U.S. Legations, and U.S. Consulates General, U.S. Consulates, and U.S. Missions to International Organizations

The third main category of records, Foreign Service Post Files, are records originally filed at American diplomatic and consular posts overseas and at U.S. missions to international organizations. These records are, to a certain extent, duplicative of the materials found in the central files (RG 59), although there is often documentation of a local nature not found among the headquarters records and their arrangement may make the post files more useful for certain types of research. Documentation that is unique to post files includes post-to-post communications, intra-post documentation, and correspondence with local officials and businesses which are only summarized or may not be reflected in reports to the Department. There are very few records from American diplomatic and consular posts for the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Other records were lost as a result of natural disasters, wars, or other emergencies, and some records have been destroyed in accordance with archival appraisals.

Records

A. 1789-1912. Records are arranged by name of country for diplomatic posts and by name of city for consular posts, thereunder by type of record, thereunder chronologically. Not all records have been preserved.

B. 1912-1935. Records are arranged by name of country for diplomatic posts and by name of city for consular posts, thereunder by year, and generally thereunder by subject according a decimal filing scheme closely related to that used by the Department of State for its central files. Country numbers were not used, but the file numbers were similar to the Department's Decimal File scheme. Not all records have been preserved.

C. 1936- Records are arranged by country, thereunder by type of office (embassy, legation, or consulate), thereunder by year or block of years, thereunder by subject according to a decimal file scheme or to the subject-numeric file scheme. For the period 1936-48, the records are arranged according a decimal filing scheme closely related to that used by the Department of State for its central files. Country numbers were not used, but the file numbers were similar to the Department's Decimal File scheme. From 1949 to 1963, the records are arranged according a decimal filing scheme unique to Foreign Service Posts. Beginning in 1963, posts once again began using the same basic filing system used for the Department's central files. Not all records have been preserved.

Finding Aids:

- Special List 9, List of Foreign Service Post Records
- Preliminary Inventory 60, Records of Selected Foreign Service Posts
- Filing Manual, 1912-48 [4.54 MB download size]
- Filing Manual, 1949-63 [88.16 MB download size]
- Subject-Numeric Filing Manual, 1963-March 1965 [18.72 MB download size]
- Subject-Numeric Filing Manual, 1965-1973 [35.13 MB download size]

Draft inventories exist for many posts, and for the 1936-48 period there are lists showing the beginning and ending year and file number in each box. These finding aids are available in the Archives II Research Room.

U.S. Information Service

Included in RG 84 are some records from U.S. Information Service (USIS) offices. USIS operated under the auspices of the Department of State until August 1953, when it became the overseas arm of the United States Information Agency (USIA). When USIA was abolished in 1999, USIS once again fell under the Department of State. USIS offices were often located within the embassy, legation, or consulate buildings. USIS posts managed the educational, cultural, and information programs in support of American foreign policy objectives and greater mutual understanding between the U.S. and foreign societies.

Records

A. 1955-1964. Records are arranged by the city, year, and then by subject accord to an alpha-numeric classification filing scheme issued in December 1955, by USIA for its overseas posts. The records are generally found in three-year blocks.

B. 1965-1999. Arranged by city, year, and then accord to a subject-numeric filing scheme patterned after that used by the Department of State. The Department of State-USIA Records Classification Handbook was issued jointly in 1965. In 1967, USIA expanded the "Administration" and the "Culture & Information" sections of the handbook to better meet its needs, and issued them under "Excerpts from Records Classification Handbook". The majority of USIS offices used only these two subject categories. The USIS offices that required broader subject coverage used the other five categories from the 1965 Department of State-USIA Records Classification Handbook.

Finding Aids

- Alpha-Numeric Filing Manual 1955-1960
- Alpha-Numeric Filing Manual 1961-1964: Conversion Table to Subject Numeric File Filing Manual 1965-1973
- Subject-Numeric Filing Manual 1965-1973
- Excerpts from Subject-Numeric Records Classification Handbook 1967-1978
- Excerpts from Subject-Numeric Records Classification Handbook 1979-1986

IV. Other Record Groups

The fourth category covers specialized Department of State records, records from agencies over which the Department of State had policy guidance, and the records of defunct agencies that became the responsibility of the Department of State. For a complete listing of the records in each record group, see the [Guide to Federal Records in the National Archives of the United States](#).

