

# The National Security Archive

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Mr. John L. Helgerson  
Inspector General  
Central Intelligence Agency  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Helgerson:

I am writing you to request that you investigate the apparent destruction of historically significant records by the Central Intelligence Agency. On 27 February 2003, the National Security Archive filed a FOIA request for further declassification review of a group of CIA documents concerning the May 1948 murder of CBS correspondent George Polk in Salonika, Greece. They had been previously released in excised form during the 1990s so the request included a list of MORI numbers to identify the documents. On 16 December 2005, the CIA's Information and Privacy Coordinator Scott Koch responded with a letter announcing the agency's decision. Much information remained withheld and the Archive responded with an administrative appeal.

What was most troubling about Mr. Koch's letter, however, was the revelation that some of the documents that had been reviewed for the initial declassification release no longer existed: "The original documents had been destroyed in accordance with approved National Archives and Records Administration records schedules." This is startling because, despite their heavy excisions, most of the documents appear to have been substantive and worthy candidates for permanent record status. They include memoranda to the Director of Central Intelligence about the Polk case and documents concerning James L. Kellis, an intelligence officer who worked for a journalists committee on the case [see examples enclosed]. It is possible that the CIA did not search hard enough and that carbon copies of some of the missing items exist in other Agency files. Toward that end, when the Archive filed the appeal we asked for a further search for those items.

The possibility that the Agency searched thoroughly for the original documents and that they no longer exist raises troubling questions about CIA's historical records preservation policies. Why is the CIA destroying what should have been permanent records? Which records schedules countenance such destruction? Who at the CIA made the decision to destroy? Why did the Agency destroy records relating to the Polk case? Why were some records on Polk destroyed and others preserved? If the Polk documents were part of a larger system of records that was destroyed, what other historically significant records also no longer exist? I hope you agree that these are important questions and that you will find answers that can be shared with the public. I have separately written to Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein to ask for his investigation as well.

Sincerely,



Thomas S. Blanton