

The National Security Archive in 2023

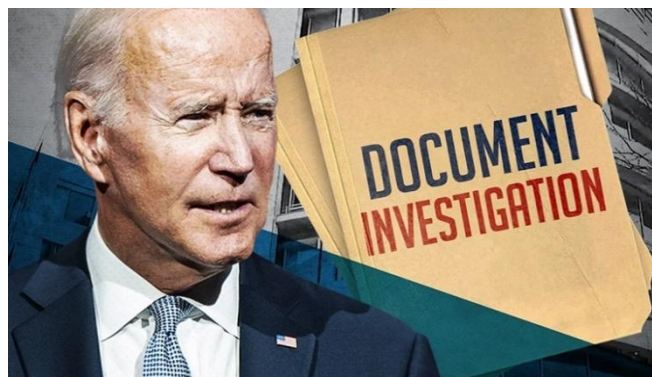
The following statistics provide a performance index of the Archive's work:

- Freedom of Information and declassification requests filed – **1,404**
- Freedom of Information and declassification appeals filed – **37**
- Pages of U.S. government documents released as the result of Archive requests – **31,567** including headline-making documents that shed light on the Clinton administration's determination not to miss a historic opportunity to help Russia transform into a democratic capitalist state in 1993; documents on the little-known SOLAR SUNRISE cyber attack that breached Department of Defense networks in 1998; records tying a key paramilitary financier to Chiquita Brands International's payments to violent paramilitary groups in Colombia and the associated human rights violations; documents revealing 50 years of U.S. opposition to proposals for environmental liability and reparations programs; materials revealing that the top leadership of the Manhattan Project repeatedly misled Congress and the public about the damaging effects of radiation; and sources revealing that the familiar presidential nuclear "football" contained executive orders of "doubtful legality" authorizing in some cases the declaration of martial law and permitting mass arrests and arbitrary detentions.
- Pages of declassified documents delivered to publisher – **86,615** in two reference collections: *Targeting Iraq, Part II: War and Occupation, 2004-2011*; *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Carter Years, 1977-1981: Highest-Level Memos to the President*.
- FOIA Lawsuits: **3 new, 1 amicus brief, 3 continuing**: The National Security Archive Fund, Inc. v. United States Department of Defense (filed December 23, 2021, Case 1:21-cv-03358) for violation of the FOIA and pattern or practice of undue delay in the Department of Defense appeals system; Appeal of National Security Archive v. Central Intelligence Agency (filed October 27, 2021, Case 1:21-cv-02857) seeking the "Perroots Memo" on the 1983 Soviet "War Scare"; National Security Archive v. Department of State, (filed September 12, 2018, 1:18-cv-02117) to release the historic U.S.-Russia files of former Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott; Closure of National Security Archive v. Department of State (filed December 14, 2022, Case 1:20-cv-03649) after parties agreed to a production schedule and re-execution of responsive records searches in FOIA requests related to 43 disappeared students in the 2014 Ayotzinapa case in Mexico; collaboration with Center for Investigative Journalism (CIR) on two more lawsuits related to the Ayotzinapa case – one regarding Mexico's request for information about a DEA operation targeting Mexican drug traffickers who were distributing huge quantities of heroin in Chicago, IL, and another ongoing lawsuit concerning the investigation of former Mexican defense secretary Salvador Cienfuegos.
- E-Books published by Archive staff and fellows – **33**, bringing the Web site total to **850**
- Archive Web site usage – Sessions: **1,952,290**; Users: **1,656,918**; Page Views: **3,309,370**
- Posts by Archive staff on *Unredacted* blog – **22**; Readers of *Unredacted* blog – **147,741** page views
- Subscribers to the Archive's e-mail alerts – **31,718** (adding over 2,230 new subscribers)
- Followers on the Archive Twitter feed – **20,100**; Followers on the Archive Facebook page – **11,700**



January 2023: On **January 9**, the National Security Archive celebrated the 90th birthday of our longtime scholarly partner and moral inspiration, Vilém Prečan, by updating and reposting four E-books he compiled and edited for the Archive and the complete briefing book from the historic 1999 conference he organized with us on the Velvet Revolution of 1989. Prečan’s distinguished career includes early landmark scholarship on Slovak history; the courageous documentation, during the Communist era, of the Soviet occupation of Prague in August 1968; forced exile in the 1970s; the founding of the Czechoslovak Documentation Centre as the hub of a large dissident network leading up to 1989; return to Prague as the first director of the new Institute of Contemporary History at the Academy of Sciences in the 1990s; and a key role in establishing the Václav Havel Library in 2004; among many other achievements. From the Archive’s perspective, Vilém’s genius arises from two deep moral commitments. First is the urgency of skeptical inquiry that has driven his lifelong challenge to authoritarianism. Second is the necessity of evidence, his insistence on preserving and publishing the primary sources that ground our mutual history and deflate polemics.

Also in **early January**, when news came out that classified documents had been found in President Biden’s former office, garage and home, Archive experts were the go-to sources on background information and the ramifications of the discovery for multiple media outlets including *CNN*, *USA Today*, *Slate*, *Government Executive* and *BBC News*. Taken together, the cases of inappropriate retention of classified materials demonstrate some of the inherent problems with the Presidential Records Act (which also covers records of the vice president) and highlight the urgent need to overhaul the entire system for protecting classified records. Archive Director Tom Blanton told the *BBC* that “part of the problem is the sheer volume of classified documents that passes through top officials’ hands. Many of those documents did not even need to be classified or should be automatically de-classified after a few years.” Blanton reinforced the point in an interview with *Government Executive*, stating, “Having a real, automatic sunset for declassifying documents would be the biggest reform we could make” and calling for the agencies overseeing the protection of classified records – such as the Public Interest Declassification Board, the Information Security Oversight Office, the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel, and the National Declassification Center – to be granted additional authority, responsibility and/or resources.



