



National Archives and Records Administration

8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, Maryland 20740-6001

DEPARTMENT OF STATE Central Files, 1906-1979 Country-Specific Research

Locating documentation on specific countries and regions in the various iterations of the Department of State's central files can be confusing because of the numerous changes in filing systems over the years. The following is an overview of how to locate the primary files relating to specific countries and regions in the various iterations of the Department's central files for the period from 1906 to 1976. It is not comprehensive and is intended only to provide a starting point for research. There are other country/region-specific files that, as part of larger file categories, are not enumerated below. To locate all file categories relating to individual countries or regions, please consult the filing manual covering the records for the period of time for your research or ask a member of the reference staff. For more information and links to online resources, see:

<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-central-files>.

1906-1910: NUMERICAL AND MINOR FILES.

In 1906, the Department adopted a new filing system in which the different types of records previously filed separately were brought together in numbered case files. The files are arranged in subject cases numbered consecutively from 1 through 25,982. There is no relationship between cases in proximity to each other.

To locate files relating to specific countries, see the information below on the 1910-49 Central Decimal File and then consult the Numerical File "Purport Lists" that have been arranged according to the decimal filing system adopted in 1910 (Inventory 15, Entry 190). The lists were rearranged by the Department of State to enhance its own use of the records.

A separate Minor File includes generally routine correspondence. This much smaller series is arranged alphabetically.

All of the Numerical and Minor Files are available on National Archives Microfilm Publication M862. To identify the roll of film for the desired file, see the additional information about that publication available on line or ask the reference staff. The Numerical and Minor Files and related index also are available online through the National Archives Catalog.

1910-1949: CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE.

The files are broken into the following segments: 1910-29, 1930-39, 1940-44, and 1945-49. The files are arranged according to a pre-determined decimal classification scheme. In general, the records are divided into nine broad subject classes: Class 0 (General. Miscellaneous), Class 1 (Administration), Class 2 (Extradition), Class 3

(Protection of Interests), Class 4 (Claims), Class 5 (International Congresses and Conferences/Multilateral Treaties), Class 6 (Commerce), Class 7 (Political Relations of States), and Class 8 (Internal Affairs of States). Country numbers (which can cover a region, a country, a colony, or another geographic entity) are used in conjunction with class and subject numbers to form the file numbers under which documents are filed. The filing manuals issued by the Department of State include listings of country numbers and the National Archives has compiled a comprehensive list showing the changes over time. These are available in the Archives II Research Room.

The following is a simplified explanation of the primary country-specific file categories, demonstrating how the country numbers are used. The file manuals prepared by the Department of State provide more details on all file categories and also explain other file categories that contain records on specific countries. Records relating to individual countries can be found in Class 5, too, but that class is not arranged using the country numbers. Researchers generally find the records in classes 6, 7, and 8 the most useful for foreign policy research.

Once you have determined the file numbers in which you are interested, use the box listings for each segment of the Central Decimal File to identify the exact boxes holding the records of interest. The lists are available in the Archives II Research Room. Many of the 7**.**# and 8** files for the years 1910-44 are available on National Archives microfilm publications.

2**.**# General files relating to extradition. The lower number always precedes the decimal point.

2**.**# [name] Individual extradition cases. The number preceding the decimal point is for the country from which extradition is sought and the number following the decimal point is the country demanding the extradition.

3**.**# Protection in country ** of the private and national interests of country ##.

4**.**# General files relating to claims matters. The lower number always precedes the decimal point.

4**.**# [name] Individual claims cases. The number preceding the decimal point is the country against which the claim is made and the number following the decimal point is the country making the claim.

6**.**# Trade between two countries. The number before the decimal point is the importing country, while the number after the decimal point is the exporting country.

7**.**# Political relations of states. The lower country number always precedes the decimal point.

8**.** Internal affairs of country **. (Includes file categories for political affairs, military affairs, naval affairs, social matters, economic matters, industrial matters, communications and transportation, navigation, and scientific affairs.)

1950-1963: CENTRAL DECIMAL FILE.

The files are broken into the following segments: 1950-54, 1955-59, and 1960-63 (use of the Decimal File ended in January 1963). The files are arranged according to a revised pre-determined decimal classification scheme. In general, the records are divided into ten broad subject classes: Class 0 (Miscellaneous), Class 1 (Administration), Class 2 (Protection of Interests), Class 3 (International Conferences, Congresses, Meetings and Organizations/Multilateral Treaties), Class 4 (International Trade and Commerce), Class 5 (International Informational and Educational Relations), Class 6 (International Political Relations), Class 7 (Internal Political and National Defense Affairs), Class 8 (Internal Economic, Industrial, and Social Affairs), and Class 9 (Communications, Transportation, Science). Country numbers (which can cover a region, a country, a colony, or another geographic entity) are used in conjunction with class and subject numbers to form the file numbers under which documents are filed. The filing manuals issued by the Department of State include listings of country numbers and the National Archives has compiled a comprehensive list showing the changes over time. These are available in the Archives II Research Room.

