



Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library and Museum

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CORE COLLECTIONS ON THE VIETNAM WAR

This guide summarizes core holdings on: the war in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos especially during the Nixon and Ford administrations; the flight of refugees from Indochina after April 1975 and the admittance of many to the United States; the accounting of U.S. armed forces MIAs and POWs; and the issue of amnesty/clemency for U.S. draft resisters and military absence offenders.

The Library's website www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov includes a comprehensive Guide to Collections, plus detailed inventories to all "open" collections. The website has an ever-growing **Digital Library** of on-line archival materials, including some on the Vietnam War.

Upon request, Library staff can provide detailed database search reports locating files on specific topics. A recent "Vietnam" search (March 2012) yielded nearly 2,000 pertinent folder titles.

Library (Ann Arbor) research room hours are 8:45 am to 4:45 pm, Monday through Friday except Federal holidays. Telephone is (734) 205-0555 and email ford.library@nara.gov.

BUCHEN, PHILIP: Files, 1974-77

Counsel to the President Buchen and his legal staff helped interpret the congressional consultation requirements of the 1973 War Powers Act. The act was tested during the evacuations of Phnom Penh and Saigon, and the *Mayaguez* military action. Buchen and staff also advised on refugee admittance and the clemency program for draft evaders and military absence offenders.

FORD, GERALD: Papers as Congressman and Vice President, 1949-74

Congressman Ford's public statements, constituent mail, reference materials from House colleagues, Republican Party materials, and more, track the course of the war and its domestic reverberations. *All of Congressman Ford's newsletters to constituents, including an August 1953 account of his official visit to French Indo-China, are available on-line in our Digital Library.*

GOODELL, CHARLES E.: Papers, 1973-77

Goodell chaired the Presidential Clemency Board, established by Ford to devise and administer an earned clemency program for Vietnam War-era draft resisters and military absence offenders. Included are board minutes, reports, case summaries (names omitted), and internal memoranda. Researchers should also see the **papers of Robert Horn**, executive director of the Presidential Clemency Board.

HARTMANN, ROBERT T.: Papers, (1884) 1934-83

As House Minority Leader Ford's closest aide, Hartmann accumulated detailed minutes of the Congressional leadership's meetings with President Nixon, 1969-72; transcripts of "Ev and Jerry Show" press briefings, 1966-67; and a wide variety of material in such folders as "Credibility Gap" or "McNamara Mismanagement." *The leadership minutes cited above are fully available on-line in our **Digital Library**.*

LAIRD, MELVIN R.: Papers, 1959-2003

Laird was a senior leader among House Republicans in the 1960s and became Richard Nixon's Secretary of Defense, 1969-72. Parts of his large collection are open, but other major segments remain closed pending review for declassification. Please inquire about the current status of this material or check the online Laird Papers finding aid.

LEHMANN, WOLFGANG: Papers, 1973-79 (1999)

Lehmann was chief deputy to U.S. ambassador Graham Martin in Saigon. His papers, photos, and oral histories record events of the time, administrative matters in the aftermath of the evacuation, and the subsequent published and unpublished accounts of Lehmann and other participants.

NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER FILES:

During 1999-2000, in anticipation of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the fall of Phnom Penh and Saigon, the Ford Library staff identified and reviewed for possible declassification much of its National Security Adviser holdings on the Vietnam War. The project encompassed every folder title with the name of an Indochina country, person, entity, or event. Folders containing approximately 39,000 pages were so identified and reviewed. In the years since 2000, much additional Vietnam War material has been opened from less obvious file headings.

____. BACKCHANNEL MESSAGES, 1974-77

Especially sensitive White House communications with Ambassador Graham Martin in Saigon were sent and received in the White House Situation Room via "the Martin Channel."

____. KISSINGER-SCOWCROFT WEST WING OFFICE FILES, 1969-77

These files were kept in the White House west wing office occupied by Henry Kissinger and his successor, Brent Scowcroft. Many other National Security Adviser collections, by contrast, were kept by NSC and other staff elsewhere in the White House or in the adjacent Old Executive Office Building. This collection includes folders on the *Mayaguez* action, contacts with Prince Sihanouk, and extensive information on the secret peace negotiations between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho conducted through the French intermediary, Jean Sainteny, from 1969 to 1971.

____. LEGISLATIVE INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP FILES, 1971-74 (1976)

The LIG was most active in 1971-1972. It coordinated efforts to deal with Congress on aid, military assistance, war limits and powers legislation, and information and declassification requests.