On **January 19**, the Archive’s Kate Doyle led a panel in Washington, D.C., on the 2014 Ayotzinapa Massacre of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers College in Mexico. Discussions covered the attack by police and a criminal gang, the government cover-up that followed, and the new investigation into the massacre that had recently unraveled. Doyle has been leading the Archive’s multi-year FOIA and investigative effort into the forced disappearances and worked with reporter Anayansi Díaz-Cortes at Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting on the podcast series “After Ayotzinapa,” which was ranked by *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*,

and others as one of the “best podcasts of 2022.” Díaz-Cortes joined Doyle, Omar Gómez Trejo, lead prosecutor in the Ayotzinapa case from 2019-2022, and Stephanie Brewer, the Washington Office on Latin America’s Director for Mexico, for the event.

On **January 24**, the Archive commended the legal precedent set by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in ordering the government of Bolivia to open military archives concerning a four-decade-old case of assassination and forced disappearance. The sentence in the *Flores Bedregal v. Bolivia* case found the State of Bolivia responsible for the 1980 disappearance of activist Juan Carlos Flores Bedregal and represents the first time the regional court has insisted that a member state has an obligation to guarantee the right to truth by releasing military documents – a new legal precedent for access to human rights information. The Archive marked this event by publishing key documents from the case, including the Court’s ruling and the previous expert testimony of the Archive’s Kate Doyle before the Court in February 2022, in which she addressed the right to truth and the right to information – including from military archives – in cases of grave human rights offenses and crimes against humanity.

On **January 30**, the Archive published declassified documents obtained through FOIA highlighting the first months of the United States’ relationship with the newly independent Russian Federation under Boris Yeltsin in 1992. The publication was timely, as the subject of relations with Ukraine comes up in almost all of the U.S.-Russian conversations at that time. The documents show that Yeltsin was eager for new and dramatic arms control arrangements that would exceed whatever former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had offered in his “arms race in reverse” in the late 1980s.



Yeltsin also sought American backing for Russia to take the Soviet Union’s place in a bipolar world. The documents are early highlights from a forthcoming National Security Archive reference collection covering the 1990s, *US-Russian Relations from the End of the Soviet Union to the Rise of Vladimir Putin*, to be published by ProQuest as part of the award-winning *Digital National Security Archive* (DNSA) series.

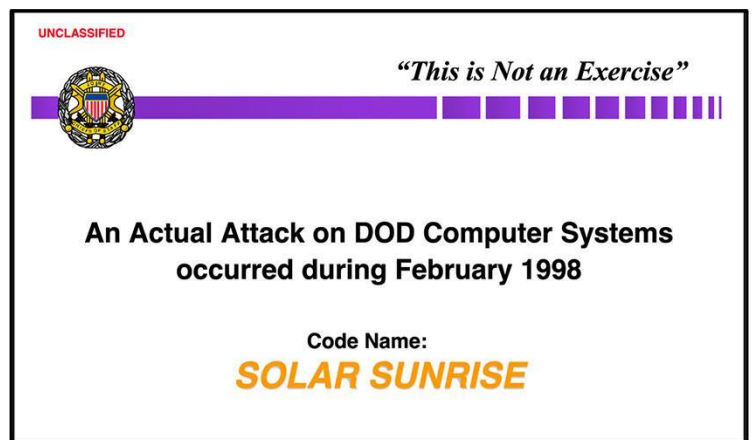
February 2023: On **February 7**, the Archive published a transcript of the first Yeltsin-Clinton telephone conversation in 1993 as part of a package of declassified State Department cables showing how the Clinton administration was determined not to miss a historic opportunity to help Russia transform into a democratic capitalist state. Released in response to Archive FOIA requests, the documents show Clinton, his advisers, and their predecessors in the Bush administration wrestling with several key policy challenges, including the presence of nuclear weapons in three former Soviet republics, the rapidly plunging Russian economy, and rising tensions between President Boris Yeltsin and the Russian parliament in 1992. Contributing to the Archive’s goal of enabling access for ordinary Russian citizens to sensitive chapters in their own history, the Russian media outlets *Meduza* and *Gazeta* provided coverage of the posting inside the country.

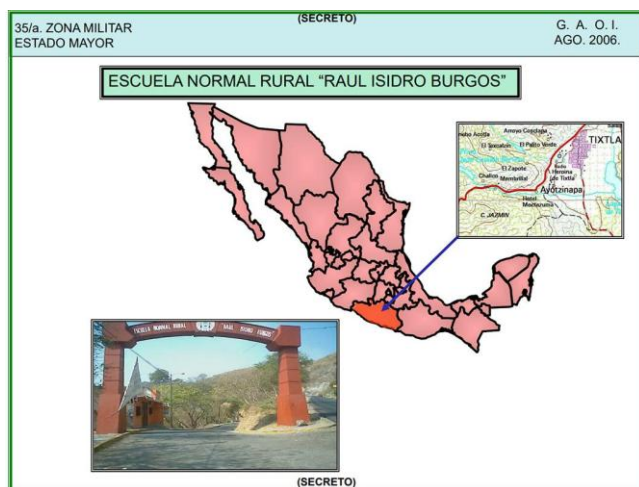


On **February 16**, the Archive published the first in a series of E-books to help reconstruct the main elements of the endgame of the Cuban Missile Crisis through January 1963 – the secret U.S.-Soviet deal to dismantle the Jupiter missiles deployed in Italy and Turkey, dubbed Pot Pie I (Italy) and Pot Pie II (Turkey). Incorporating some less frequently covered perspectives on the episode, the documents include the reactions of senior Italian and Turkish officials to U.S. proposals to remove Jupiter missiles and replace them with Polaris submarine patrols in the Mediterranean. The records indicate that the removal process was not without complications, as both countries saw the deployments as symbols of a U.S. security commitment, making it necessary for the Kennedy administration to engage in some unexpected diplomacy to persuade both countries' leaders that the new arrangement would be more beneficial to their security.

