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Office of the Inspector General (OIG) Management Letter  
regarding security and handling of classified holdings at the  
Washington National Records Center 2009

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Office of the Inspector General  
FOIA Request  
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*National Archives and Records Administration*  
*Office of the Inspector General*

8601 Adelphi Road, Suite 1300  
College Park, Maryland 20740

March 23, 2009

*Sent electronically*

Re: Your FOIA request for various OIG records dated December 1, 2008 (OIG FOIA 09-10)

This is in response to your letter of December 1, 2008 requesting “the Management Letter on concerns focusing on the security and handling of classified holdings received, maintained and shipped by a NARA facility.” and several other records. The majority of this request was responded to in disclosure from this office on March 6, 2009. I have reviewed the responsive records controlled by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and am providing you with the attached Management Letter.

The two redactions to the record fall under exemption (b)(2), both “low (b)(2)” and “high (b)(2).” Low (b)(2) redactions include matters related solely to the internal practices of the agency and are of no significant public interest. High (b)(2) redactions include sensitive internal agency information, the disclosure of which would risk circumvention of an agency regulation or statute and increase NARA’s potential vulnerability to some form of outside interference or harm. Please note the redactions were done by “whiting out” the relevant information and replacing it with a line. Explanations of the redactions are written within or near the redacted area.

While your request has been granted substantively, you have the right to administratively appeal the denial of the redacted material by writing to the Archivist, National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD, 20740, within 35 calendar days of the date of this letter. If you choose to appeal, your appeal letter and its envelope should be clearly marked “Freedom of Information Act Appeal,” and you should explain why you believe NARA should release the withheld information.

If you have immediate questions, you may contact me directly at 301-837-1966 or [john.simms@nara.gov](mailto:john.simms@nara.gov). Thank you for contacting the National Archives and Records Administration Office of Inspector General.

Sincerely,

John M. Simms  
Counsel to the Inspector General  
National Archives & Records Administration

Enclosure



# National Archives and Records Administration

Office of the Inspector General

8601 Adelphi Road, Room 1300  
College Park, Maryland 20740-6001

Date : January 9, 2009

Reply to  
Attn of : Office of Inspector General (OIG)

Subject : Management Letter OI 09-01: Management of Classified Information at the Washington National Records Center

To : Adrienne Thomas, Acting Archivist of the United States

The purpose of this Management Letter is to formally advise you of the unacceptable and potentially dangerous status of classified records management and storage at the Washington National Records Center (WNRC) in Suitland, Maryland. Based on NARA's wide-variety of classified holdings, it has been the position of NARA, as well as the OIG, that the National Archives is a national security agency. As such, issues outlined in this letter describe an ongoing failure at WNRC to protect some of the most sensitive information produced by the Federal Government.

This office applauds and supports recent efforts initiated by NARA to resolve existing issues at WNRC. However, there exists a need for this agency to take appropriate measures beyond those presently in place. The success of NARA's mission demands creative, thoughtful, and systemic change at Suitland paired with a long-term goal of operational relocation to a more suitable facility.

The following timeline illustrates the systemic nature of the issues facing WNRC:

- In 1998 and 2004, WNRC conducted inventories of its classified holdings. Both inventories revealed missing classified records. According to what WNRC staff can recall, only minimal if any corrective measures were taken. These findings, and the responsive actions taken, were not reported to NARA entities outside of WNRC or to the affected agencies.
- In June 2006, an Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO) Assessment reported that in early 2006, 187 boxes of CONFIDENTIAL and SECRET records, and 2 boxes of TOP SECRET records held at WNRC were unaccounted for. No documentation was available to indicate that an inquiry into the potential loss of classified material was done. Additionally, no records have been found to indicate the equity holders were so informed.
- A 2006 WNRC internal report — *b(2)* — revealed 1,857 boxes of classified records, including 30 TOP SECRET were missing.

- In 2007, more than 6,000 boxes of classified material stored by NARA were reported to the OIG as missing. After a lengthy internal inventory, many of these materials were accounted for, but a remaining 180 boxes of TOP SECRET and/or Restricted Data (TS/RD) materials have not been found. An OIG investigation was opened to determine the status of this TS/RD material. This investigation remains ongoing.
- In December 2007, approximately 12 boxes of SECRET records were left in an unsecured hallway at WNRC.
- In January 2008, WNRC shipped classified records to the wrong Federal office.
- In March 2008, a box of SECRET records from WNRC was found at AII in an unsecured area. It was neither known nor documented as to how those records got there.
- In May 2008, SECRET records were found on an employee's desk in an unsecured area at WNRC.
- In October 2008, documents from a classified system of records were found in the trash in a secure vault at WNRC.
- In December 2008, an inventory of WNRC's vault, excluding TS/RD material, was completed. This inventory could not account for 2,759 boxes of material. Whereas the vault co-mingles classified with unclassified material, it is not known as of this writing how many of these boxes contain classified material.

Based on preliminary findings in our ongoing investigation into missing classified material at WNRC, a number of security issues become apparent. During the course of our investigation, we have learned that:

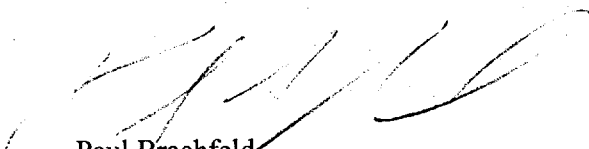
- 1) A comprehensive and thorough Standard Operating Procedures manual for the vault at WNRC does not exist;
- 2) There is no coordination or consistency among all NARA records centers holding classified material;
- 3) There is co-mingling of classified with unclassified records, the segregation of which is viewed as unaffordable; and
- 4) The aforementioned issues, as well as others not detailed herein, will likely be exacerbated with the ongoing arrival of some 5,000 boxes of classified material from ~~b(2)~~, which began in September 2008.

The multitude of issues and incidents described above illustrate an unacceptable stature for any national security agency. NARA is the custodian of the nation's most sensitive materials. The status quo at WNRC fails to adequately serve NARA's customers, the taxpayers, or national security.

While recent efforts to resolve WNRC's ongoing issues are and should be applauded, a fundamental and paradigm shift in how WNRC operates is necessary. Such a shift should incorporate new policy, new personnel, new facilities, and a new mindset. Necessary resources and related funding should be quantified and both short- and long-term strategies defined and presented to appropriate entities to include the Congress and the Executive Branch. The challenges faced at WNRC present no small obstacle. However, if NARA is to truly be a "national security agency" and provide the Federal Government with safe, secure, and accessible classified storage facilities, then this challenge must be met with an aggressive and overarching approach.

Please advise me within 30 days whether you concur with this interpretation, and if so, what action has been or will be taken.

Should you have any questions after you have had an opportunity to review this management letter, please e-mail me or Ross Weiland, AIGI, or call us at (301) 837-3000.



Paul Brachfeld  
Inspector General