The following is a simplified explanation of the primary country-specific file categories, demonstrating how the country numbers are used. The file manuals prepared by the Department of State provide a more details on all file categories and also explain other file categories that contain records on specific countries. Records relating to individual countries can be found in Class 3, too, but that class is not arranged using the country numbers. Researchers generally find the records in classes 5, 6, and 7 the most useful for foreign policy research.

Once you have determined the file numbers in which you are interested, use the box listings for each segment of the Central Decimal File to identify the exact boxes with the records of interest. The lists are available in the Archives II Research Room.

- 2**.## Protection in country ** of interest of nationals of country ##.
 - 4**.## Trade between two countries. The number before the decimal point is the importing country, while the number after the decimal point is the exporting country.
 - 5**.## Cultural and informational activities of country ** in country ##.
 - 6**.## Political relations of states. The lower country number always precedes the decimal point.
 - 7**.
 - 8**.
 - 9**.
- Internal political and national defense affairs of country **.
- Internal economic, industrial, and social affairs of country **.
- Internal communications, transportation, and scientific affairs of country **.

1963-1973: CENTRAL FOREIGN POLICY FILE (SUBJECT-NUMERIC FILE).

The records are broken into the following segments: February – December 1963, 1964-1966, 1967-1969, and 1970-1973. The files are arranged according to a prearranged subject-numeric filing system. While the records are arranged in eight broad categories (Administration, Consular, Culture and Information, Economic, Political and Defense, Science, and Social), the files on individual countries and regions are arranged under fifty-six primary subjects into which the broad categories are divided. The table below lists the primary subjects into which the broad categories are divided.

The primary subject files are further divided by country or region using an assigned abbreviation. The filing manuals issued by the Department of State include a list of country names and abbreviations. The records on each country are further divided by subject according to a pre-determined numerical file designation that is placed between the primary subject abbreviation and the country or area abbreviation. For example, the file number POL 15-1 SWE is for documents about political affairs and relations (POL) of Sweden (SWE), specifically about the Swedish Prime Minister (15-1). Researchers generally find the files in the Economic and Political and Defense categories the most useful for foreign policy research.

Once you have determined the primary subject in which you are interested, use the box listings for each segment of the Central Foreign Policy File to identify the exact boxes holding the records of interest. The lists are available in the Archives II Research Room.

ADMINISTRATION ACC Accounting & disbursing BG Buildings & Grounds BUD Budget CR Communications & Records EP Emergency Planning ES Equipment, Supplies, & Services FMGT Financial Management FSV Facilitative Services LEG Legislative & Legal Affairs ORG Organization & Administration PER Personnel PR Public Relations SY Security TRV Travel & Transportation VEH Vehicles CONSULAR CON Consular Affairs (General) PPT Passports & Citizenship PS Protective Services V Visas CULTURE AND INFORMATION CUL Culture EDU Education EDX Educational & Cultural Exchange INF Information MP Motion Pictures PPB Press and Publications RAD Radio TV Television	ECONOMIC AGR Agriculture AID AID AV Aviation (Civil) E Economic Affairs (General) ECIN Economic Integration FN Finance FSE Fuels & Energy FT Foreign Trade INCO Industries & Commodities IT Inland Transportation LAB Labor & Manpower OS Ocean Shipping PET Petroleum PO Postal Affairs STR Strategic Trade control TEL Telecommunications TP Trade Promotion & Assistance TR Transportation (General) POLITICAL AND DEFENSE CSM Communism DEF Defense INT Intelligence POL Political Affairs & Relations SCIENCE AE Atomic Energy SCI Science & Technology SP Space & Astronautics SOCIAL HLTH Health & Medical Care REF Refugees and Migration SOC Social conditions
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1973-1979: STATE ARCHIVING SYSTEM.

On July 1, 1973, the Department began phasing in a new filing system. Records were no longer arranged by subject. Documents were indexed using an automated tool with most telegrams being stored electronically and hard-copy documents (beginning January 1, 1974) being stored on microfilm. The FAQ for the records <<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-central-files/faqs.pdf>> contains useful information about the organization and use of the records, including details on which records are available for use by researchers.

You may gain access to the declassified telegrams and declassified index information about the microfilmed documents, as well as withdrawal notices for classified records, on the AAD website: <<https://aad.archives.gov/aad/>> under "Diplomatic Records."

The electronic records can be searched in many ways to locate documents of interest. Paper copies of the declassified documents from the microfilm are available for use at the National Archives.

Central file records dated 1980 and later remain in the custody of the Department of State. Researchers must file a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request directly with the Department to request access to records in their custody.

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