



NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and* RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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Citing Foreign Affairs Records

Full and accurate citations are necessary in order to properly identify the documents and other materials used in preparing books, articles, legal briefs, and other documentary-based works. The NARA publication "Citing Records in the National Archives of the United States" [General Information Leaflet Number 17] provides general recommendations for citing records. The following specialized guidance is primarily for the users of Department of State and other foreign affairs records. You may, however, derive citations for other records by following the pattern set forth below. If you have questions about citing any of the records you use, please consult an archivist familiar with those records.

I. General Guidance

The first citation to records from a series of records should include the full series title and other archival details about the records (record group number, entry number, etc.). Subsequent notes to the same series can be in the form of shorthand references, but should still include the key information. The examples provided here include both a long and a short form of note. Citations to records that are on microfilm or online should follow this guidance with the addition of an indication that the records are available on microfilm or online with appropriate identifying information.

Regardless of the type of note, a proper citation to the records must include several elements. In some instances, discussed below, additional information should be included or information that might seem useful for a note is actually extraneous:

[1] **Originating office ("From").** The place where the document originated. This might be the Department of State, an office within the Department, a Foreign Service Post, another agency, or an individual.

[2] **Addressee ("To").** The destination of the communication. Similarly, this might be the Department of State, a Foreign Service Post, another agency, or an individual.

[3] **Type of document and document number.** All incoming and outgoing telegrams, airgrams, despatches, instructions, and many

reports are numbered. Correspondence, memorandums, memorandums of conversation generally do not have assigned numbers.

[4] **Date of document.**

[5] **File designation.** This can vary depending on the records being used. See detailed guidance in Sections II - V below.

[6] **Series title.** The exact information to include varies depending on the type of records. See detailed guidance in Sections II - V below.

[7] **Entry number.** The entry number assigned to the records within a record group in the National Archives. This information is not necessary for the Central Files or Post Files if all of the guidance herein is followed.

[8] **Record group number and title.**

[9] **Repository** (e.g. "U.S. National Archives").

II. Department of State Central Files

•**Central Files, 1789-1906.** Before late 1906, the records constituting the Department's central files were arranged by type ("Instructions to Diplomatic Posts", "Miscellaneous Letters", "Notes to Diplomatic Missions in the United States", etc.) and thereunder chronologically or by name of country or by name of city and thereunder chronologically. See Example 1.

•**Central Files, 1906-1973.** If the document comes from the Department's Numerical Files, Central Decimal Files, or Subject-Numeric Files, you should include the file designation that each individual document carries, either on the back of the document (Numerical Files), in the right margin (Central Decimal Files and Subject-Numeric Files), or in the upper-right corner (Subject-Numeric Files) of the document. **Do not use the folder designation for records from the central files as those folders may contain documents with more than one file designation. Box numbers should not be used for central file citations, either.** See Examples 2-7.

•**Central Files, 1973 and later (SAS).** In addition to including the series title - "Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-1979" - notes should indicate the subset of that series

(e.g. "Electronic Telegrams" or "P-Reel Printouts," etc.), and the record group information with additional information as noted below:

◆ Citations to individual telegrams reviewed online should include identifying information such as date, to, from and the Document

Number (also known as the Message Reference Number [MRN]) as found in the message attributes. The MRN can be found on every telegram. See illustration. For example,

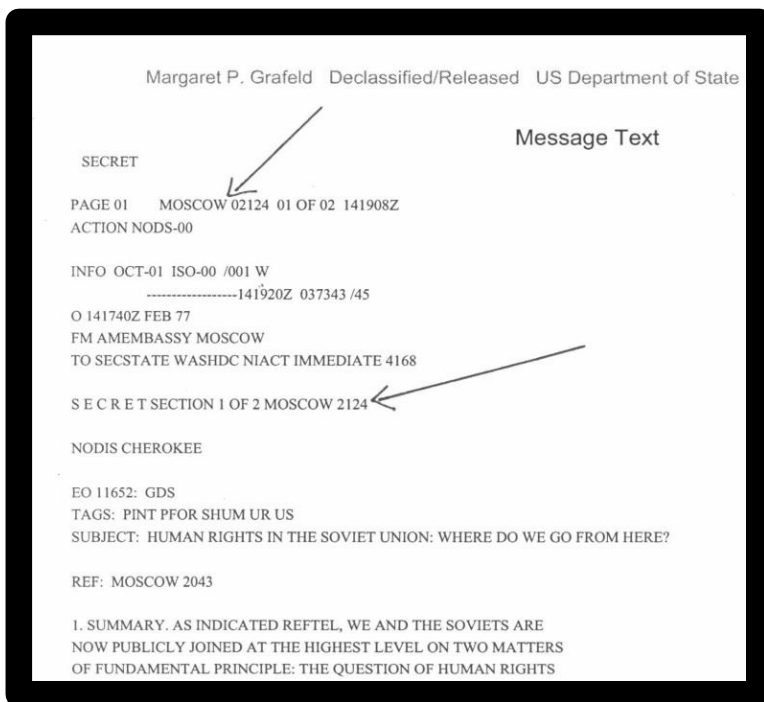
"1977MOSCOW02124" indicates the 2124th telegram sent by the U.S. embassy in Moscow in 1977, while a telegram with a citation of "1975STATE095768" is the 95768th telegram sent from the Department of State

in 1975. Using this number, researchers will be able to retrieve all available sections of multi-section telegrams and all available versions of retransmitted telegrams. While not useful for identifying the records, the citation can include a note in brackets containing the date on which the records were retrieved online;

◆ Citations to individual telegrams from the D-Reel microfilm or the N-Reel microfilm should include identifying information such as date, to, from, the Document Number, and the Film Number, which can be found on the document;

◆ Citations to documents from the P-Reel microfilm printouts should indicate the type of document (airgram, letter, memorandum, report) and other identifying information such as date, from, to, the document number (where appropriate), and the Film Number.

The following are model Central Files-SAS notes:



A. Electronic telegrams:

Embassy Manila to Department of State, Telegram 07657, June 27, 1974, 1974MANILA07657, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/Electronic Telegrams, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives (accessed August 25, 2023).

B. Telegrams from D-Reels:

Embassy Manila to Department of State, Telegram 07657, June 27, 1974, D740169-1020, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/D-Reel Microfilm, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.

C. P-Reel Printouts:

1. Memorandum of Conversation, "Secretary's London Speech; ECPC; US-French Relations; European Unification," July 1, 1976, P760126-0934, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/P-Reel Printouts, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.

2. Embassy Cairo to Department of State, Airgram A-150, August 9, 1976, P760129-0386, Central Foreign Policy Files, 1973-79/P-Reel Printouts, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.