On **February 23**, the Archive published an exciting new resource for scholars and practitioners who study arms control and nuclear nonproliferation – a series of oral history interviews with veteran Russian arms control negotiators and nuclear experts that provides valuable insights into decades of U.S.-Russian nonproliferation efforts and emphasizes the importance of strategic dialogue between nuclear powers. The interviews were conducted by experts from the PIR Center, Russia's main nonproliferation NGO, as part of the group's project, "Oral History of Nuclear Nonproliferation Project: Voices from Russia." High-definition videos of the interviews, conducted by PIR Center's Elena Karnaukhova and Alexandra Zubenko, are also posted on the Russian page of the National Security Archive website. Among the veterans interviewed are General Viktor Esin, former head of the Russian Strategic Rocket Forces; Ambassador Yuri Nazarkin, Soviet and Russian START negotiator; Russian Academy of Sciences member Alexei Arbatov; and other key participants in the U.S.-Russian strategic dialogue.

On **February 28**, the Archive marked the 25th anniversary of the cyber-attack known as SOLAR SUNRISE by publishing declassified records obtained through FOIA by the Archive's Hewlett Foundation-funded Cyber Vault project. The series of cyber intrusions from 1998, which then-Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre called "the most organized and systematic [cyber] attack the Pentagon has seen to date," affected almost a dozen DOD networks but also hit a number of university and other sites. One of the persistent problems the attacks underscored was the difficulty of assigning attribution. But when investigators discovered that the perpetrators had used a node in the United Arab Emirates called Emirnet, one of the only Internet gateways into Iraq, it raised a more immediate alarm – that the real goal of the incident might have been to disrupt the imminent deployment of 2,000 Marines to enforce weapons inspections in Iraq. That concern led the Clinton administration, just a few weeks later, to promulgate Presidential Policy Directive 63 (included in the posting), which ordered steps to address the obvious vulnerability of U.S. military systems.





March 2023: On **March 10**, the Archive continued its long-term investigative project on the Ayotzinapa case by publishing internal communications and documents from the Mexican armed forces showing that they had been surveilling the local teachers’ college that the abducted students attended. The military records also reveal that Mexico’s defense ministry worked to shield itself from the civilian-led investigation into the disappearance of the 43 students; that military intelligence routinely lumped together dangerous drug traffickers and parents of the missing students in reports on “conflict” in Mexico; and that Mexico’s defense secretary oversaw a propaganda campaign to discredit the parents, their lawyers, and a group of

experts assigned to assist in the case by a United Nations commission. The 20 documents posted by the Archive are among an estimated four million emails and records that were stolen from the Mexican Defense Ministry (*Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional – Sedena*) by an anonymous collective of hackers known as “Guacamaya.” The documents were covered by media worldwide including *Areistegui Noticias*, *Infobae*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, and the *Latin Times*, and Archive analyst Kate Doyle was interviewed on *Democracy Now!*

For Sunshine Week 2023 – **March 12-18, 2023** – the Archive published its 22nd government-wide FOIA audit – investigating agency compliance with the federal government’s portal, FOIA.gov, which was mandated by the 2016 FOIA amendments. Our audit found that the public still cannot send FOIA requests to the CIA or other prominent agencies through the national



portal seven years after Congress required the building of a website that allows “the public to submit a request to any agency from a single website.” Three out of four federal agencies do not even mention FOIA.gov on their individual agency websites, with many funneling requesters through independent portals with varying degrees of functionality, leaving them unaware of a more simplified and centralized way to file their requests. The Archive’s audit also detailed exactly what the Biden administration could do to ensure that the 2016 law was followed.

On **March 13**, the Archive collaborated with James E. David, curator of national security space programs at the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum, and Pentagon scientist Charles Byvik to publish declassified documents on the 65-year U.S. effort to detect and track objects in space, from the days before *Sputnik 1* to today’s much more crowded orbital environment. The fascinating posting draws from a variety of declassified sources, including early CIA memos on requirements for “surveilling” foreign space vehicles, Pentagon reports on various Soviet satellite launches, and the 1965 report of a high-level working group established to review the entire U.S. space surveillance program.

On **March 20**, the Archive published several official films produced by the U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC) and the U.S. Air Force during the 1960s that were declassified in response to Archive FOIA requests. Published by the Archive for the first time, the films reveal how SAC prepared bomber pilots and crews for nuclear war, educated them on the effects of the devastating weapons, and acquainted them with the contents of their “Combat Mission Folders.” A pair of SAC “film reports” from the mid-1960s feature the 1965-66 “Arc Light” bombings – a major SAC contribution to the rapidly escalating Vietnam War, as well as fascinating footage from the initial efforts to clean up the radioactive mess left behind by a January 1966 “Broken Arrow” accident in which a nuclear-armed B-52 crashed near Palomares, Spain. A final film from 1966 gives viewers an inside look at the Ballistic Missile Early Warning System (BMEWS) site in Thule, Greenland, and the men working inside its secret Tactical Operations Room (TOR). The aviation blog *The Aviationist* wrote extensively about the newly released films and found the reenactments of B-52s with nuclear weapons on board (meant to perform retaliatory nuclear strikes in the event of Soviet attack) of particular interest today as Russia continuously threatens to use nuclear weapons in retaliation for Western support of Ukraine.