____. **MEMORANDA OF CONVERSATIONS, 1973-1977**

This collection is fully available on-line in our Digital Library. Detailed handwritten notes were taken during President Nixon's and President Ford's conversations with foreign government officials, senior U.S. national security officials, and occasional others. The notes were then rendered into formal, transcript-like memoranda of conversation. The collection is arranged by date of conversation.

____. **NSC EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS STAFF: Files, (1969) 1973-76**

These work files of NSC staff encompass many diplomatic and military topics. Included, for example, are background materials for numbered National Security Study Memoranda; minutes of various Washington Special Action Group meetings; memoranda of conversations from Henry Kissinger's and Alexander Haig's trips to Indochina; reports for and from the Paris peace negotiations; and more.

____. **NSC INFORMATION LIAISON WITH COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES: Files, 1974-77**

The NSC Secretariat accumulated Indochina-related documents of the 1960s while responding to Congressional investigations of the intelligence community in 1975. The Secretariat also handled Congressional and General Accounting Office requests for information about the *Mayaguez* action.

____. **NSC MEETINGS FILE, 1974-77**

Transcript-like meeting minutes on many topics, especially SALT, but including the final weeks of the Vietnam War and the *Mayaguez* action. *This collection is fully available on-line in our Digital Library.*

____. **NSC PRESS AND CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON STAFF: Files, 1973-76**

Includes a small quantity of Vietnam-related material compiled to aid in answering press and Congressional queries on diverse topics.

____. **NSC VIETNAM INFORMATION GROUP: Intelligence and other reports, 1967-75**

Primarily State Department and CIA cables concerning North and South Vietnam. They concern the war; relations with the Saigon government; South Vietnam's political climate, opposition groups, religious sects, ethnic groups, labor unions, corruption, and censorship; peace negotiations; North Vietnam's military and economy; and events in Laos and Cambodia.

____. **NATIONAL SECURITY STUDY MEMORANDA AND DECISION MEMORANDA, 1974-77.**

This collection is fully available on-line in our Digital Library. These include, for example, NSSM 213 on U.S. assistance policy and programs for South Vietnam, and NSDM 322 on captured U.S. equipment.

____. **"OUTSIDE THE SYSTEM" CHRONOLOGICAL FILES, 1974-77.**

A collection of documents, on a wide range of topics, that were not logged into the NSC computer control number tracking system. It includes scattered items on the Vietnam War, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnamese refugees, and POWs/MIAs.

____. **PRESIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE WITH FOREIGN LEADERS, 1974-77**

Folders for Presidents Nguyen Van Thieu and Lon Nol contain both substantive and routine correspondence, with supporting material.

____. **PRESIDENTIAL COUNTRY FILES FOR EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, 1974-77**

Primarily memos by NSC staff to the National Security Adviser, or by him to President Ford, regarding high-level issues in U.S. relations with North and South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. Many State Department cables are included as well. The focus is on diplomacy rather than intelligence or military matters.

____. **PRESIDENTIAL FILES OF NSC LOGGED DOCUMENTS: Selected documents arranged by log number, (1973) 1974-77**

The NSC Secretariat often logged documents and created thin case files while tracking action on them. Indochina-related topics include: declassification requests for documents dating to 1960s, military assistance, aid, refugees, disposition of captured U.S. equipment, and the *Mayaguez* action.

____. **PRESIDENTIAL NAME FILE, 1974-77**

Pertinent material is filed under: Cyrus Eaton, Admiral Noel Gayler, Senator Mike Mansfield, Ambassador Graham Martin, Senator Sam Nunn, Dean Rusk, W.R. Smyser, Senator John Sparkman, Sir Robert Thompson, and D. Warshaw.

____. **PRESIDENTIAL SUBJECT FILE, 1974-77**

Includes files on refugee issues, White House liaison with the National League of Families of MIAs and POWs, Congressional relations, military assistance programs, and other matters.

____. **SAIGON EMBASSY FILES KEPT BY AMBASSADOR MARTIN: Copies made for the NSC, (1963) 1970-75 (1976)**

Most of the material dates from the Nixon and Ford administrations, but there are earlier items dating to the Diem coup in 1963. A chronological run of backchannel cables between Ambassadors Bunker and Martin in Saigon and national security adviser Kissinger comprise most of the collection. In addition, there are talking points for meetings with South Vietnamese officials, mainly President Thieu; reports and memoranda of conversations from those meetings; drafts of speeches; drafts of proposed agreements prepared by both sides; and military situation and intelligence reports. The Paris peace talks are a dominant topic, along with the subsequent unraveling of the peace agreement culminating in the fall of Saigon.

____. **STAFF ASSISTANT JOHN K. MATHENY FILES, 1975-76**

Matheny accumulated material from many agencies while working on an internal "*Mayaguez* Performance Evaluation."