III. Decentralized ("Lot") Files and Specialized Record Groups

File citations to records from subject or country files maintained by a separate office in the Department of State, or from one of the specialized record groups, should include the folder title, including any alphabetical or numerical file designation. As part of the series title, the citation should include the name of the bureau or office that maintained the records. Box numbers may be useful for citations if the series is very large or not well organized, but if you have a good file designation, they are unnecessary. See Example 8.

IV: Foreign Service Post Files

Citations to records of Foreign Service Posts will vary, depending upon the time period of the records and the series from which they come. In general, there are two periods of records: (1) ending in 1912 and (2) beginning in 1912.

•Before August 1912, most records maintained at Foreign Service Posts were arranged by type ("Instructions from the Department of State", "Miscellaneous Correspondence Received", etc.) and thereunder chronologically. Almost all of these records are bound and are tabbed with labels that include the post name and an assigned consecutive volume number.

•Beginning in August 1912 and carrying through to the most recent records accessioned by the National Archives, most post records were arranged according to one of several pre-determined subject filing schemes used over the years. Generally, the records were bound in annual increments until World War II. From that point forward, the records were maintained in file folders in annual or multi-year accumulations. In many instances there are separate parallel overlapping files based on the original classification level of the records ("General Records", "Classified General Records", "Top Secret General Records"). Despite the existence of the basic files, some posts continued to maintain separate files of different sorts ("Chronological Files", etc.).

♦Citations to Foreign Service Post records should include the following information. Note that citing records by the volume or box number assigned by the National Archives is not recommended:

[a] **Type of document and document number.**

[b] **Originating office ("From").**

[c] **Addressee ("To").**

[d] **Date of document.**

[e] **File designation.** Found on the volume file divider, the document, or the file folder. [Used only for files after August 1912.]

[f] **Series title.** Include the date(s) of the specific element of the files (e.g. "1951-53 Top Secret Files").

[g] **Name of post.** Embassies and legations are usually referred to by name of country ("U.S. Embassy Russia") while consulates are referred to by name of city ("U.S. Consulate St. Petersburg").

[h] **Record group number and title.**

[i] **Repository.**

See Examples 9-12.

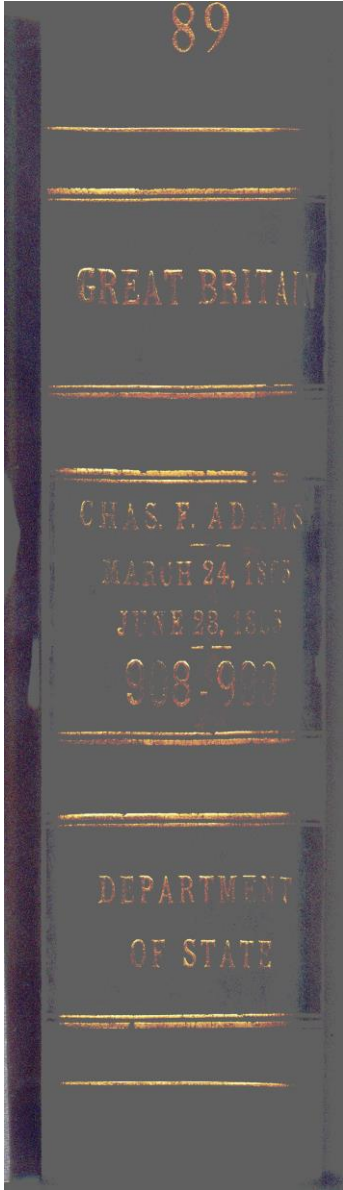
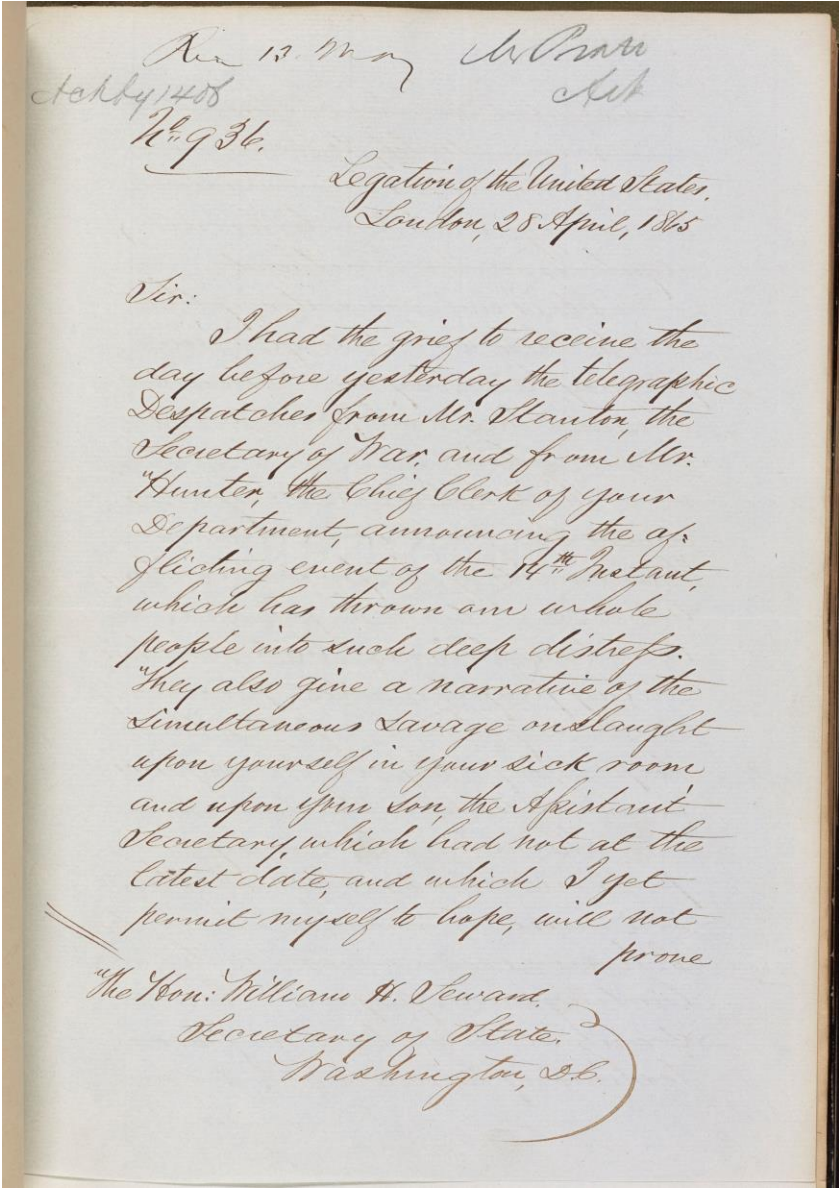
IV: Records on Microfilm or Digitized

Many of these records are on microfilm. In those cases, citations should include the elements noted above plus an indication of the microfilm publication number. Many microfilm publications have been digitized, particularly those covering the period before 1910, and are available online. Citations to online records should include the elements noted above, not just the URL for the online resource.

