Guide for Researchers
from The George Washington University

WELCOME

GW COMMUNITY!

The National Security Archive is an **award-winning investigative journalism center**, research institute, and archive of declassified U.S. documents. In 1999, we won a Special George Polk Award for "piercing self-serving veils of government secrecy, guiding journalists in search for the truth and informing us all." Since then, the organization, its staff, and fellows have variously earned an Emmy, a Peabody, two Pulitzers, and numerous other honors.

Regrettably, ongoing **COVID-19** issues mean that we cannot welcome you in person for research. However, during the pandemic we have put renewed emphasis on providing extensive **online resources** that will meet the vast majority of your documentary research needs.

In fact, our **most important and widely used materials are accessible through the Web**, including more than 780 expertly curated electronic briefing books of key primary sources, and our enormous dataset of professionally indexed, declassified documents in the *Digital National Security Archive*, published by ProQuest (see page 8 below).

So, if you are a student or instructor, these records are tailored to your needs — curated, fully searchable, and ideal for research papers or the classroom.

This guide is primarily aimed at students but instructors and general users will also benefit. It will help you navigate our online files – and point you to other essential sources on the Internet.

Table of Contents

Note: The Archive's aim is to encourage wide use of our materials, so unless otherwise indicated all declassified U.S. government records on this site are freely available to the public. For details about reprinting or citing original content, please see Terms and Conditions below.

Documentation From The National Security Archive

The following are our main online resources. All U.S. government records contained in these publications are free to use without copyright restrictions. The Archive encourages re-use and re-publication of its documents. All we ask is that you follow our citation guidelines (see the final section of this Guide) and include a link to our web site as the source.

Electronic Briefing Books (on our web site)

Over 790 e-books featuring more than 10,000 annotated declassified documents

Sourcebooks (on our web site)

Compilations of related Archive postings that facilitate in-depth research

Special Exhibits (on our web site)

Unusual collections of lasting historical and public interest

Digital National Security Archive - DNSA

(access through Gelman Library and other major libraries)

60 large-scale publications totaling 150,000 documents and a million pages

Documents or Virtual Reading Room (on our web site)

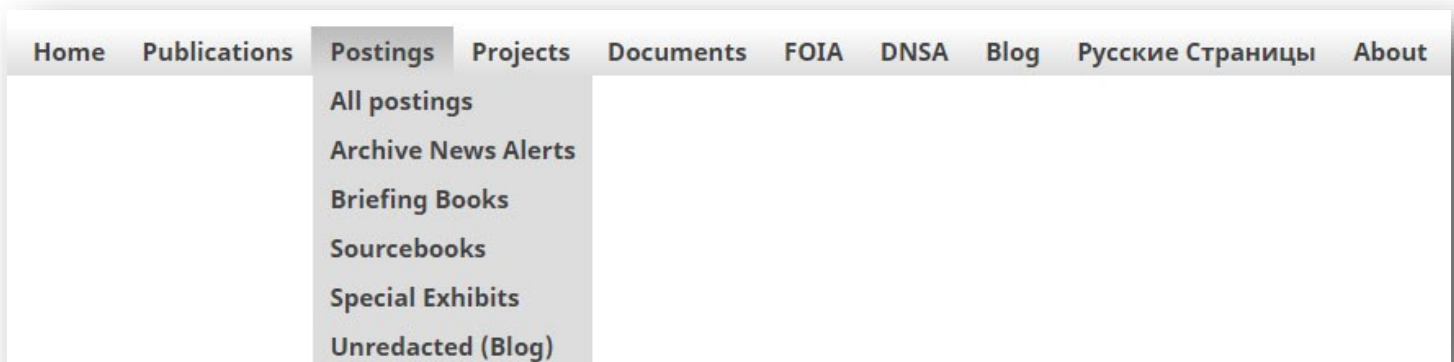Collection more than 10000 PDF documents

Unredacted (our blog site)

A platform for breaking news and discussion of secrecy, government transparency, FOIA, and the international right to know.

Good to know

"Briefing Books" are one-stop resources covering a full range of topics in U.S. foreign policy. Containing from 5 to 100+ documents, each briefing book features an introductory essay, individual document descriptions, related photo or video content, plus links for further reading.

