



National Archives and Records Administration

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Record Group 84 RECORDS OF FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

This record group contains records from U.S. diplomatic and consular posts overseas and U.S. missions to international organizations. There are records from over 850 posts and missions. The records, however, are far from complete. There are very few records from American diplomatic and consular posts for the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Recordkeeping had not been regularized at that time; the Department of State did not begin to address the accumulation of records overseas until the early twentieth century. Other records were lost as a result of natural disasters, wars, or other emergencies, and more recently records have been destroyed in accordance approved records disposition schedules.

- I. RECORDS OF EMBASSIES, LEGATIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, CONSULATES
- II. MISSION RECORDS
- III. WHAT YOU WILL NOT FIND
- IV. ACCESS

- I. RECORDS OF EMBASSIES, LEGATIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, CONSULATES

The records are generally arranged by post (embassy, legation, consulate general, consulate, consular agency) and naturally fall into several periods:

1789 - 1912. Records during these years are generally arranged by type and thereunder chronologically. The records at diplomatic posts generally include instructions from the Department; despatches to the Department; notes to and from the government where the post was located; communications back and forth with subordinate posts; miscellaneous letters received and sent; records of passports and visas issued; and records of births, deaths, and marriages of American citizens. The records from consular posts generally include similar records. Seaport consulates often include records resulting from their unique responsibilities. Those series include records noting arrival and departure of U.S. vessels; records of services performed for American ships and seamen; lists of seamen shipped, discharged, or deceased; and records of marine protests. Not all posts have all types of records described and other types of records may exist.

1912-1948. In August 1912, U.S. diplomatic and consular posts began using a new filing system. A simplified version of the filing system used by the Department of State for its central files since 1910, it was a numerically-based

prearranged subject filing system in which all communications on a particular subject were kept together, rather than being filed by type of record and thereunder chronologically. In some cases, the more sensitive files were kept in a parallel series of "Confidential Files" and beginning in the 1940s, Top Secret documents were usually filed in another separate parallel file. Records were bound annually until the 1940s at which point the records were maintained in file folders grouped annually. Documentation was filed in nine subject classes:

- Class 0: Miscellaneous
- Class 1: Administration
- Class 2: Extradition
- Class 3: Protection of Interests
- Class 4: Claims
- Class 5: International Congresses and Conferences
- Class 6: Commerce and Commercial Relations
- Class 7: Relations of States
- Class 8: Internal Affairs of States.

The National Archives carried out two appraisals of these records, the first covering the records from 1912 through 1935 and the second for the records dating from 1936 through 1948. In the first appraisal, the National Archives determined that only records with file numbers 300 and higher (except 811.11) warranted preservation in the National Archives. The records bearing the lower numbers and file 811.11 were destroyed, unless they were bound in a volume with permanent records. For the later period, the following records were determined to warrant preservation:

- File 121: Diplomatic Branch
- File 124: Embassies and Legations
- Class 2: Extradition
- Class 3: Protection of Interests
- Class 4: Claims
- Class 5: International congresses and conferences
- File 631: Trade relations
- File 690: Other administrative measures affecting export trade (embargo),
- Class 7: Relations of State
- Class 8: Internal Affairs of States.

During the implementation of the appraisals, some records designated as permanent were mistakenly destroyed and some records designated as temporary were preserved.

Despite the mandate to file all records in the subject files, most posts created and maintained separate series of records of a specialized nature. Typical of these separate series are registers of correspondence, chronological files of

telegrams sent and received, citizenship records such as passport applications, and "Miscellaneous Records Books." The files of some posts include records resulting from specialized work. For example, the World War I-era files of a number of posts include files relating to U.S. representation of interests of one or more nations at war before the U.S. became involved in the conflict.

1949-1963. In January 1949, Foreign Service Posts began using a new filing system. A numerically-based prearranged subject filing system, as with the system used previously, it was a complete revision of the earlier system and had no relationship to the system used by the Department for its central files. More sensitive files continued to be kept in separate parallel series of "Confidential Files" and Top Secret files. The files were generally maintained in multi-year blocks, usually of three years. Documentation was filed in seven classes:

- Class 0: Miscellaneous
- Class 1: Administration, Department of State and the Foreign Service of the United States
- Class 2: Citizenship. Immigration. Protective and Legal Services
- Class 3: Political and Governmental Affairs
- Class 4: National Defense Affairs
- Class 5: Economic, Industrial, and Social Affairs
- Class 6: Informational, Cultural, and Scientific Affairs.

A National Archives appraisal regulated the preservation of these records. For Consular Posts, only the following records were designated as permanent:

- File 050: Prominent Persons
- File 310: International Conferences and Organizations
- File 510: Trade Relations

in addition to "Miscellaneous Record Books" and files on participation in international conferences and commissions.

For most Diplomatic Posts, the following records were designated as permanent:

- File 050: Prominent Persons
- Class 3: Political and Governmental Affairs; and
- Class 5: Economic, Industrial, and Social Affairs,

in addition to "Miscellaneous Record Books" and files on participation in international conferences and commissions.

At seven special diplomatic posts (Sofia, Bulgaria; Prague, Czechoslovakia; Budapest, Hungary; Warsaw, Poland; Bucharest, Romania; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; and Moscow, U.S.S.R.) the following additional files were designated as permanent:

- File 030: Visits and Tours

File 040: Entertainment, Ceremonials and Ceremonial
Communications, Condolences, Felicitations
File 100: Administration-General
File 120: Foreign Service of the United States
File 200: Citizenship, Immigration, Protective and Legal
Services-General
File 220: Citizenship and Passport Matters (General)
File 230: Protection and Welfare Services.