If you have questions, please consult an archivist familiar with the records.

Research Services
September 2023

Example 1: Pre-1910 Central File (despatch)

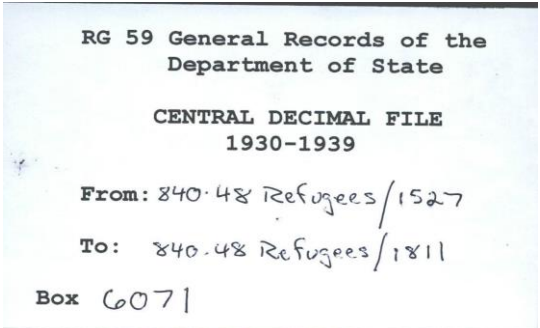
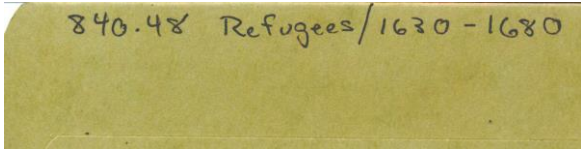
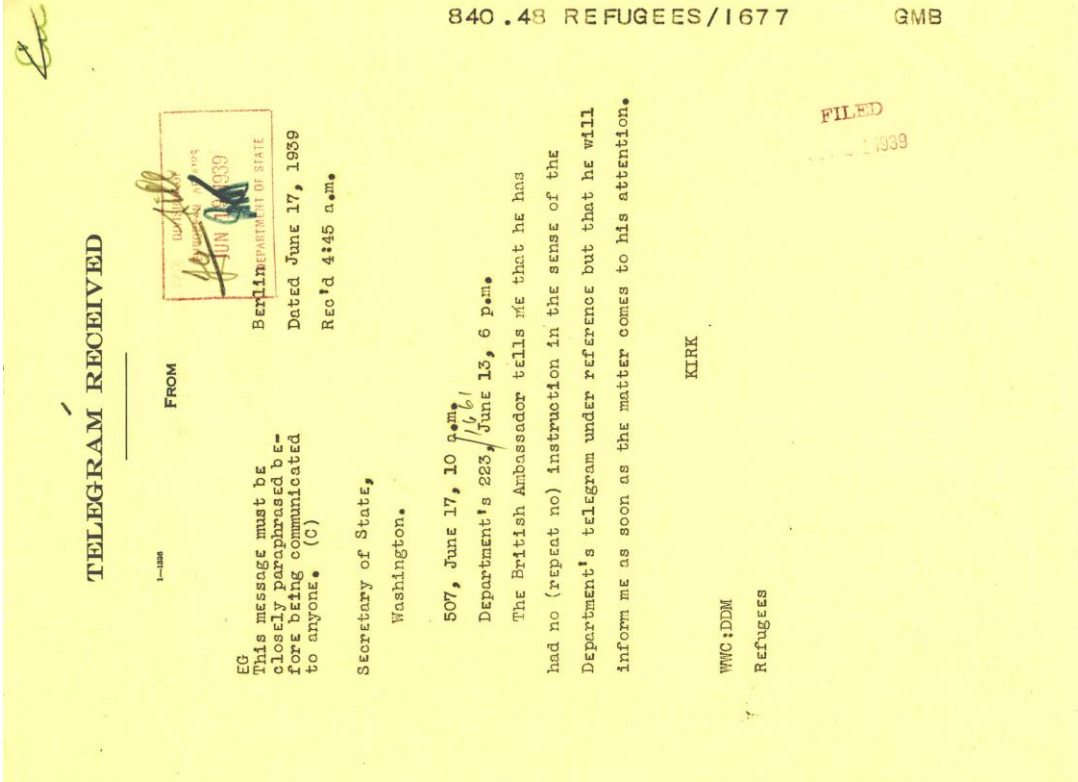
Volume Spine	Document
	

Notes

(long): U.S. Legation Great Britain to Department of State, Despatch 936, April 28, 1865, Despatches from Great Britain, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives. Available on National Archives Microfilm Publication M30. Online at <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/177380725>.

(short): Great Britain to State, Despatch 936, Despatch 936, April 28, 1865, Despatches from Great Britain, RG 59, USNA. M30.

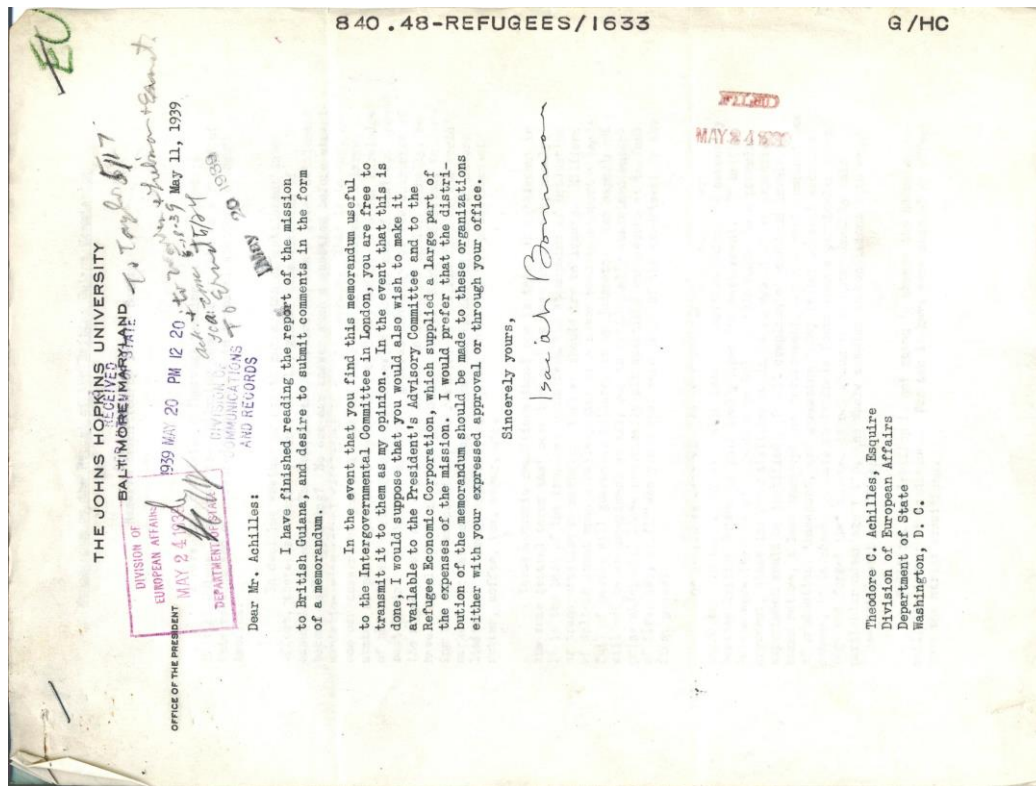
Example 2: Central Decimal File (telegram-consecutive numbering)