The **Digital National Security Archive** is an invaluable online collection of more than 100,000 declassified records documenting historic U.S. policy decisions.
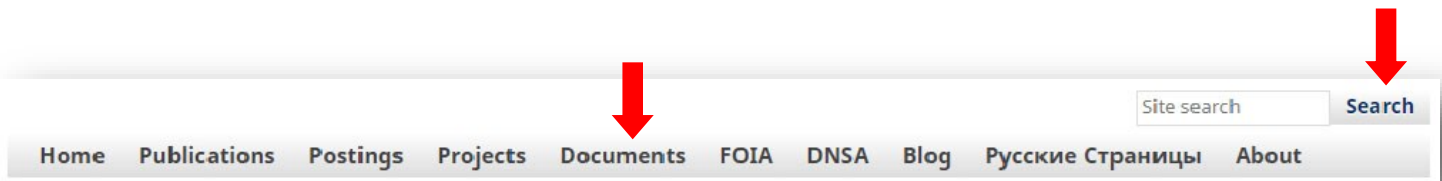

Pic.1. Easy access to all resources from the main menu on every page of our website

How to access National Security Archive online resources

Basic search options on the Archive's web site

There are two main ways to search for material from the home page. The first is the Site Search box at the top right of the page, which will take you to the dialogue box (pic.3. below) that includes a variety of helpful filters. This option primarily searches text from postings of all kinds on the web site. Typically, it will not pick up actual documents, which are reproduced in PDF form and can be searched via the Documents—Virtual Reading Room –VRR option (pic.4. on next page).

Pic.2. Two main search options.

Pic.3. Advanced search through the site.

Good to know

"Legacy Postings" are the postings (e-books and news postings) published before 2016 and located on our legacy site https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu.
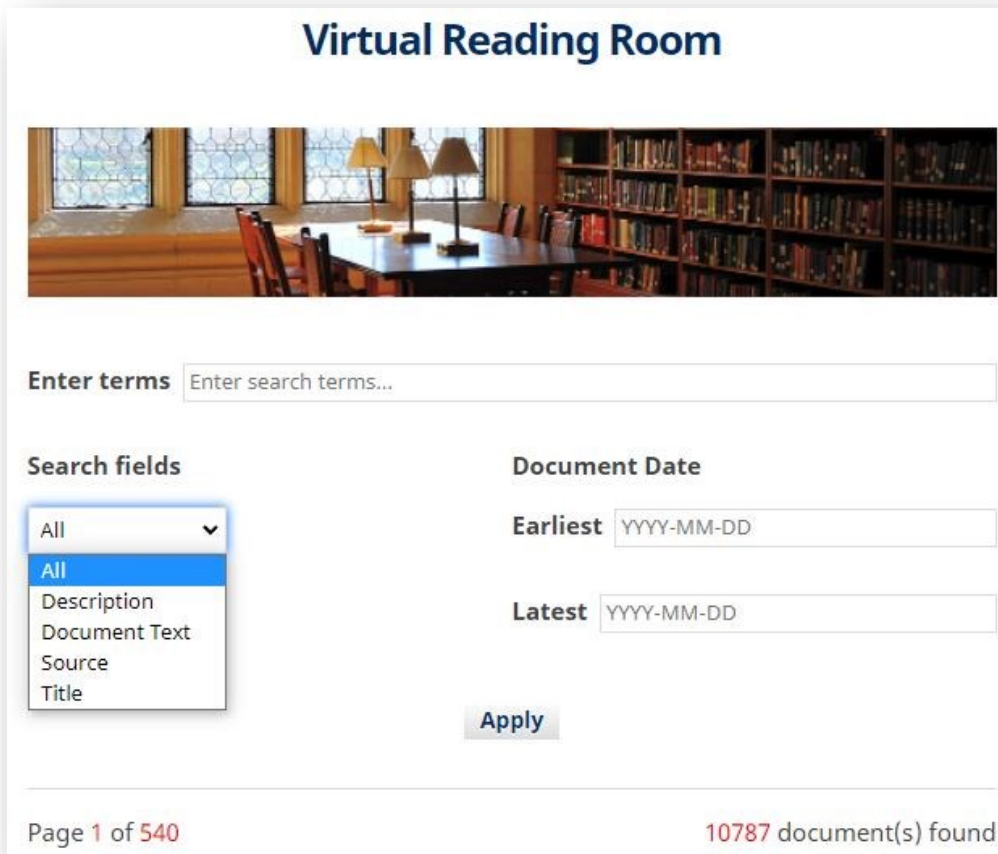In 2016 Archive moved from the HTML based site to the CMS based one in order to be more secured and user friendly. Our long goal is to move all materials from the legacy site to the new one.
Legacy postings look like on example below:

Basic search options on the Archive's web site - (continued)

The second general approach is via our Virtual Reading Room, also linked on the home page. The VRR here's what the search dialogue looks like, including options to narrow by date and/or field.