During the implementation of the appraisal, some records designated as permanent were mistakenly destroyed and some records designated as temporary were preserved. Files from United States Information Service (USIS) offices are present among the records from some posts.

1963-87. In 1963, the Department began using another new filing system in both headquarters and field offices. Records are arranged in seven broad subject classes:

- Administration
- Consular
- Culture & Information
- Economic
- Political & Defense
- Science
- Social

Each subject class was further divided into several primary subjects. For example, the Political & Defense class is divided into Communism (CSM), Defense (DEF), Intelligence (INT), and Political Affairs and Relations (POL).

In an archival appraisal, the following primary subjects were deemed permanent at all Diplomatic Posts:

Administration

ORG: Organization and Administration

Economic

AV: Aviation

E: Economic Affairs (General)

ECIN: Economic Integration

FN: Finance

FT: Foreign Trade

LAB: Labor and Manpower

PET: Petroleum

STR: Strategic Trade Control

TP: Trade Promotion & Assistance

Political and Defense

CSM: Communism

DEF: Defense Affairs

INT: Intelligence
POL: Political Affairs & Relations

Social

REF: Refugees and Migration
SOC: Social Conditions

Science

AE: Atomic Energy
SCI: Science & Technology.

For the diplomatic posts in Sofia, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest, Moscow, Belgrade, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Peking, and Taipei the file BG: Buildings and Grounds was also designated as permanent.

At the Consular Posts in Amsterdam, Belfast, Bombay, Calcutta, Capetown, Dacca, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Karachi, Liverpool, Melbourne, Naples, Rio de Janeiro, Rotterdam, Sydney, and Tangier the following primary subjects were designated as permanent:

Administration

ORG: Organization and Administration

Economic

AV: Aviation
E: Economic Affairs (General)
ECIN: Economic Integration
FN: Finance
FT: Foreign Trade
LAB: Labor and Manpower
PET: Petroleum
STR: Strategic Trade Control
TP: Trade Promotion & Assistance

Political and Defense

CSM: Communism
DEF: Defense Affairs
INT: Intelligence
POL: Political Affairs & Relations

Social

REF: Refugees and Migration
SOC: Social Conditions

Science

AE: Atomic Energy
SCI: Science & Technology.

For all other consular posts, only the file BG: Buildings and Grounds was designated as permanent.

During the implementation of the appraisal, some records designated as permanent were mistakenly destroyed and some records designated as temporary were preserved. Records from some United States Information Service (USIS) offices are present.

In 1973, the Department instituted a new filing system for its central files. In the new system, called TAGS/Terms, documents were labeled with various types of subject, country, and organizational information. The Subject TAGS were arranged in nine subject fields:

- Administration
- Business Services
- Consular Affairs
- Economic Affairs
- Military and Defense Affairs
- Operations
- Political Affairs
- Social Affairs
- Technology and Science

Each subject filed is divided into specific subject categories with four-letter abbreviations. For example the subject category EAID indicates the topic "Foreign Economic Assistance," which is under Economic Affairs and the subject category PHUM indicates "Human Rights" which is under Political Affairs. By the late 1970s, some posts began using this new filing system for their records.

1987 - . In 1987, the Department of State mandated use of the Subject TAGS for the filing of records at Foreign Service Posts. By this time, too, the filing of records at posts had changed. Posts no longer had central files; records were kept in the various components of the post, for example, the chief of mission, the Political Section, and the Economic Section. Archival appraisals designated the records of the chief of mission, deputy chief of mission, the political section, the economic section, and other specialized records as permanent.

II. MISSION RECORDS

The records maintained by U.S. missions to international organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Organization of American States (OAS) are part of this record group. The records of those offices may be filed according to one of the filing systems described above, or they may have filed records in a manner unique to a mission. The most important and voluminous of the separate mission records are those from the U.S. Mission to the United Nations (USUN), which maintained its records in a unique manner. Also included are

the records of the U.S. Mission, Berlin (USBER), which represented U.S. interests in occupied Berlin from 1945 to 1990.

III. WHAT YOU WILL NOT FIND

The post files do not include comprehensive collections of the reports of representatives of other agencies assigned to a given post, such as agricultural attaches, military attaches, naval attaches, and legal attaches. While those officials were attached to a post, from an organizational standpoint, they worked for another agency and their records were not routinely incorporated into the Department of State files of Foreign Service Posts. Unless an attaché worked collaboratively with Foreign Service staff or sent documents to the Foreign Service office for action, generally the most researchers are likely to find among the records in RG 84 are occasional documents from other agencies. The files of some posts, however, do on occasion include larger aggregations of reports by attaches of other agencies.

For copies of reports from and documentation about other agencies assigned to Foreign Service Posts, you should search the records of the parent agency.

IV. ACCESS

With the exception of the few documents that remain security classified and documents that are restricted for other reasons, such as personal privacy, Foreign Service Post records dating through 1961 are generally open and available for public use. Records of later dates are undergoing archival processing as well as reviews for security classified and otherwise restricted information. Before visiting the National Archives, you should contact the Archives II Reference Staff <archives2reference@nara.gov> to find out the status of the records in which you are interested. Please send your query at least 4 weeks in advance of a planned visit. Even then, the records you seek may not be available when you visit. Documents that have been withheld may be requested in writing under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Requests may take the form of surface mail, email, or fax, and should be directed to Special Access and FOIA Staff/National Archives and Records Administration/RD-F Room 5500/8601 Adelphi Road/College Park, MD 20740/FAX (301) 837-1864/specialaccess_foia@nara.gov.

Textual Records Division
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