Box Label	Folder Label
 <p>RG 59 General Records of the Department of State</p> <p>CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE 1930-1939</p> <p>From: 840.48 Refugees/1527</p> <p>To: 840.48 Refugees/1811</p> <p>Box 6071</p>	 <p>840.48 Refugees/1630-1680</p>
Document	
 <p>840.48 REFUGEES/1677 GMB</p> <p>TELEGRAM RECEIVED</p> <p>1-1188</p> <p>FROM</p> <p>DEPARTMENT OF STATE BERLIN JUN 17 1939</p> <p>Dated June 17, 1939 Rec'd 4:45 a.m.</p> <p>EG This message must be closely paraphrased be- fore being communicated to anyone. (C)</p> <p>Secretary of State, Washington.</p> <p>507, June 17, 10 a.m., 1661 Department's 223, June 15, 6 p.m.</p> <p>The British Ambassador tells me that he has had no (repeat no) instruction in the sense of the Department's telegram under reference but that he will inform me as soon as the matter comes to his attention.</p> <p>WMC:DDM Refugees</p> <p>KIRK</p> <p>FILED JUN 17 1939</p>	
Notes	
<p>(long): U.S. Embassy Germany to Department of State, Telegram 507, June 17, 1939, file 840.48 REFUGEES/1677, 1930-39 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives. Available on National Archives Microfilm Publication M1284.</p> <p>(short): Germany to State, Telegram 507, June 17, 1939, 840.48 REFUGEES/1677, 1930-39 CDF, RG 59, USNA. M1284.</p>	

Example 3: Central Decimal File (letter-consecutive numbering)

Box Label	Folder Label
<p>RG 59 General Records of the Department of State</p> <p>CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE 1930-1939</p> <p>From: 840.48 Refugees/1527</p> <p>To: 840.48 Refugees/1811</p> <p>Box 6071</p>	<p>840.48 Refugees/1630-1680</p>

Document



Notes

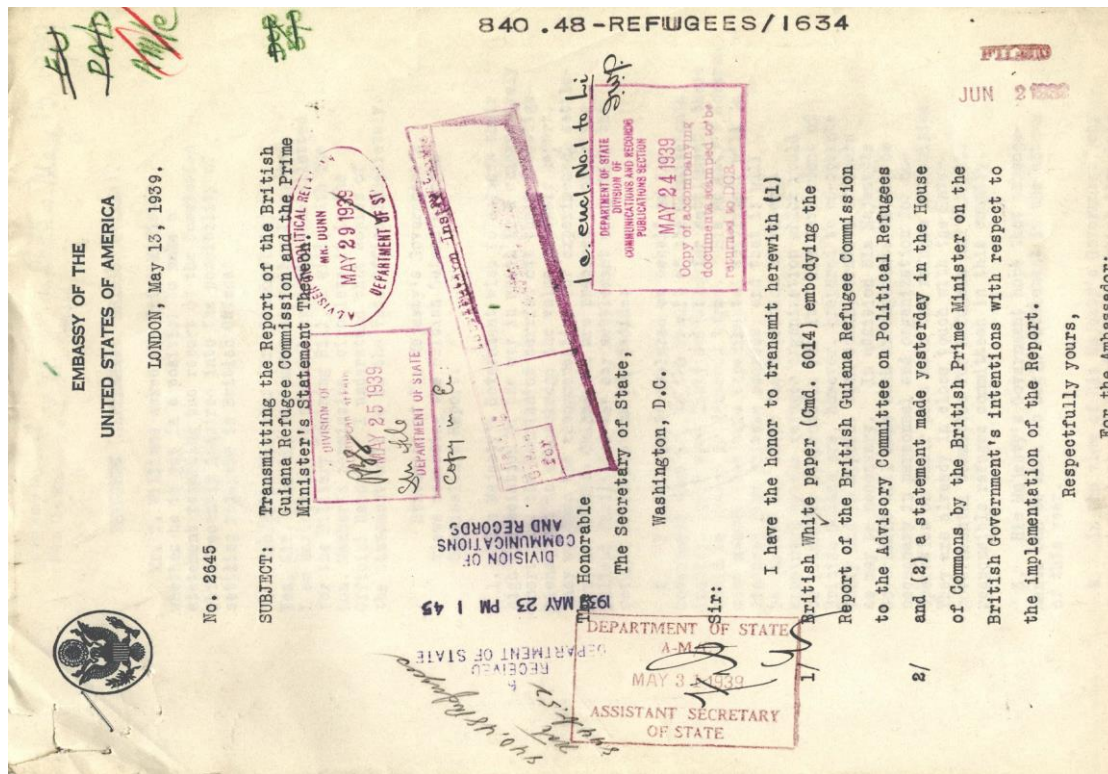
(long): Isaiah Bowman to Theodore Achilles, Letter, May 11, 1939, file 840.48 REFUGEES/1633, 1930-39 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives. Available on National Archives Microfilm Publication M1284.

(short): Bowman to Achilles, May 11, 1939, 840.48 REFUGEES/1633, 1930-39 CDF, RG 59, USNA. M1284.