RG 11, General Records of the U.S. Government

Many of the records in this record group were originally filed in the Department of State. Among the records are: Laws of the United State and international treaties and related records.

RG 43, International Conferences, Commissions, and Expositions

This record group is divided into several subgroups of Department of State records: (1) Records of International Conferences, including records of World War II and postwar conferences of heads of state and meetings of foreign ministers; (2) Records relating to International Commissions, Committees, and Councils; (3) Records of participation in international expositions and exhibitions held outside the United States; (4) Records of participation in international exhibitions and expositions held in the United States; and (5) Other records and undescribed records. After 1953, records on many expositions are found in the records of the United States Information Agency (RG 306).

RG 63, Records of the Committee on Public Information

CPI was established as an independent agency in April 1917 to handle foreign and domestic information activities. Domestic activities were discontinued after the Armistice in November 1918 and foreign operations were discontinued in June 1919.

RG 76, Boundary and Claims Commissions and Arbitrations

This record group is for three distinct kinds of records. Records relating to the United States northern boundaries with Canada and southern boundaries with Mexico are described in Daniel T. Goggin, comp., Preliminary Inventory of the Records Relating to International Boundaries, PI 170 (1968).

There are several finding aids for claim commission records, generally arranged by country and thereunder by claim commission. Most of the records are described in George S. Ulibarri, comp., Preliminary Inventory of Records Relating to International Claims, PI 177 (1974). There are three other finding aids for records not included in PI 177. They are (1) George S. Ulibarri, comp., Preliminary Inventory of the Records of United States and Mexican Claims Commissions, PI 136 (1962); (2) George S. Ulibarri and Daniel T. Goggin, comps., Preliminary Inventory of Records Relating to Civil War Claims, United States and Great Britain, PI 135 (1962); and (3) George S. Ulibarri and Francis J. Heppner, comps., Preliminary Inventory of Records Relating to United States Claims Against the Central Powers, PI 143 (1962).

Arbitration records are described in Herbert Horwitz, comp., "Preliminary Inventory of Records Relating to International Arbitrations," NC 155 (1969).

RG 169, Records of the Foreign Economic Administration

This agency was responsible for the wartime functions of export control, foreign procurement, lend-lease, reverse lend-lease, participation in foreign relief and rehabilitation, and economic warfare (including foreign economic intelligence). This record groups includes records of the following predecessor organizations: Interdepartmental Committee for Coordination of Foreign and Domestic Military Purchases (President's Liaison Committee, 1939- 41), Division of Defense Aid Reports(1941), Office of Lend-Lease Administration (1941-43), Office of the Administrator of Export Control (1940-41), Economic Defense Board (1941), Board of Economic Warfare (1941-43), Office of Economic Warfare (1943), offices in the Department of State (Division of Controls (1938-41), Board of Economic

Operations (1941-43), Office of Foreign Economic Coordination (1943), Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations, Department of State (1942-43).

RG 182, Records of the War Trade Board

Established during World War I, this agency was responsible for licensing exports and imports, rationing supplies to neutrals, and conserving commodities and shipping facilities for American and Allied use. It also sought to keep strategic goods out of enemy hands and prohibit the use of enemy credit and financial holdings in the United States. Abolished in June 1919 and its functions were transferred to the Department of State.

RG 208, Office of War Information

This agency was a World War II temporary agency which formulated and executed information programs to promote, in the United States and abroad, understanding of the status and progress of the war effort and of war policies, activities, and aims of the U.S. government. Most of the records date from 1942 to 1945.

RG 229, Office of Inter-American Affairs

This agency was a World War II temporary agency created to promote increased hemispheric solidarity and inter-American cooperation, especially in commercial and economic areas. The records are described in Edwin D. Anthony, comp., Inventory of the Records of the Office of Inter-American Affairs, Inv. 7 (1973).

RG 239, American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas

This agency was a World War II temporary agency, created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1943, under the chairmanship of Associate Justice Owen J. Roberts; it is often called the Roberts Commission. Its officers cooperated with the U.S. Army in protecting cultural treasures, gathered information about war damage to such treasures, compiled data on cultural property appropriated by the Axis Powers, and encouraged its restitution. It was abolished in 1946. All of the records are on microfilm (M-1944). There is a separate publication (M-1782, 1 roll) for Art Looting Investigative Unit Reports, 1945-46.