On **March 23** Archive director Tom Blanton testified before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs committee in a hearing entitled, “Modernizing the Government’s Classification System.” The Archive marked the occasion by posting a copy of Blanton’s testimony (co-authored by Archive policy director Lauren Harper and Archive senior analyst Dr. William Burr), which describes the crisis of over-classification, the enormous and growing backlogs of millions of classified records and thousands of unanswered declassification



requests, and the incoming tsunami of digital secrets. The testimony highlighted findings from our 2022 Sunshine Week FOIA audit showing the National Archives suffering from 30 years of an almost flat-lined budget, while the number of records for which it is responsible has increased exponentially. To counteract over-classification, the Archive called for original classifiers to assign sunsets at the front end – dates at which classification would expire automatically – and to apply a more focused consideration of the costs of secrecy and the benefits of public release. On the back end, the system needs “drop dead” dates for automatic release with little or no review, according to Blanton. Even a 40-year date would be an improvement over the current, completely backlogged system, in which FOIA requesters can expect a 12-year wait before the classified records they're seeking even reach the review stage.



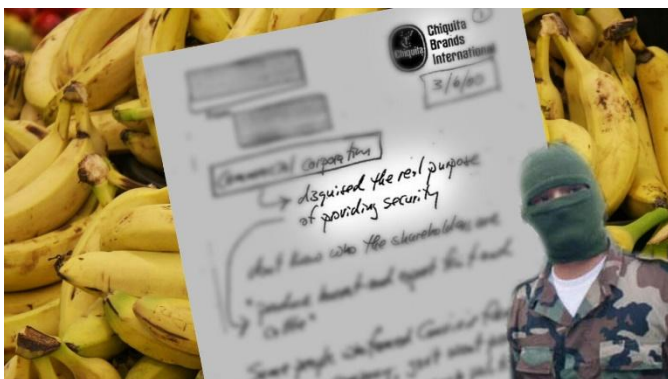
On **March 28**, PBS’s “American Experience” program premiered “The Movement and the ‘Madman,’” a documentary that tells the story of how the intensity of the U.S. anti-Vietnam War movement forced President Richard Nixon to abandon plans to escalate the conflict in the fall of 1969 and instead implement his “madman” theory, approving a secret alert of U.S. nuclear forces around the world to project the idea that he was “crazy” and intimidate adversaries into backing down. The filmmakers interviewed a number of researchers and

historians, including Archive senior analyst William Burr, whose book, co-written with Jeffrey Kimball – *Nixon’s Nuclear Specter: The Secret Alert of 1969, Madman Diplomacy, and the Vietnam War* (published by the University Press of Kansas in 2015) – was a key source for the documentary. In conjunction with the documentary screening, the Archive posted some of the key evidence that Burr and Kimball drew upon in writing their book on its web site.

April 2023: On **April 3**, Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) announced that the National Security Archive and its partner, Reveal from the Center for Investigative Reporting, were winners of a 2022 IRE Award for “Longform Journalism in Audio” for producing the *After Ayotzinapa* podcast. The Archive has been investigating the Ayotzinapa case as part of the Mexico Project since 2015. In February 2020, Kate Doyle and Reveal’s Anayansi Díaz-Cortes began reporting on it together for their podcast.



Over the course of two years, they traveled from New York and San Francisco to Mexico City, Guerrero, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., interviewing dozens of people and examining thousands of pages of documents.



On **April 18**, Archive Colombia Project director Michael Evans published documents that for the first time tied a key paramilitary financier to Chiquita Brands International’s payments to violent paramilitary groups in Colombia. The posting details how a Colombian taxi driver who recently received a 36-month prison sentence served as a key intermediary in delivering cash payments from Chiquita to right-wing paramilitary organizations. Previous investigative work by the Archive detailed how Chiquita saw payments to paramilitaries from

the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, the Colombian military, and even left-wing rebel groups as little more than the “cost of doing business in Colombia.” One senior Chiquita executive, Robert Kisting, told U.S. investigators that it was “not realistic” to halt operations over something in the range of \$100,000-

200,000 per year. The newly published records suggest that the former banana company “bagman” could be instrumental in helping Colombian authorities understand the roles of company officials still under investigation in connection with paramilitary human rights violations and the roles of Colombian military officers who encouraged and facilitated those relationships.

On **April 20**, the Archive published 43 documents as part of its second Cuban Missile Crisis endgame E-book prepared in partnership with the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Nuclear Proliferation International History Project and covering the last phases of U.S. action to remove the Jupiter missiles through official agreements with Italy and Turkey. The documents include a never-before-published Air Force “Plan for the Withdrawal and Disposition of the Jupiter Weapon System,” which required the Air Force to remove the missiles and render them “unidentifiable,” and State Department memoranda revealing that, while negotiations with Italy had been relatively straightforward, Turkey was reluctant to move ahead with dismantling the missiles and would demand secret talks and promises of higher levels of U.S. military aid before signing off on a dismantling agreement.



May 2023: On **May 24**, the Archive and its publishing partner ProQuest added a 61st documentation set to the *Digital National Security Archive* (DNSA) series. The new offering is titled *Targeting Iraq, Part II: War and Occupation, 2004-2011* and is a follow-on to Part I of the *Targeting Iraq* series published in 2017. Comprised of 2,179 documents totaling 77,706 pages, the collection begins with the closure of the Coalition Provisional Authority, which was established by the United States following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, and ends with the withdrawal of all American combat troops in 2011 under the terms authorized by President George W. Bush. The documents spotlight a range of key issues across the intervening years, including efforts to restore a functioning economy and reestablish security in Iraq, American attempts to suppress violence motivated by the U.S. presence in the country, U.S. influence in Iraq’s political and economic decision-making, oil legislation, and much more.