Example 4: Central Decimal File (despatch-consecutive numbering)

Box Label	Folder Label
<p>RG 59 General Records of the Department of State</p> <p>CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE 1930-1939</p> <p>From: 840.48 Refugees/1527</p> <p>To: 840.48 Refugees/1811</p> <p>Box 6071</p>	<p>840.48 Refugees/1630-1680</p>

Document



Notes

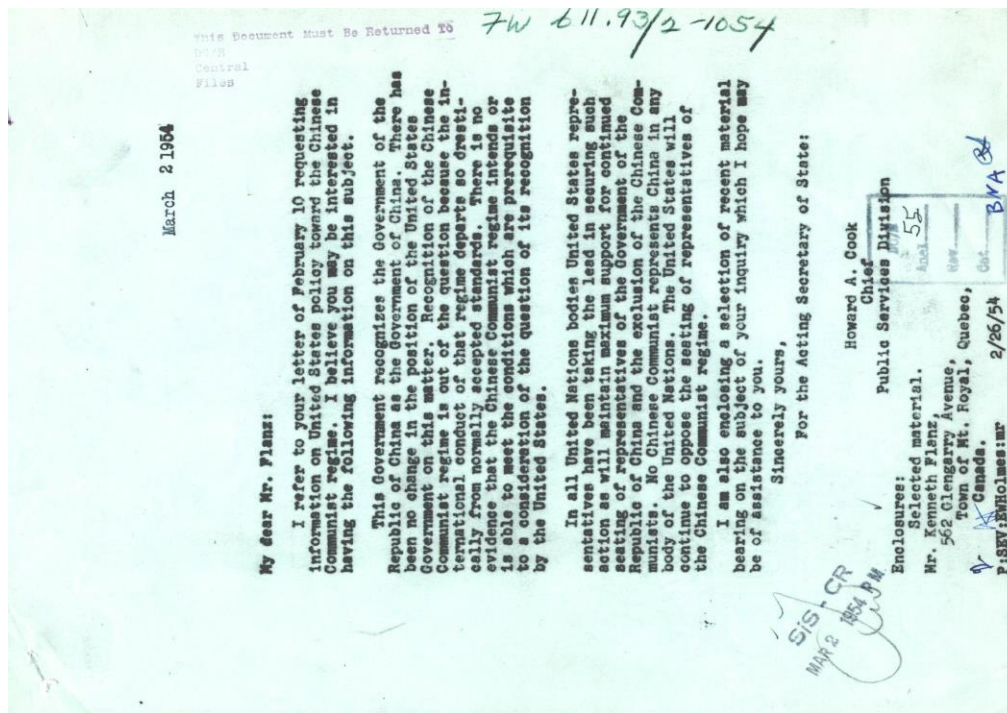
(long): U.S. Embassy Great Britain to Department of State, Despatch 2645, May 13, 1939, file 840.48 REFUGEES/1634, 1930-39 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives. Available on National Archives Microfilm Publication M1284.

(short): Great Britain to State, Despatch 2645, May 13, 1939, 840.48 REFUGEES/1634, 1930-39 CDF, RG 59, USNA. M1284.

Example 6: Central Decimal File (letter-date numbering)

Box Label	Folder Label
<p>RG 59 General Records of the Department of State</p> <p>CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE 1950-1954</p> <p>From: 611.93/1-151</p> <p>To: 611.93/12-2954</p> <p>Box 2861</p>	<p>611.93/1-754 -- 12-2954</p>

Document

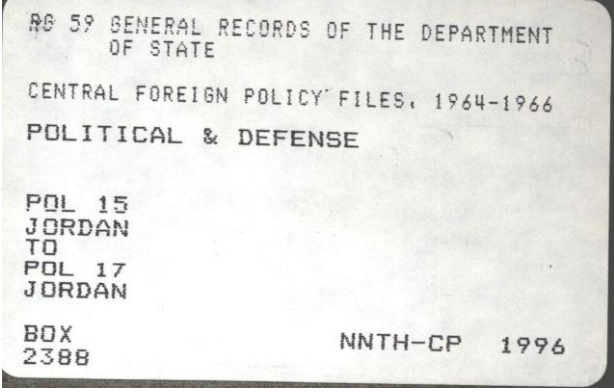



Notes

(long): Howard Cook to Kenneth Flanz, Letter, March 2, 1954, file 611.93/2-1054, 1950-54 Central Decimal File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.

(short): Cook to Flanz, March 2, 1954, 611.93/2-1054, 1950-54 CDF, RG 59, USNA.

Example 7: Subject-Numeric File (airgram)

Box Label	Folder Label
	

Document

<p>41 NEP-5</p>	<p>DEPARTMENT OF STATE AIRGRAM FOR RM USE ONLY</p>	<p>POL 17-3 JORDAN POL 15 JORDAN</p>	<p>HANDLING INDICATOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE 1965 APR 22 PM 4 09</p>	<p>TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE INFO: JERUSALEM</p>	<p>DATE: April 19, 1965</p>	<p>FROM : Embassy, AMMAN SUBJECT: Anticipated Appointments and Transfers in the Jordanian Diplomatic Service</p>	<p>REF : <u>BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED</u></p>	<p>The local press announced April 16 that the following ambassadorial appointments and transfers were expected to be made shortly in the Jordanian Diplomatic Service; Mihad JUM'a, from Bonn to Beirut; Abdallah ZUREIQAT, from Beirut to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); ex-Major General Ali Abu NURAH, to replace, replacing Iouad HAKAL, who will be retired; Baha ad-din TUQAN, former Under Secretary in the MFA, to Moscow, replacing Dr. Jamil TITUMI, who will be retired; Zuhair MUFTI, former Under Secretary in the MFA, to Ankara, replacing Dr. Shamsat MUFTI, who will be retired; in addition, ex-Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Amin Younes al-HUSSEINI, ex-Minister of Health Dr. Salih BURQAN, and Counselor of the Jordanian Embassy in Cairo, Dr. Mohammed al-FARAH would be given ambassadorial assignments, while Ambassadors Edmund ROCKE in Rome, Anastas HAMANIYA in London, and Subhi Abu GHAMMIEH in Damascus would be retired. END UNCLASSIFIED.</p> <p><i>See pg 2. may replace Abd Juma</i></p>	<p>COMMENT: Taysir TUQAN, Director of Political Affairs in the MFA, confirmed to the reporting officer on a confidential basis that the above changes were, in fact, being contemplated, and that the new ambassadorial assignments were awaiting King HUSSEIN'S approval, the exceptions being those of Jumi'a and Zureiqat, which had already been confirmed. Mr. Tuqan said Zureiqat would probably take over the currently vacant Under Secretary position.</p> <p><i>Declassify January 1, 1966</i></p> <p><i>A Palestinian Arab party recruited in Israel</i></p>	<p>FORM 05-323 4-61 1965 APR 22 PM 8 06 COPIED-PBR</p>	<p>APPROVED BY: [Signature] DATE: 1965 APR 22 PM 8 06</p>
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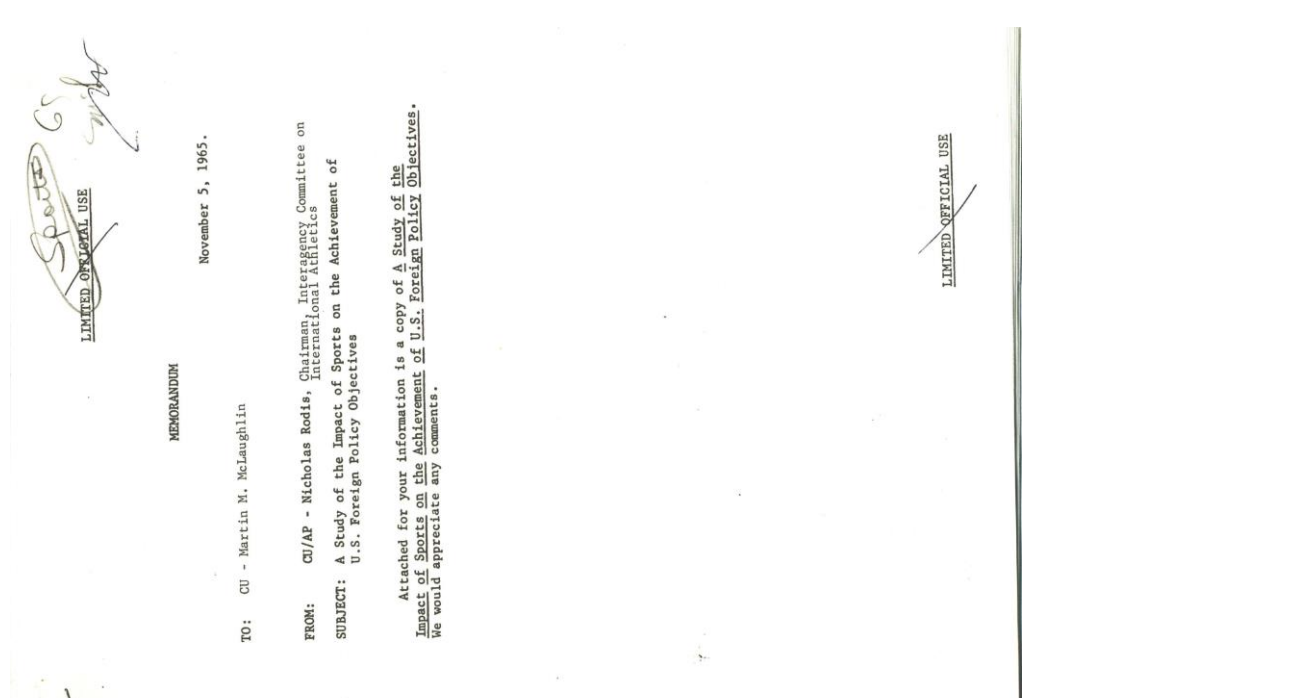
Notes