RG 256, American Commission to Negotiate Peace

President Woodrow Wilson established this commission, following the signing of the Armistice ending World War I (Nov. 11, 1918), to negotiate the formal treaties ending the war and also to draft the Covenant of the League of Nations. Included are the records of the Inquiry and records relating to the Conference of Ambassadors in the postwar period. The records are described in Sandra K. Rangel, comp., Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, Inv. 9 (1974). Almost all of the records are on microfilm (M-820, 563 rolls, General Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, 1918-1931, and M-1107, 47 rolls, "Inquiry Documents" (Special Reports and Studies), 1917-1919).

RG 268, Philippine War Damage Commission

Congress created this commission as an independent agency by the Philippine Rehabilitation Act in 1946 to receive, adjudicate, and pay private and public claims for World War II property damage in the Philippine Islands. It was abolished in 1951 when its work was completed.

RG 278, Displaced Persons Commission

The commission was created by Congress in 1948 to administer the selection and resettlement in the United States of certain European displaced persons. Most of the records are administrative; they do not include lists of names of displaced persons.

RG 286, Agency for International Development

This agency was established in 1961 to administer the nonmilitary U.S. foreign assistance programs. For records of predecessor agencies see RG 469.

RG 306, U.S. Information Agency

Created in 1953 from a semi-autonomous program within the Department of State. Its functions related to international information and cultural affairs, and cultural exchanges. It hoped to influence public attitudes in foreign countries in support of U.S. foreign policy objectives. It analyzed the implications of foreign opinion for present and contemplated U.S. policies, programs, and official statements. USIA was abolished in 1999 and its non-broadcasting functions folded into the Department of State. The International Broadcasting Bureau operates as an independent agency reporting to the Broadcasting board of Governors.

RG 353, Interdepartmental and Intradepartmental Committees (State Department)

This record group is for records of Department of State committees. It includes records of committees maintained by the Executive Secretariat, 1933-1977, and records of several interdepartmental committees where the Department of State served as the secretariat: Foreign Service Buildings Commission, 1926-47; Advisory Council on Technological Cooperation, 1938-53; Committee on the Proclaimed List, 1917-19, 1941-48; the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 1944-49; National Intelligence Survey Committees, 1948-65; Policy Committee on Arms and Armaments, 1945-49; Interdepartmental Patent Interchange Committee, 1941- ?; and the Joint USA-USSR Documentary Project on Russian-American relations, 1765-1815, 1975-81; and numerous other committees.

RG 383, U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

This agency was created in 1961 to conduct, support and coordinate research for arms control and disarmament policy formulation. It prepares for and manages U.S. participation in international arms control and disarmament negotiations. ACDA was abolished in 1999 and its functions folded into the Department of State.

RG 420, Records of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation

Responsible for promoting economic growth in developing countries and emerging markets by encouraging U.S. private investment in those countries.

RG 466, U.S. High Commissioner for Germany

This agency (commonly referred to as "HICOG") was established in the Department of State in 1949, and continued to function until 1955. It represented the U.S. Government on the Allied High Commission for Germany.

RG 469, U.S. Foreign Assistance Agencies, 1948-1961

This record group is for the records of the variety of agencies that existed before the creation of the Agency for International Development (AID) in 1961. It includes

records of the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA), the Mutual Security Agency (MSA), the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA), the Foreign Operations Administration (FOA), and the International Cooperation Administration (ICA).

RG 486, Records of the Trade and Development Agency

Responsible for advancing economic development and U.S. commercial interests in developing and middle-income countries.

V. How to Access the Records

ARC (Archival Research Catalog)

ARC provides a description of archival holdings by record group, collection, series, and in some cases down to the file units and individual item level. Access ARC at <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>

Write to Us

National Archives staff are available to do limited research about the records and to answer specific questions. Mail your request to:

Archives II Reference Section (NWCT2R), Room 2600
The National Archives at College Park
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

By e-mail: archives2reference@nara.gov.

If you send enough information, we may be able to make a specific search and provide information for ordering copies.

Microfilm

As noted above, many of the Department of State records have been microfilmed, and are available for review at the National Archives. All microfilm publications are available at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland. Copies of selected microfilm publications are also available in the Regional Archives. Microfilm is also available for purchase.

Visit NARA

Most of the Department of State records are located in:

The National Archives at College Park
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001