On **May 25**, the Archive marked what would have been Anatoly Sergeyevich Chernyaev’s 102nd birthday with the publication for the first time in English of his Diary for 1983. The author donated the original diary to the Archive before his death. In 1983, he was serving as deputy director of the International Department of the Central Committee responsible for the International Communist Movement (ICM). Within three years, he became the chief foreign policy adviser to Mikhail Gorbachev and a leading theorist in the era of *perestroika* and *glasnost*. The 1983 installment was one of Chernyaev’s shortest, perhaps reflecting a dark year when

early hopes for change under the new general secretary, Yuri Andropov gave way to the gradual realization that Andropov was ill and unlikely to continue reforms. Other grim events included the September shoot-down of the civilian airliner KAL-007 and the November NATO war game Able Archer 83, which sparked genuine fears in Moscow (in Andropov most especially) that a Western nuclear strike might be coming.

Not surprisingly, Chernyaev contemplated the possibility of nuclear war for the first time in this excerpt, writing “this vast world, full of fantastic achievements of the human mind and labor, can in a few short minutes fall victim to a nervous breakdown of one of the two ‘superpower’ leaders.” Next year’s translation of the Diary for 1984 will be the last installment of this remarkable resource that covers two decades in total. Pulitzer Prize-winning author David Hoffman has called it “irreplaceable” and “one of the great internal records of the Gorbachev years.”

June 2023: On **June 5**, the Archive published the highest-level declassified documents from the first six months of the Clinton administration’s relations with the Russian Federation in 1993. The records reveal a remarkable array of cooperative diplomatic initiatives and Bill Clinton’s direct personal support for Boris Yeltsin in the latter’s growing conflict with his own elected parliament over the radical economic reforms known as “shock therapy.” The documents include verbatim transcripts of the first two face-to-face presidential meetings in Vancouver, Canada (April 1993), the G-7 meeting in Tokyo, Japan (July 1993), and records of telephone conversations between the two leaders in February, April and June. Among other contributions, the materials provide historical context to the June 2023 statements of Secretary of State Antony Blinken in his speech about Russia’s strategic failure in Ukraine: “At the peaceful end of the Cold War, we shared the hope that Russia would emerge to a brighter future, free and open, fully integrated with the world.” Journalist Mike Eckel wrote an article extensively covering the documents in the posting for *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*.



On **June 6**, the Archive published declassified documents showing that the Reagan administration rejected an international agreement on humanitarian laws of war – Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions – due to insurmountable objections from the Pentagon and the belief that the agreement favored terrorists. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had so many objections to the measure – which proposed additional protection for civilians during international conflict – as to render the Protocol useless. One particular obstacle for both U.S. officials and NATO allies was the fear that international talks intended to strengthen

protections for civilians during conflicts could lead to a ban on the use of nuclear weapons. To include all of their reservations, the JCS believed, would make the document “too complex to be a reliable codification of the law of armed conflict.”

Also in **June**, Archive director Tom Blanton was consulted by multiple news media regarding the federal indictments against former President Trump for storing dozens of classified documents at Mar-A-Lago and how the actions possibly violated the Espionage Act through the illegal retention of defense information and obstruction of government efforts to retrieve the documents. *Reuters*, *Politico*, and the

Daily Kos consulted Blanton and he was also interviewed on PRI's *The World*. Blanton clarified that Trump lacked the authority to declassify materials related to nuclear weapons and stamped "Formerly Restricted Data (FRD)" because such records can only be declassified through a process involving the Departments of Energy and Defense. Blanton told *Reuters*, "While a president can ask for an FRD designation to be removed, that process 'takes forever.'"

July 2023: On **July 6**, the Archive's Climate Change Transparency Project published declassified records documenting 50 years of U.S. resistance to environmental reparations. Among the highlights was a Nixon-era intelligence report noting "increasing African militancy on development matters" and predicting that "views linking environment and development will be with us in the years to come." Although reparations are often seen as an idea that formed in the early 1990s, the documents demonstrate that calls by developing nations for environmental liability – and U.S. opposition to those proposals – began nearly 20 years earlier in 1972. These records thus present ground-breaking new evidence that sheds light on the various ways the U.S. government has tried to avoid getting what President George H. W. Bush called a "big bill" in talks about compensation, liability, and reparations programs meant to alleviate the impacts of climate change. *E&E News* by *POLITICO*, which reports on energy and the environment, published coverage of the documents.

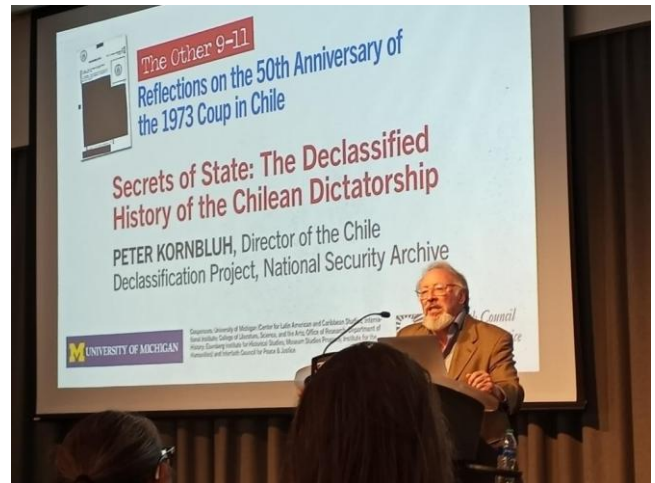


On **July 18**, the Archive published declassified documents on the presidential nuclear "football" – a special carrying case also known variously as the "satchel," the "black bag," and the "emergency actions pouch" – that enabled and symbolized presidential control of nuclear weapons from the Eisenhower to the George W. Bush administrations. While the existence of the "football" has been known since the 1960s, reliable details about its contents have been relatively scarce. The newly published documents show that during the Cold War, and possibly later, they included proclamations and executive orders