(long): U.S. Embassy Jordan to Department of State, Airgram A-477, April 19, 1965, file POL 17-3 JORDAN, 1964-66 Subject-Numeric File, RG 59: General Records of the Department of State, U.S. National Archives.


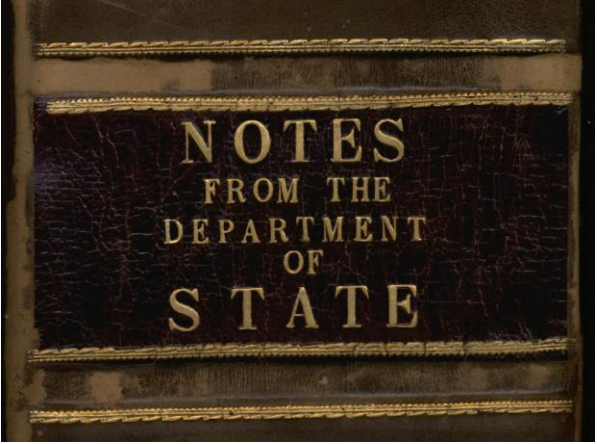
(short): Jordan to State, Airgram A-477, April 19, 1965, POL 17-3 JORDAN, 1964-66 SNF, RG 59, USNA.

Example 8: Department of State Decentralized Files

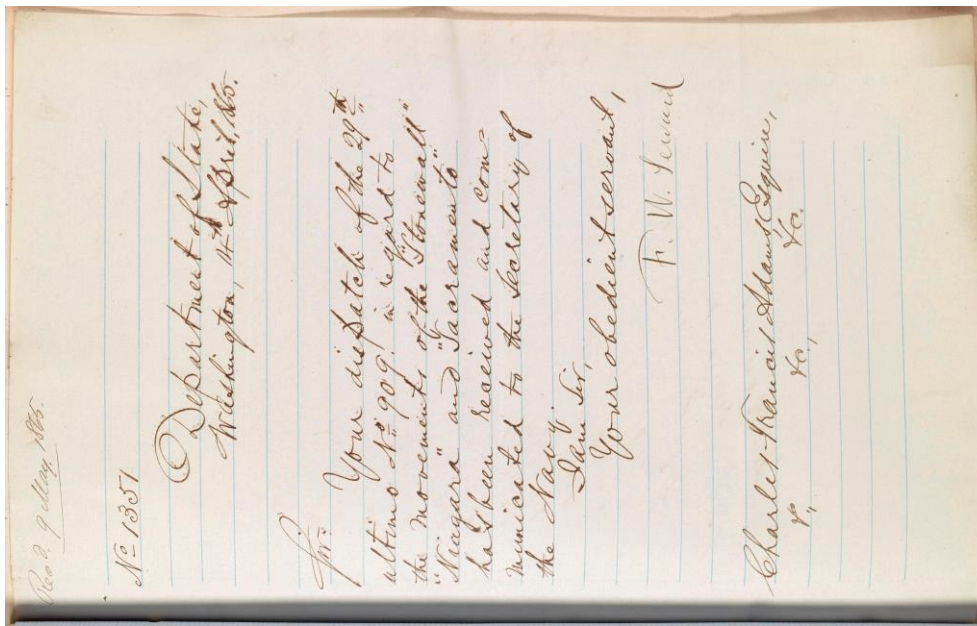
This sample also serves as a model that can be followed for all other records entries other than those of the Department of State central files

Box Label	Folder Label
<p>RG 353 RECORDS OF INTER- AND INTRA- DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEES (STATE DEPARTMENT)</p> <p>Interagency Youth Committee</p> <p>GENERAL RECORDS, 1959-1973</p> <p>From: Research</p> <p>To: Sports General</p> <p>Box 8 ARC ID 5480791 Entry P 5</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sports General</p>
Document	
	
Notes	
<p>(long) CU/AP (Rodis) to CU (McLaughlin), Memorandum, November 5, 1965, file Sports General, Interagency Youth Committee General Records, Entry P-5, RG 353: Records of Inter- and Intra-department Committee, U.S. National Archives.</p> <p>(short) CU/AP to CU, November 5, 1965, Sports General, IAYC General Records, Entry P-5, RG 353, USNA.</p>	