Pic.4. Documents (VRR) search dialog window.

The search fields:

Description—the explanation of the document content, made by our analysts

Document Text—the OCRed document content (please note, some old documents or poor quality copies of documents can't be OCRed properly)

Source—the source where our analysts obtained the document

Title—this field, usually, contains much more information than the document title itself (example: **Special Coordination Committee, Summary of Conclusions, "Iran," Top Secret-Sensitive, November 8, 1979**)

Good to know

Documents are sorted by date they were created (newest first). Some documents have no date, they appears last on the documents list.

*The **two oldest documents** in our collection dated 1868 and 1884.*

Specific resources at the National Security Archive

Electronic Briefing Books

The National Security Archive has published over 790 e-books on our public web site presenting more than 10,000 declassified documents on a broad range of topics, expertly selected and annotated. Introductory essays provide historical context and related links point readers to additional resources. New e-books are added one or two weeks.
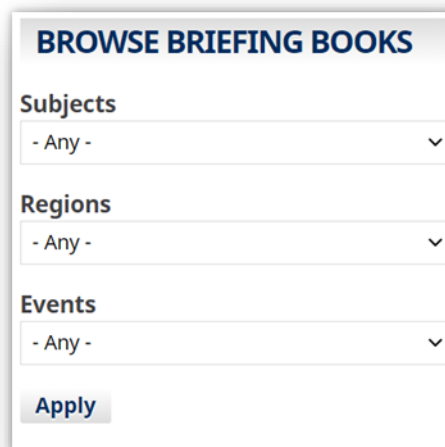
You can peruse EBBs by subject or other criteria through this menu at the top right of the page:

Good to know

*The 9 latest **Briefing Books** are presented on the center column of Archive's home page.*

*List of **all** briefing books accessible from the main menu: **Postings > Briefing Books** (see pic. 1)*
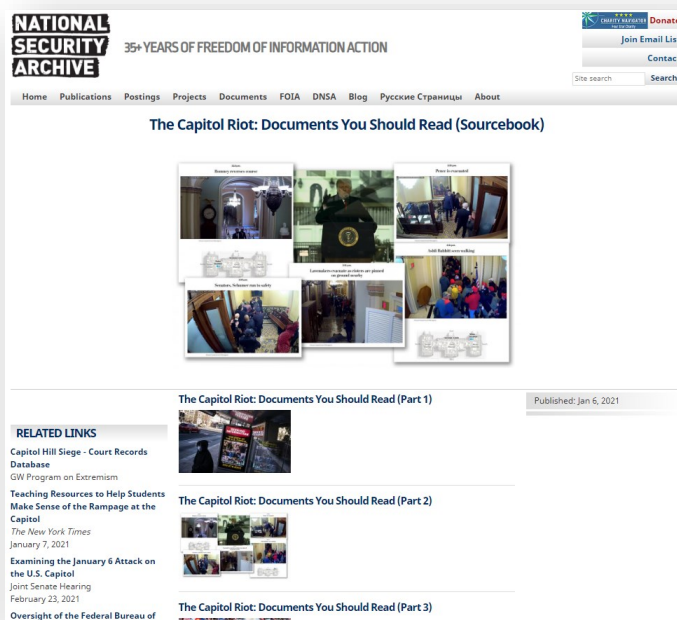
*Lists of all **Sourcebooks** and **Special Exhibits** also available through the main menu, under **Postings** tab.*

Pic.5. Available filters to browse the briefing books.