known as Presidential Emergency Action Documents (PEADs) for use in a national emergency that were meant "to clothe the President with formal emergency powers." But according to documents in the posting, some of these authorities were actually of "doubtful legality," "badly out of date," and "even illegal," perhaps because they could authorize the suspension of habeas corpus, the declaration of martial law, and mass arrests and arbitrary detentions. Playing off the "football's" frequent dramatic portrayals by Hollywood, the posting also featured a gallery of recently released photos from the George W. Bush Presidential Library showing military officers carrying the actual satchel in a variety of situations. The documents were featured on *ABC News*, the *Associated Press* and a German podcast on *WELT*.

August 2023: On **August 7**, the Archive marked the 78th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings with the publication of a selection of declassified records, including a newly released memorandum from the weeks after the bombings that confirmed early reports of fatal radiation disease – even as Manhattan Project director General Leslie Groves dismissed the accounts from Japan as “propaganda.” The memo supplements previous Archive E-books on how Manhattan Project scientists estimated and calculated the harmful impacts of nuclear radiation while Groves continued to downplay and make misleading statements about its effects. Fred Kaplan wrote extensively about the documents for *Slate*, noting that their publication coincided with the screening of the \$500 million-dollar grossing film *Oppenheimer* – a film about the director of the Los Alamos Laboratory who “kept mum about Groves’ lie rather than dispute him or confront the general directly.” This yearly documentary update published by the Archive on the anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki continually ranks as one of the most viewed publications on our web site.

In **August**, Archive senior analyst and Chile Documentation Project director Peter Kornbluh began a month-long commemoration of the CIA-backed September 11, 1973, coup in Chile that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power. Capping a career that has included significant personal experience with, and has been devoted extensively to, Chile and the history of its turbulent relationship with the United States, Kornbluh worked with remarkable impact to engage the debate in Chile over the meaning and history of the coup. Major activities included the publication of *Pinochet Desclasificado: Los Archivos Secretos de Estados Unidos Sobre Chile* – a revised, 50th-anniversary, Chilean edition of his noted book, *The Pinochet File: A Declassified Dossier on Atrocity and Accountability* (published in 2003); petitioning top levels of the Chilean government to identify and formally request still-secret U.S. records on the coup from the Biden administration; developing and producing a documentary film, “Operation Chile: Top Secret” for the Chilevision channel, which highlighted Kornbluh’s book and its new documentary revelations and featured him in interviews about his years of work researching Chile; and a series of related E-books published on the Archive’s web site. Kornbluh’s commemoration work made a huge media splash in outlets including *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Democracy Now!*, *Axios*, *The Nation*, *The Raw Story*, *Truthdig*, *La Tercera*, *El Periodico*, *La Jornada*, *Piensa Chile*, *Ciper Chile*, *Agencia EFE*, *El Universal*, *El Pais*, *Noticias Telemundo* and *El Mostrador*, among others. Related Archive e-books posted this month include:



August 8: **“Chile’s COUP at 50: Kissinger Briefed Nixon on Failed 1970 CIA Plot to Block Allende Presidency”** – The publication of a Kissinger-Nixon telcon wherein Kissinger told the president that the CIA-backed plot to block Socialist president-elect Salvador Allende from being inaugurated – an operation ordered by Nixon five weeks earlier – had not succeeded. The Chilean military turned out to be “a pretty incompetent bunch,” according to Kissinger, having failed to seize power after the removal of Gen. René Schneider, Chile’s top pro-constitution military officer.

August 25: “**The Coup in Chile: CIA Releases Top Secret 9/11/73 President’s Daily Brief**” – A posting focused on a declassified President’s Daily Brief (PDB) written on September 11, 1973, that was finally released in response to a formal petition from the Chilean government and the threat of an Archive lawsuit. The CIA also partially declassified a second PDB, dated September 8, 1973, which erroneously informed President Nixon that there was “no evidence of a coordinated tri-service coup plan” in Chile and said that “should hotheads in the navy act in the belief they will automatically receive support from the other services, they could find themselves isolated.” Kornbluh, who filed a FOIA petition for the two Chile PDBs earlier this year, applauded the release, but questioned why these two documents, which he said “contain not a single sentence that could compromise U.S. national security,” had been withheld in their entirety for decades.



On **August 28**, the 20th anniversary of the final report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), the Archive posted a collection of 22 cables and declassified intelligence reports chronicling 20 years of internal armed conflict between government security forces and the Maoist Shining Path and the Marxist Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) that resulted in the death of an estimated 69,000 Peruvians and 19,000 disappearances. Former Archive Peru documentation project director Tamara Feinstein posted this collection as part of the Archive’s

continuing commitment to the long-term goals of the CVR and its mission to shed light on 20 years of abuses, to identify and aid the victims, and to determine those responsible for the violence. Feinstein noted that the current political crisis in Peru “demonstrates that the problems and legacies of Peru’s violent past are still very present today” but also saw signs of progress against impunity and evidence of the truth commission’s lasting legacy, such as the historic prosecution of President Alberto Fujimori in 2009; convictions of Peruvian paramilitary chiefs in 2023; the formation of a Comprehensive Reparations Program in 2005; and the 2009 establishment of the Lugar de Memoria (Place of Memory). The posting was featured by *El Pais*, *La Republica*, *La Prensa Latina* and the blog *The 1014*.