Sample 9: Pre-1912 Foreign Service Post

Volume Tag	Volume Spine
	

Document


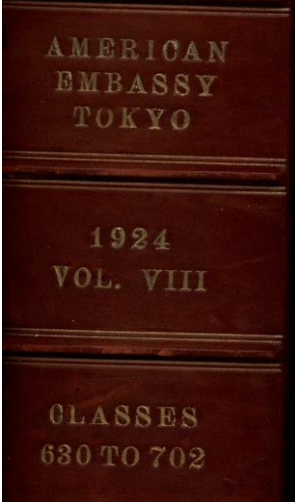
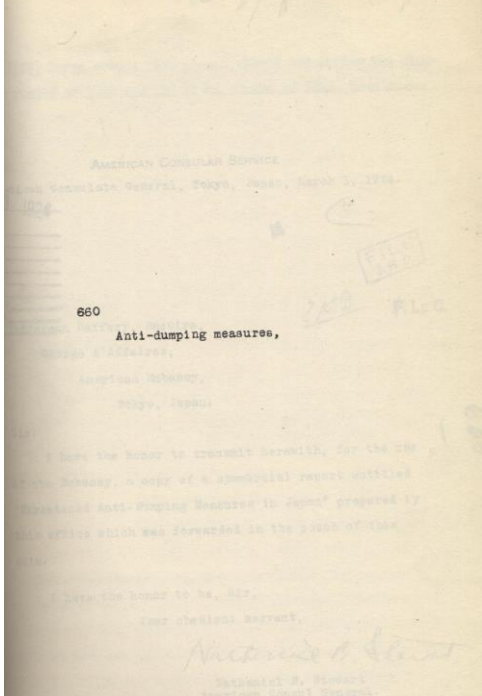
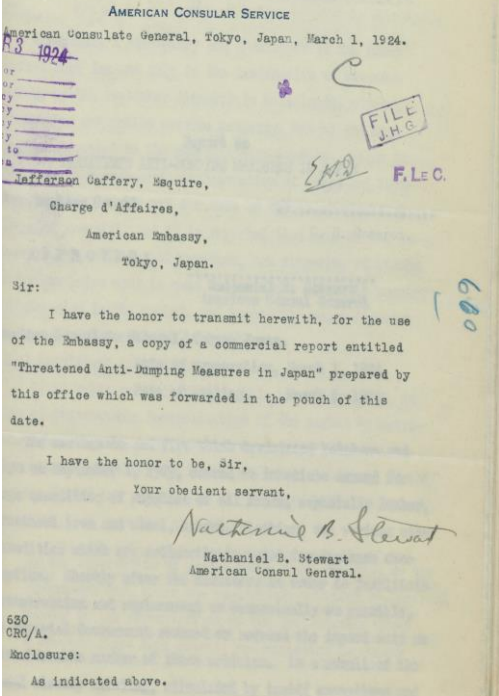


Note

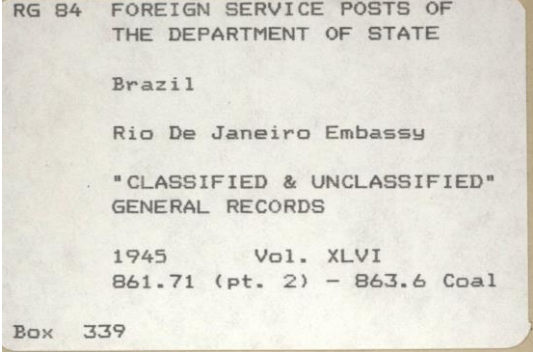
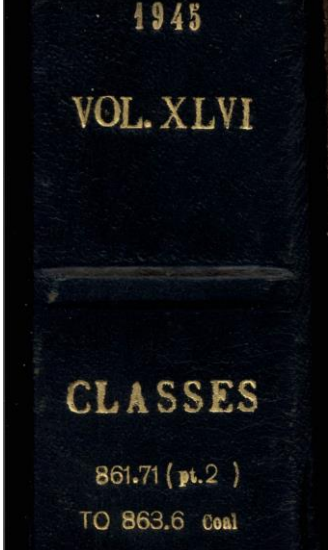
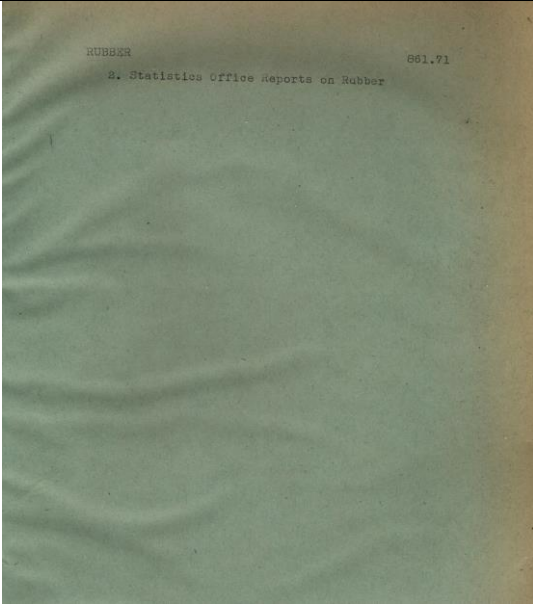
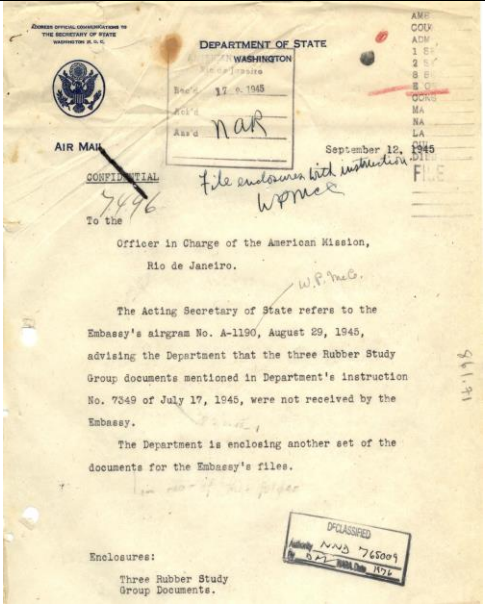
(long) Department of State to U.S. Legation Great Britain, Instruction 1351, April 14, 1865, Instructions ["Notes"] from the Department of State, U.S. Embassy Great Britain, RG 84: Records of Foreign Service Posts, U.S. National Archives.

(short) State to Great Britain, Instruction 1351, April 14, 1865, Instructions, Great Britain, RG 84, USNA.

