

Records Management and Declassification Programs

Department of State Records

The Department maintains records dealing with:

- The formulation and execution of US Foreign Policy
- The administration and operations of the Department and US missions abroad
- Applications of US citizens for US passports
- Visa applications from non-citizens to enter the US
- Consular assistance given to US citizens abroad
- Current and former employees of the Department

For more information on the organization and responsibilities of the Department of State please visit the [Department Organization](#) page.

Records Management Policy & Procedures

For Department of State Records Management Policy and Procedures please go to our Foreign Affairs Manual, [5 FAM 400](#) and our Foreign Affairs Handbook, [5 FAH 4](#) links.

Records Disposition Schedules

For specific records series and the length of time that the records are maintained please go to our Records Disposition Schedules linked below. A records disposition schedule documents the major records series (including electronic records) related to the activities of each office, identifies temporary and permanent records, provides mandatory instructions for the retention and disposition (retirement or destruction) of each records series based on their temporary or permanent status. All Records Disposition Schedules are approved by the Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration.

[Domestic Records Disposition Schedules](#)

[Foreign Records Disposition Schedules](#)

[General Records Schedules \(Schedules Common to All Agencies\)](#)

Declassification of Department of State Records

Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR): Under the provisions of Executive Order 13526 (which replaced Executive Order 12958 and its amendments) an individual may request the declassification review of specific classified material that (s)he is able to identify so that the agency may retrieve it with reasonable effort. MDR is appropriate for any classified materials

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including materials such as Presidential Papers which are not subject to the FOIA. Some researchers prefer filing MDRs instead of FOIAs. Please note: if you would like to file a request for mandatory declassification review, you must specifically mention MDR under E.O. 13526, and not the Freedom of Information or Privacy Acts.

More information is available in the Information Access Guide and 22 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 171, Subpart C – Executive Order 12958 Provisions. You may also wish to view Executive Order 13526.

25 year Declassification Review: E.O. 13526 provides for the review of classified records as they become 25 years of age. The Systematic Review Program (SRP) conducts the review of the Department's permanent historical records, in all media formats, which are scheduled for transfer to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). After review, records are transferred to NARA according to authorized disposition schedules.

Declassification Priorities: As permanent record series become 25 years old, they will be reviewed for declassification. These record series are described in our [Records Disposition Schedules](#). The Department establishes priorities among the eligible series based on guidance from the National Archives and Records Administration and input from the public. If you wish to make recommendations for priorities among the permanent record series, please [Share Your Ideas](#) on the Department's OpenState web site.

Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series: The Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) series constitutes the official historical documentary record of US foreign policy decisions and significant diplomatic activity. A staff of more than 30 historians and editors at the Office of the Historian in the Department of State compiles and prepares the volumes for publication. Volumes may be purchased through the U.S. Government Printing Office's [U.S. Government Bookstore](#). Recent volumes are also available online at [Volumes Online](#).

Freedom of Information: Individuals may request the declassification of Department of State records through the Freedom of Information Act. Many records declassified and released in response to FOIA requests are available in the Department of State's [Declassified/Released Document Collections](#).

Department of State Records at NARA

With the exception of genealogical records, Department of State records are the most heavily used public records at the National Archives. Generally, permanent records 25 years and older, pre-1925 passport and pre-1940 visa records are the property of NARA. When appropriate, these records have been declassified and cleared for release by Department officials. Permanent records are transferred to NARA upon declassification review and in accordance with their records disposition schedules. For information on how to locate Department of State Records at the National Archives go to [State Department Records in the National Archives](#).

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Series of Interest: Central Foreign Policy Records – This series consists of materials related to all aspects of American bilateral and multilateral foreign relations and administrative and operational activities of the U.S. Department of State and its Foreign Service posts. Beginning in 1973, this series was created and maintained as an electronic file consisting of the full texts of telegrams to and from the Department and citations for paper records which were microfilmed for inclusion in the series. Records created through December 31, 1976 are now available at the National Archives or on the NARA website. See the [Central Foreign Policy Files](#) section of the Access to Archival Databases research tool on the NARA website for access to the on line files.

In June 2004, DOS became the first government agency to transfer electronic textual records to NARA. For more information on the Department's partnership with NARA, please read [Secretary Powell's Remarks](#) at State/NARA Ceremony on April 13, 2004.