September 2023: Continuing his focus on the anniversary of the 1973 coup in Chile, on **September 8** Archive senior analyst Peter Kornbluh contributed to the ongoing debate over the extent of the U.S. role in the coup by posting an edited section of his *Pinochet File* book as an E-book titled “Countdown Toward the Coup.” The essay recorded U.S. government actions, internal debates and policy deliberations as conditions for the coup evolved between March and September 1973. The CIA did not play a “direct role,” according to Kornbluh, but “the Nixon White House sought, supported, and embraced the coup,” according to Kornbluh, even if “the political risks of direct engagement simply outweighed any actual necessity for its success.” Kornbluh went on to describe Nixon and Kissinger commiserating over the fact that the U.S. administration would not get the credit they deserved for the success of the coup, suggesting “that the press should be ‘celebrating’ the military coup” and that “in the Eisenhower period, we would be heroes.” “This is an intricate, complicated and extraordinarily revealing history,” Kornbluh said, “that holds many lessons on the secret abuses of U.S. power and the danger of dictatorship over democracy for today’s world community.”

On **September 19**, Colombia project director Michael Evans published declassified Pentagon and State Department cables cited in the recently published memoir of Helena Urán Bidegain, daughter of slain magistrate Carlos Horacio Urán, who was detained and murdered by the Colombian military in the aftermath of the November 1985 siege of the Colombian Palace of Justice. Over 100 people perished during the siege, including 11 Colombian Supreme Court justices, most of them during Colombian military operations to retake the building, which was stormed and occupied by M-19 militants on the morning of November 6, 1985. Helena Urán, who is now a special adviser to the Colombian foreign ministry, told the RTVC television network that she had investigated U.S. records provided by the National Security Archive and “found information that the country should know.” She referred specifically to documents revealing that the U.S. sent a military adviser and C-4 explosives to Bogota as the siege was unfolding and that then Colombian President Belisario Betancur gave the military a “green light” to do “whatever was necessary” to end the standoff. Uran told RTVC it would be “a good moment for [Colombian] President Gustavo Petro to make a formal declassification request to President Biden,” adding that “to completely declassify those archives would be a great support to the peace process, to reconciliation, to non-repetition, and to the strengthening of democracy in Colombia.” In response to the revelations, Colombia’s war crimes tribunal, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), ordered the Colombian foreign ministry to ask the U.S. government for a complete declassification of files on the Palace of Justice case later in December. Multiple media outlets covered information disclosed in the documents, including *El Espectador*, *El País*, *Infobae*, and *RTVC Noticias*.



October 2023: On **October 3**, to mark the 35th anniversary of the Chilean plebiscite that forced General Augusto Pinochet from power, the U.S. State Department designated the Ambassador’s residency in Santiago as “the Barnes House” – honoring former Ambassador Harry G. Barnes who served as U.S. chief of mission in

Santiago during the last years of the Pinochet dictatorship. Ambassador Barnes called attention to human rights violations and supported opposition to the Pinochet regime, causing Pinochet to refuse to meet with him and block his access to government ministers – contrasting sharply with the earlier history of Washington’s support for the military coup and the consolidation of the Pinochet regime. The Archive paid tribute to Barnes by posting key documents recorded during his ambassadorial tenure, and senior analyst Peter Kornbluh honored Barnes’ legacy with an article in *The Nation* (“The American Ambassador Who Helped Stop a Coup in Chile”).

October 4 marked the 30th anniversary of Russian President Boris Yeltsin ordering tanks and airborne troops to shell and storm the “White House,” the Russian Parliament (Supreme Soviet) building in 1993, to suppress the opposition trying to impeach and remove him – a landmark event in Russia’s failure to develop democracy. The Archive marked the anniversary by publishing declassified documents detailing the complete American support for Yeltsin’s actions, including the transcript of U.S. President Bill Clinton’s phone call to Yeltsin the next day to praise him, and the memcon in which U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher subsequently told Yeltsin this was “superb handling.”

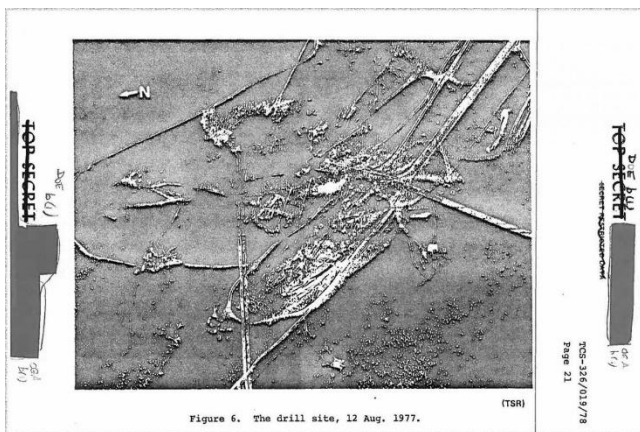


Figure 6. The drill site, 12 Aug. 1977. (TSR)

On **October 26**, the Archive published documents on South Africa’s secret nuclear test site. While aware that South Africa had a uranium-enrichment project, the U.S. lacked specific evidence of a nuclear explosives testing program. But U.S. suspicions were growing in 1977, after the CIA found that South Africa had been conducting “criticality experiments” associated with nuclear weapons work. The posting focused on the decision-making and diplomatic process during August 1977 that began after the U.S. obtained evidence confirming the existence of the Kalahari nuclear test site. Worried that South African moves

toward a nuclear weapons capability could have a destabilizing impact in Africa and set back non-proliferation efforts, records show that the Carter administration worked closely with allies to send messages designed to ensure that South Africa understood the costs of having a nuclear program and to obtain assurances that the program would be in compliance with non-proliferation norms.