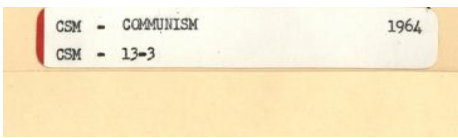
Sample 10: Post 1912 Foreign Service Post Files-Volumes

Volume Tag	Volume Spine
 <p>RG 84 RECORDS OF FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS</p> <p>Diplomatic Posts</p> <p>JAPAN</p> <p>Volume 634</p>	 <p>AMERICAN EMBASSY TOKYO</p> <p>1924 VOL. VIII</p> <p>CLASSES 630 TO 702</p>
Volume Divider	Document
 <p>AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE</p> <p>660</p> <p>Anti-dumping measures,</p>	 <p>AMERICAN CONSULAR SERVICE</p> <p>American Consulate General, Tokyo, Japan, March 1, 1924.</p> <p>Jefferson Gaffery, Esquire, Charge d'Affaires, American Embassy, Tokyo, Japan.</p> <p>Sir:</p> <p>I have the honor to transmit herewith, for the use of the Embassy, a copy of a commercial report entitled "Threatened Anti-Dumping Measures in Japan" prepared by this office which was forwarded in the pouch of this date.</p> <p>I have the honor to be, Sir,</p> <p>Your obedient servant,</p> <p><i>Nathaniel B. Stewart</i> Nathaniel B. Stewart American Consul General.</p> <p>630 CRC/A. Enclosure: As indicated above.</p>
<p>Note</p> <p>(long) U.S. Consul General Tokyo to U.S. Embassy Japan, Letter, March 1, 1924, file 660: Anti-dumping measures, General Correspondence 1924, U.S. Embassy Japan, RG 84: Records of Foreign Service Posts, U.S. National Archives.</p> <p>(short) Tokyo to Japan, March 1, 1924, 660: Anti-dumping, General Correspondence 1924, Japan, RG 84, USNA.</p>	

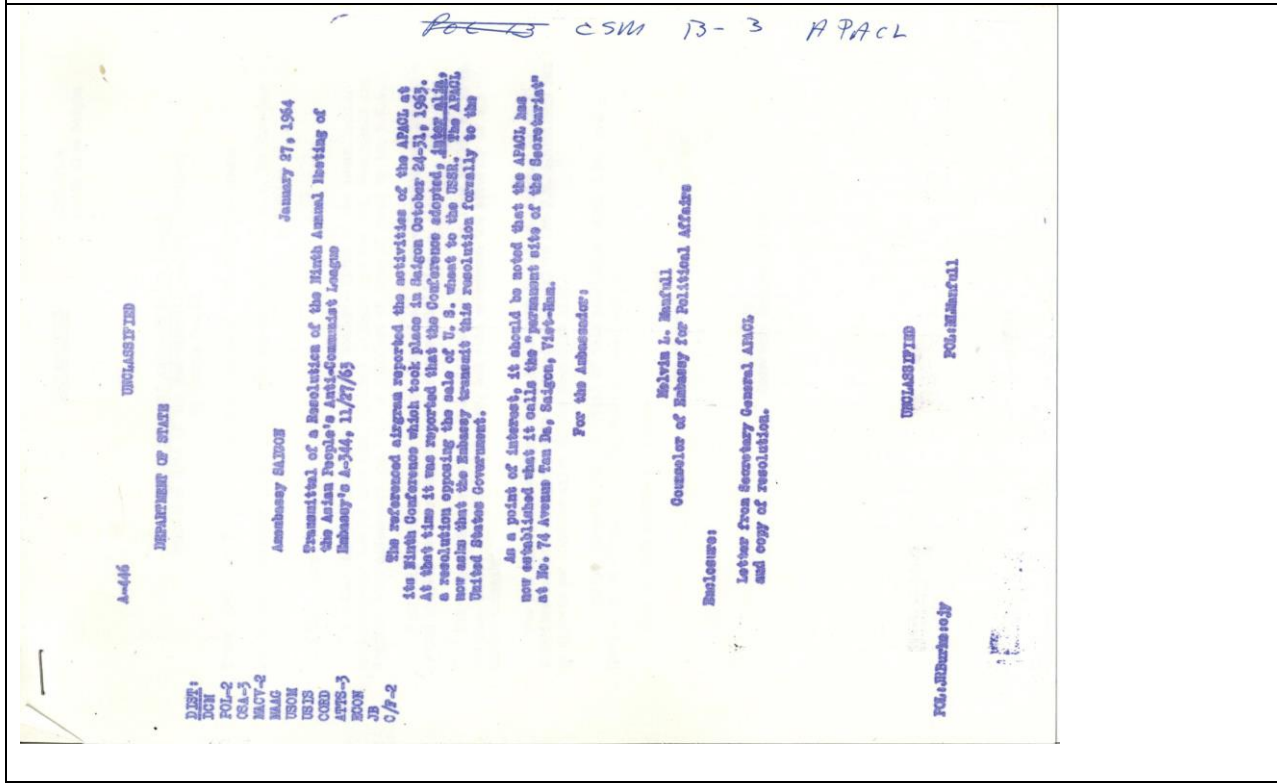
Sample 11: Post 1912 Foreign Service Post Files-Volumes in boxes

Box Label	Volume Spine
	
Volume Divider	Document
	
Note	
<p>(long) Department of State to U.S. Embassy Brazil, Instruction 7496, September 12, 1945, file 861.91, Classified & Unclassified General Records, U.S. Embassy Brazil, RG 84: Records of Foreign Service Posts, U.S. National Archives.</p> <p>(short) State to Brazil, Instruction 7496, September 12, 1945, 861.91, Classified & Unclassified General Records, Brazil, RG 84, USNA.</p>	

Sample 12: Post 1912 Foreign Service Post Files-Folders

Box Label	Folder Label
<p>RG 0084 Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State</p> <p>Vietnam/U.S. Embassy, Saigon</p> <p>Entry# P 789: Vietnam; U.S. Embassy, Saigon; Unclassified Central Subject Files; 1964-1971</p> <p>1964 Economic-FN THRU Pol&Def-POL 13-6</p> <p>Container # 2 ARC# 4497880</p>	

Document



Note

(long) U.S. Embassy Vietnam to Department of State, Airgram A-446, January 27, 1964, file CSM 13-3, Unclassified Central Subject Files, U.S. Embassy Vietnam, RG 84: Records of Foreign Service Posts, U.S. National Archives.

(short) Vietnam to State, Airgram A-446, January 27, 1964, CSM 13-3, Unclassified Central Subject Files, U.S. Embassy Vietnam, RG 84, USNA.