

The National Archives Responds to Reclassification of Documents

Washington, DC. . . As part of an ongoing review of the reclassification of documents at the National Archives, Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein said, "Inappropriate declassification can subject our citizens, our democratic institutions, our homeland security, and our interactions with foreign nations to potential harm. Inappropriate classification (and reclassification) needlessly disrupts the free flow of information and can undermine our democratic principles which require that the American people be informed of the activities of their Government. This is not an either/or challenge. Deliberate, continuous effort is required to succeed at both. The American people expect and deserve nothing less and the National Archives is determined to fulfill its role in this process."

In response to complaints and recommendations received from a group of historians and researchers regarding agency classification activity which has resulted in a number of historical documents being withdrawn from the open shelves at the National Archives and Records Administration, the following action has been initiated:

- Several weeks ago, the Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO), an office within the National Archives, initiated an audit of the above activity. This audit is intended to:
 - Identify the number of records withdrawn from the open shelves over the past several years
 - Identify who initiated the withdrawal action
 - Identify the authorization and justification for the withdrawal.
 - Through a statistically significant sample, determine the appropriateness of the classification action (i.e. was the action in accordance with the terms and limitations of E.O. 12958 (as amended) and does the information satisfy the standards for continued classification)
 - Examine the effectiveness of our own internal processes and procedures and make improvements where required
- The audit will entail consultation with:
 - Affected agencies
 - Members of the research community
- The audit will result in a public report designed to provide the greatest feasible degree of transparency to this classification activity. It is anticipated that the report will be available within the next 60 days.
- As part of its continuing responsibility to oversee the Executive branch's security classification system, ISOO will issue annual updates providing insight into any similar activity conducted in the future. These updates will address the same issues and entail the same methodology used in the current audit and will be included in ISOO's annual report to the President on implementation of E.O. 12958, as amended.

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