Sourcebooks

These in-depth collections bring together related Archive postings on certain topics to make it easier to explore selected issues in detail. Topics include the January 6 Capitol Riot, September 11 terrorist attacks, U.S. policy toward Saddam Hussein, and the 1983 War Scare.
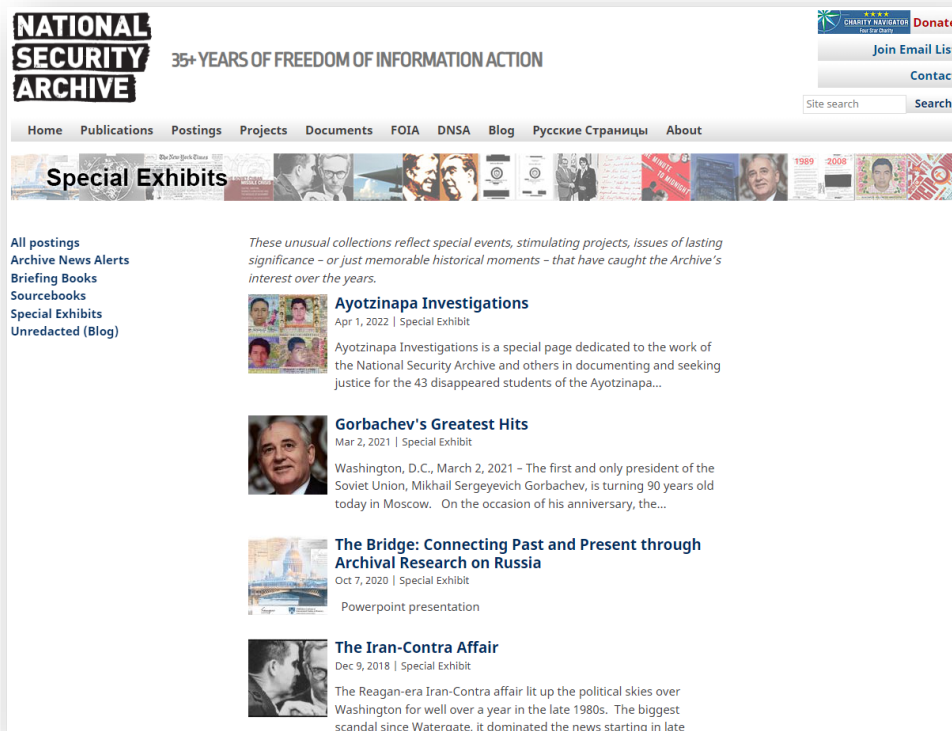

Pic.6. "The Capitol Riot: Documents You Should Read (Sourcebook)" - an example of one of the Sourcebooks

Specific resources at the National Security Archive - (continued)
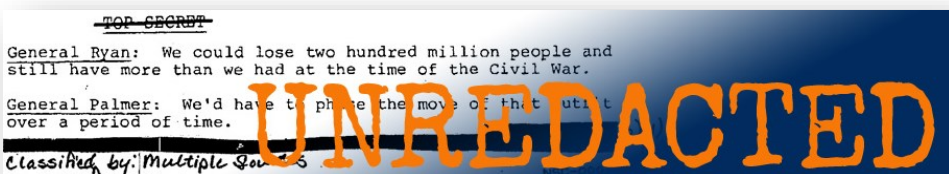
Special Exhibits

These unusual collections reflect special events, stimulating projects, issues of lasting significance – or just memorable historical moments – that have caught the Archive's interest over the years.

Pic.7. The "Special Exhibits" page

Unredacted blog

A platform for breaking news and discussion of secrecy, government transparency, FOIA, and the international right to know. Accessible from main menu on any page on Archive's site (see pic.1), or through the direct link: **https://unredacted.com**

Pic.8. The *Unredacted* blog banner

Good to know

Latest postings of "Unredacted" blog are listed on the top of the left side-bar on Archive's home page.

You can find related "Unredacted" postings on the left sidebar on any Archive's project page.

Specific resources at the National Security Archive - (continued)

Digital National Security Archive (DNSA)

The Archive's flagship series currently comprises 60 large-scale collections totaling 150,000 documents and a million pages. The DNSA is distributed through the academic publisher ProQuest and the entire series is freely available through Gelman Library.

DNSA collections are compiled by recognized experts and fully indexed by professional librarians. Along with PDFs of the documents, the sets include chronologies, glossaries, and other research aids. For a full listing of titles, see here.

Pic.8. The "Digital National Security Archive " page and how to access it.

Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) - (continued)

How to use the DNSA

Navigate to the ProQuest *Digital National Security Archive* site either by clicking on **this link** or going to Gelman's Database page and typing "National Security Archive" into the search box.

When you get to the page below, fill in the search query fields as appropriate. Note that you can limit your search any number of ways, including by title, date, author, document type, or collection.

Pic.9. ProQuest's *Digital National Security Archive* **advanced search** page, which you access using your GWU credentials.