____. **TRIP BRIEFING BOOKS AND CABLES OF HENRY KISSINGER, 1974-77**

Events in Indochina and discussions about Indochina are frequent topics in these files related to Kissinger's travels.

____, **WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM, 1974-77**

These subcollections all contain materials on events in Indochina: **Presidential Daily Briefings, Intelligence Briefings for Former President Nixon, Evening Reports from NSC Staff, and Noon and Evening Notes.**

NESSEN, RON: Papers, 1974-77

Press Secretary Nessen's **Papers** include background material on events in Indochina and notes from many meetings partly concerned with Indochina. A separate collection, the **Ron Nessen Files**, includes indexed transcripts of daily briefings for the White House press corps, with Indochina a frequent topic.

SEA-LAND SERVICES, INC.: Mayaguez interviews, 1975

Sea-Land, as corporate owner of the merchant ship *Mayaguez*, conducted extensive interviews with the ship's officers and crew upon their rescue and arrival in Singapore.

U.S. MARINE CORPS HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION: Copies of Oral Histories on the Mayaguez Action and Related Marine Unit Operational Records, 1965-77

The collection includes compact disks of oral histories (audio files only) with Marines who participated in the *Mayaguez* action. It also includes compact disks containing Marine unit operational records from the *Mayaguez* action. These disks, as an incidental by-product of their creation, also contain extensive operational records from the Marine units' participation in other phases of the Vietnam War. Most of these records date from 1965-1970, but some concern the evacuations of Phnom Penh and Saigon, and the later transfer of refugees to the United States. The Ford Library staff has printed to paper, as an additional convenience to researchers, all operational records that date from the Ford presidency.

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY: Intercepts of helicopter radio messages during the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy, Saigon, April 30, 1975

The NSA conducted authorized intercepts of helicopter pilot radio transmissions during the evacuation of the Embassy. The Library thanks the NSA Historical Office for discovering, declassifying, and copying the resulting texts.

U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL: Institutional records, (1969) 1974-77

The collection contains, for example, minutes and background materials of NSC meetings and Washington Special Actions Group meetings, focusing especially on the closing weeks of the Vietnam War and the evacuation of Americans and refugees.

WHITE HOUSE CENTRAL FILES (WHCF), 1974-77

This vast file system was shared by all White House staff. Contents range from public opinion mail to declassified briefing papers. The **WHCF-Subject File** has several file headings pertinent to the war, especially within the primary categories CO-Countries and ND-National Defense. In the **WHCF-Name File**, which is arranged alphabetically, one can search for material by name of person, corporation, or organization (exceptions include Federal Government agencies, appointed officials, and staff).

WHITE HOUSE CONGRESSIONAL RELATIONS OFFICE (CRO), 1974-77

This office provided liaison with members of Congress on such issues as aid to South Vietnam, use of the War Powers Act, MIA and POW concerns, the clemency program, and the admittance of refugees. Several collections from staff of this office have pertinent material. Additional material is in the files of Counsellor to the President John O. Marsh, to whom the CRO reported.

WHITE HOUSE PUBLIC LIAISON OFFICE, 1974-77

The **Theodore Marrs Files** document interagency efforts on behalf of Indochina refugees entering the U.S. in 1975. The **Milt Mitler Files** concern Mitler's liaison role with families of MIAs and POWs, 1972-76.

WHITE HOUSE STAFF SECRETARY'S OFFICE, 1974-77

The **James Connor Files** include Cabinet meeting minutes, October 1974-October 1975. A few hundred pages of Indochina-related materials are found in the **White House Special Files Unit: Presidential Files** and in the **Presidential Handwriting File**, where the Staff Secretary kept some of the documents annotated by the President. The **President's Daily Diary** gives a very detailed chronological accounting of the President's day, including exact meeting times, movements and travels, and persons met. *The Cabinet meeting minutes and the entire Daily Diary are fully available on-line in our **Digital Library**.*

AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTIONS

White House Communications Agency (WHCA), 1974-77.

WHCA videorecorded selections from network nightly news broadcasts, special news programs, and occasional public affairs programs. It also audiotaped nearly all presidential speeches and press conferences, the daily press briefings and question sessions held by the Press Secretary, and the occasional special briefings conducted from the White House by Secretary Kissinger and others.

White House Photo Office, 1974-77.

Official photographers created a daily record of the President's private meetings, travels, and public events. They occasionally photographed the White House staff, Ford family life, and the work of the First Lady. *Chronologically-arranged photo contact sheets of the entire White House photo collection are fully available on-line in our **Digital Library**.*

*S:BIN/Finding Aids & Guides/GUIDES/Core Vietnam War Collections
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