



Office of the Chief  
Records Officer for the  
U.S. Government

***Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.***

February 24, 2023

Tonia Austin-Douglas  
Department of Homeland Security  
United States Coast Guard  
Attn: Records Manager  
US Coast Guard Stop 7710  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20593-7710

Dear Tonia Austin-Douglas,

It has come to the attention of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that approximately 500,000 images once held in the office by the United States Coast Guard (USCG) Historian are currently either missing or misplaced. In 2005, NARA still images personnel were given a tour of the USCG Historian Office to discuss the holdings in the Historian's office. At that time, the still images personnel noted an estimated 260,000 photographic prints (1900s to present) and 300,000 slides (1960s to present), which supported the Historian's web page that cited an overall total of 500,000 unique images.

It was also noted that the "nature of the organization" of the files "is not in accordance with media or provenance, but strictly in accordance with subject classifications." Forms and media were mixed in any given box and special environmental requirements of photographic materials have been disregarded. Noted especially is in the examples of "badly-deteriorated acetate negatives." Since that time, it appears that these records have not been accessioned into the holdings of the National Archives, nor have any of these collections been housed at a Federal Records Center.

In accordance with 36 CFR 1230.14, we are requesting that the USCG provide NARA with a report within 30 calendar days that includes the following information:

- A complete description of the records with volume and dates if known;
- The office maintaining the records;
- A statement of the exact circumstances surrounding the removal, defacing, alteration, or destruction of records;
- A statement of the safeguards established to prevent further loss of documentation; and
- Details of the actions taken to salvage, retrieve, or reconstruct the records.

Additionally, the USCG will have to conduct an inventory of any records that are identified in the Historian's Office to ascertain if there are any records that are overdue for transfer. The USCG will also have to provide to NARA a plan that will ensure all permanent records that are overdue for transfer are identified and are transferred into the holdings of the National Archives.

If more time is required to provide a final report, please provide us with an interim report within 30 days. I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact me at [laurence.brewer@nara.gov](mailto:laurence.brewer@nara.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence R. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

LAURENCE BREWER  
Chief Records Officer  
for the U.S. Government

cc. Michelle Thomas, Department Records Officer, Department of Homeland Security



Office of the Chief  
Operating Officer

January 14, 2025

Tonia Austin-Douglas  
Department of Homeland Security  
United States Coast Guard  
Attn: Records Manager  
US Coast Guard Stop 7710  
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE  
Washington, DC 20593-7710

Dear Ms. Austin-Douglas:

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has received the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) final report regarding approximately 500,000 still images held by USCG that NARA determined may have gone missing or been misplaced. NARA asked USCG to conduct an inventory to establish whether any records had gone missing, and provide a plan that will ensure all permanent records that are overdue for transfer are identified and transferred into the holdings of the National Archives.

USCG has conducted the inventory and has provided quarterly reports of records that have been transferred to the legal and physical custody of the National Archives. NARA has verified that the records transferred match those identified on a 2005 inventory. NARA has also received USCG's plan to ensure that permanent records are transferred promptly in the future. As part of this plan, we understand that USCG has developed an Electronic Records Transfer Policy; has implemented requirements for all directorates to appoint records coordinators; and holds quarterly meetings with records coordinators.

Based on this information, NARA considers this matter closed. Although permanent records were overdue for transfer, we have no reason to believe that any records were destroyed. The allegation of unauthorized disposition is therefore unfounded. I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please contact the Records Management Oversight and Reporting Program by email at [UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov](mailto:UnauthorizedDisposition@nara.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Fischer". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

WILLIAM FISCHER

Chief Records Officer

for the U.S. Government (Acting)

cc. Michelle Thomas, Department Records Officer, Department of Homeland Security