Digital National Security Archive (DNSA) - (continued)

How to use the DNSA - (continued)

When you get a hit, it will look something like this:

Pic.10. ProQuest *Digital National Security Archive* **document** page

From here you can scroll through the document, check detailed metadata, download, print, email, or get the full citation for footnoting.

Where else can you find documents on the Web?

If you're not finding exactly what you need at nsarchive.gwu.edu or on DNSA, these online U.S. government repositories contain literally millions of pages of primary documents that are searchable, downloadable, and copyright-free. These are essential resources that every national security or foreign policy researcher should know about.

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

NARA is the "nation's record keeper," comprising billions of pages of historically significant government materials (including the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and Bill of Rights). Archives II is located in College Park, Maryland, and is where most researchers go to explore U.S. federal records.

Access to Archival Databases (AAD) at NARA

AAD is an online, searchable resource covering 60+ archival series at NARA. Among those of most interest to national security researchers are military files from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, and the War on Terrorism, along with a growing compilation of State Department telegrams from the mid-1970s.

The Presidential Libraries at NARA

NARA maintains 15 libraries of documentation from presidential administrations going back to Franklin Roosevelt. Many of these include museums honoring that particular president and were built with private funds but the archives are maintained by the government. If a document was created by or sent to the president or a member of the White House or NSC staff during a given period, the relevant presidential library is probably the place to start your research.

Where else can you find documents on the Web? - (continued)

Department of State FOIA Electronic Reading Room

The State Department posts a large number of materials released to the public under Freedom of Information Act in its online Reading Room. Most of these are cables to and from embassies and other foreign posts, but there are many emails and other records, too.

Central Intelligence Agency FOIA Electronic Reading Room

Perhaps surprisingly, the CIA also posts a very large quantity of records on its website. Even though many of the materials are incidental items that were simply part of an analyst's file system (including public sources like newspaper clips), and despite the frustrating search engine, this is an absolutely critical resource.

Citing Our Materials

Note: The National Security Archive follows The Chicago Manual of Style. The online manual and its "Quick Guide" are at **http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html**.

Published Collections

I. To cite correspondence such as letters, memoranda, and cables identify as many of the following elements as are available and relevant:

> Names of sender and recipient
> Title or subject
> Place at which it was written
> Type of communication and identifying number
> Date of communication
> Title of published collection
> Editor of published collection
> Place of publication, publisher, and publication year
> Document number

Examples:

John F. Kennedy to Nikita S. Khrushchev, 22 October 1962, *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, ed. Laurence Chang (Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990), Digital National Security Archive accession number CC00844.

Armin H. Meyer to Secstate, "Iranian Arms for Jordan," Tehran, cable 04494, 2 May 1968, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, ed. Eric Hooglund (Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990), Digital National Security Archive accession number IR00661.

II. To cite documents other than correspondence, such as all kinds of reports, memoranda of conversation, and executive orders, identify as many of the following elements as are available and relevant:

> Personal or corporate author
> Title of document
> Type of document and identifying number
> Date of document
> Title of published collection
> Editor of published collection
> Place of publication, publisher, and publication year
> Document number

Examples:

Harlan Cleveland, "A Most Dangerous Time," speech, 23 November 1962, *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962*, ed. Lawrence Chang (Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990), Digital National Security Archive accession number CC02570.

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Land Reform in Iran: Implications for the Shah's 'White Revolution'," memorandum RNA-3, 8 February 1965, *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980*, ed. Eric Hooglund, (Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990), Digital National Security Archive accession number IR00548.

Citing Our Materials - (continued)

Bibliographic Entries for Published Collections and Web Briefing Books

Examples:

Chang, Laurence, ed. *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.* Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990.

Hooglund, Eric, ed. *Iran: The Making of U.S. Policy, 1977-1980.* Washington, D.C.: The National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Hea1ey, 1990.

Gregg Henneman, "Black Sheep Over Iraq: The 8th Fighter Squadron in Operation Iraqi Freedom," November 2004, Secret, in Jeffrey T. Richelson, "The Area 51 File: Secret Aircraft and Soviet MiGs," EBB #443, October 29, 2013, https://nsarchive.gwu.edu/briefing-book/intelligence/2013-10-29/area-51-file-secret-aircraft-soviet-MiGs.

Pic.11. Gelman Library at George Washington University—home for the National Security Archive office.

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If you still have a question about Archive sources or need more information, please let us know by using our contact form (**click here).** Because most of us are working remotely, we can't promise to get back to you immediately, but we do check these queries daily and will do our best to respond as quickly as possible.

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