November 2023: On **November 22**, the Archive published for the first time in full the confessions of Chilean intelligence agent Michael Townley, Augusto Pinochet’s hitman who orchestrated the September 1976 car bomb assassination of former Chilean diplomat Orlando Letelier and Ronni Karpen Moffitt of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. Townley’s confessions record his four-year career as an American-born DINA assassin – how he was recruited by top DINA officers in 1974, given a mansion in an upper-class neighborhood of Santiago, and appointed to lead a special Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) unit “dedicated to elimination” of Pinochet regime opponents, some with chemical warfare agents that he manufactured in his home laboratory. Another of Townley’s reports details his covert mission to assassinate Letelier with support from the “Red Condor” – the Operation Condor network of Southern Cone security services. “The government of Chile wanted Letelier dead,” according to the confession. *Ciper Chile* and *El Periódico de España* covered the documents.



The Archive became the go-to source on the legacy of Henry Kissinger upon his death on **November 29**. Media outlets worldwide made use of the “declassified dossier” of documents Archive staff had posted just prior to Kissinger’s 100th birthday on May 27 earlier in the year. The “dossier” was meant to contribute to a balanced and more comprehensive evaluation of Kissinger’s legacy with a compilation of the memos, memcons and telcons that the Archive played a significant role in recovering in the years after he left office in 1977. The dossier detailed his policy deliberations, conversations and directives on many

initiatives for which he became famous – détente with the USSR, the opening to China, and Middle East shuttle diplomacy, among them. But the documents also detailed the darker side of Kissinger’s controversial tenure in power: his role in the overthrow of democracy and the rise of dictatorship in Chile; disdain for human rights and support for dirty, and even genocidal, wars abroad; secret bombing campaigns in Southeast Asia; and involvement in the Nixon administration’s criminal abuses, among them the secret wiretaps of his own top aides. Documents from the “declassified dossier” were featured on NPR’s *All Things Considered*, the frontpage of the *USA Today* and in *Rolling Stone*, *MSNBC*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *HuffPost*, and numerous outlets in Latin America. David Sanger of *The New York Times* linked to our posting and wrote that Kissinger’s mistake was living so long that the declassified documents caught up to him. The two E-books on Kissinger’s legacy published this year were among the most viewed publications on the Archive’s web site.

December 2023: The Archive began December (**December 6**) with a posting highlighting some of the good, bad and ugly nuclear declassification decisions that have been recently disclosed in response to our FOIA requests. On the plus side are releases that add historically valuable information to the public record, such as the opening of documents that were reclassified after having



been released at the National Archives, a newly declassified Kissinger-Nixon telcon, and U.S. embassy messages from 1980 on nuclear nonproliferation policies. In contrast to these good releases are multiple bad and just plain ugly responses from the Pentagon and the U.S. Air Force, among others, highlighting a persistent problem where government agencies – for whatever reason – try to maintain security classification restrictions even in cases where the information has already been released, sometimes decades earlier. The examples illustrate the deep and fundamental problems that plague the U.S. secrecy declassification system, including a dramatic lack of resources in government FOIA offices and the overclassification that is built into the front end of the U.S. national security records management and which must be corrected by an updated executive order on classified national security information.

On **December 12**, as former president Jimmy Carter remained in hospice care, the Archive published a major primary document collection on his presidency. The 62nd installment in the Archive’s award-winning *Digital National Security Archive* series, *U.S. Foreign Policy in the Carter Years, 1977-1981: Highest-Level Memos to the President*, comprises more than 2,500 communications and top-level policy-



making records that Carter personally viewed and, in many cases, commented on directly. The collection, which comes primarily from the files of the Jimmy Carter Library, as well as from FOIA requests and other sources, features every declassified weekly memo to the president from his most senior foreign policy aides – National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and Secretaries of State Cyrus Vance and Edmund Muskie; as well as every available meeting record of the National Security Council and its two subgroups – the Policy Review Committee and the Special Coordination Committee. Topics cover the gamut of foreign policy issues during this pivotal

period, notably the conflict in the Middle East, the Iran hostage crisis, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, SALT talks with Moscow, the opening of diplomatic relations with China, the Nicaraguan revolution, energy, and a growing emphasis, championed by Carter, on global human rights in U.S. foreign policymaking.

FUNDERS AND SUPPORTERS 2023:

The National Security Archive is grateful towards the following organizations – including foundations, law firms, attorneys, and legal advocacy groups – whose philanthropic and FOIA litigation support were critical to the Archive’s mission during 2023:

Carnegie Corporation of New York
Sally and Dick Roberts Coyote Foundation
Democracy Fund, Inc.
Ford Foundation
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
James and Kinsella Family Fund
Stewart R. Mott Foundation
New-Land Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Bernard and Anne Spitzer Charitable Trust
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John Gutmann
Hillary Jacobs
Nate Jones
Knight First Amendment Institute
Scott Nelson
Public Citizen Litigation Group
Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP
David Sobel
Anne Weismann
Yale Law School Media Freedom and Information
Access Clinic
Allison Zieve

And thank you to the many individuals who have donated to the work of the National Security Archive!

Special thanks to Peter Grabosky, Jenny Holzer, and David Rosenberg