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2 APR 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Records Administration Branch

SUBJECT : Vital Records Report

1. This paper is presented in answer to your request that I examine the Agency's current Vital Records Program and submit my recommendations for improvement.

2. Before I present my findings and list recommendations I feel that a brief history of our Program will show the importance of a "Total" Emergency Program. A "Survival" Program that will assure us of the simultaneous availability of People, Facilities (equipment), and Vital Records.

3. Executive Order 10346 (Exhibit A) issued by President Truman in April 1952 made it mandatory that each Federal Agency establish a program for maintaining the continuity of its essential operations during a period of emergency. It was very easy for us to comply with this as our "Vital Records Program" had its beginning in 1948 as part of the overall Agency Emergency Relocation Plan. This plan resulted in the selection and establishment of a relocation site presumed to be a safe distance from a critical target area (Washington). This was consistent with the then current policy for Evacuation of essential personnel and also in agreement with basic assumptions as prescribed by the Office of Civil Defense and Mobilization (Exhibit B).

4. We later learned that our Program was also consistent with the recommendations of the Task Force Report on Paperwork Management in the United States Government released in January 1955. This Task Force recommended that Agency relocation plans and vital records programs be closely coordinated (Exhibit C). Experience has shown us that such coordination is absolutely essential to the success of an Emergency Program.

5. In the earlier years of our Program we could have very likely carried on our essential emergency operations through evacuation of our emergency personnel [redacted]. However, since the issuance of these guidelines, as established by OCDM (Exhibit B), great scientific and technical advances have been made that imperil our present Emergency Program. The advent of the ICBM and the resulting effect of fallout coupled with reduction in warning time makes our present Emergency Program unrealistic. It is for this reason that I presented my previous paper (14 December 1967) concerned with the "Total" Emergency concept.

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6. The recommendations that I include result from ideas that I have had for some time and that have received additional impetus from my talks with Records Officers of the Agency. During this "Examination" I met and discussed Vital Records with the Agency's Emergency Planning Officer, the [REDACTED] Records Management Officers for DD/P and DD/I, as well as twelve (12) Records Officers representing offices of each of the four Directorates, representatives of Agency repository, and several others.

7. In each of these meetings I discussed Vital Records in the light of its importance as an essential aspect of a "Total" Emergency Program. Without exception, all persons that I contacted agreed that the Agency should review its "Total" Emergency Program.

8. It is my personal feeling that the main weakness appears to have resulted from a lessening of importance of the Program. For the first 10 years we had an excellent program. Our people were motivated because OCDM presented a realistic program. Participation in annual operation alerts generated interest among our people and provided us with the necessary information to permit an objective evaluation and implement necessary improvement of our Program.

9. There does not seem to be sufficient genuine interest and enthusiasm emanating from the Nation's Emergency Planning Officials at this time. It is very difficult to motivate workers if those responsible, OEP and GSA, cannot present a more realistic program.

10. I sincerely feel that the correction of this weakness would be helpful in improving the following additional weaknesses that I categorize under the appropriate aspect of a Total Program:

A. EMERGENCY RELOCATION

[REDACTED]

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B. EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

THERE IS A DEFINITE LACK OF EQUIPMENT CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL TO THE CONVERSION OF NON-PAPER TYPE RECORDS INTO USABLE FORM AT THE TIME OF EMERGENCY.

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The fact that several offices have deposited magnetic tapes, half-tone negatives, NPIC type film, etc., it is necessary that we have specialty type equipment capable of converting such information into readable form available at Relocation.

C. VITAL RECORDS

1. THERE IS GRAVE CONCERN ABOUT THE ADEQUACY OF VITAL RECORDS COVERAGE.

Many Agency Records Officers have indicated that they do not feel confident that they have selected all Vital Records necessary to carry out the emergency mission of their office. We can attribute this to the fact that most records officers have not been briefed in the Emergency mission of their respective offices and in some cases do not even know their Emergency Planning Officer.

2. IN MANY INSTANCES, ESPECIALLY IN THE DD/I AREA, THE VITAL RECORD AND ARCHIVAL RECORD ARE ONE AND THE SAME.

This consolidation or dual useage jeopardizes both programs. Responsibility for preservation of Archival Records is contained in Public Law 754 (Exhibit D) while Executive Order 10346 (Exhibit A) requires that we protect Vital Records. These are two separate programs and must be maintained separate and independent of one another.

3. CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE IN VITAL RECORDS DEPOSIT SCHEDULES AND PROCEDURES THAT HAVE NOT BEEN FORMALLY APPROVED.

There have been changes made in Vital Records Deposits without the amending of current Vital Records Schedules.

11. In order that the above weaknesses may be corrected, I submit the following recommendations for your review:

A. CONSTRUCTION OF AN UNDERGROUND VAULT AT LANGLEY USING THE HILL IMMEDIATELY BEHIND THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING.

The protection afforded by the natural terrain, plus providing additional protection through lining the walls and ceilings with layers of concrete, lead, etc, should permit us to withstand an attack on our Nation's capital and protect against resulting fallout. The construction of this facility should provide sufficient space to accomodate a cadre of highly essential workers with minimum living quarters. In addition, equipment commensurate with the type of records and emergency office operation (ADP, EDP, Microfilm, photo interpretation, etc.) should be placed in this facility. Because of its proximity to our main building this facility could be used productively in fulfillment of the day to day peace time operations of our Agency, thereby providing gainful utilization. A tunnel, linking the main building with this underground site would

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assure us that our people, records, and equipment would be brought together at time of need (Exhibit F). In the event of a night attack we would at least have our night headquarters force, who should be trained to support our essential emergency operations.

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B. IN THE EVENT THAT THE ENGINEERS RULE THE ABOVE OUT, I THEN RECOMMEND THE RELOCATING OF AN AGENCY OFFICE

C. ESTABLISH A BETTER LIAISON BETWEEN AGENCY EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICERS AND RECORDS OFFICERS.

Records Officers cannot select Vital Records until they have been briefed in the Emergency Mission of their Office. Further, the Records Officer can be very helpful in informing his E.P.O. of the need for special equipment necessary to obtain maximum utilization of the relocated records. At the present time we have, at relocation, records essential to emergency operations that cannot be used because of the lack of special equipment.

D. PRESENT A VITAL RECORDS SEMINAR AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE.

This seminar would define the need for a Vital Records Program, describe the techniques employed, emphasize the need for teamwork, and stress the "Total" program concept. To obtain the maximum benefit from this seminar it is imperative that all Emergency Planning Officers attend with their respective Records Officers. I am certain that such a seminar will do much toward motivating all who attend.

E. UNTIL A "HARDENED SITE" AS DESCRIBED IN RECOMMENDATION A OR B CAN BE OBTAINED, MAINTAIN ALL VITAL RECORDS IN A SPECIAL AREA, SEPARATE AND DISTINCT FROM OTHER RECORDS.

A Vital Record must not serve as the record or archival copy. It must, in all instances, be an extra copy of an essential document set aside for use at time of emergency. To have a copy serve a dual purpose (Archival and Vital) jeopardizes both programs and continuation of this could prove very disastrous at the time of an emergency. I understand that dual useage was started as an economy measure. The savings realized represent false economy when compared with our possible inability to have the Vital Records immediately accessible at time of need. It is very possible that

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a situation may arise requiring that all Vital Records be moved to a more protective area. This question of moving Vital Records to a more protective location was an actual problem given this Agency during the 1956 Operation Alert.

This move could be very easily accomplished if the Vital Records were stored separately, but could prove chaotic if they had to be individually selected from the retired or archival records [redacted] or from those that have been moved to Suitland. In addition, this dual purpose could jeopardize our responsibility to preserve, for historical purposes, (not part of a Vital Records Program) those records that document the activities and operations of this Agency. This consolidation has caused concern to DD/I and DD/S&T offices.

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To illustrate the problems encountered in making one copy serve a dual purpose, I attach Exhibit E, an extract from my overall evaluation of the 1956 Operation Alert.

F. IMPROVE OUR METHOD OF RECORDING, FILING, AND MAINTAINING OUR VITAL RECORDS DEPOSITS.

With the consolidation of the Records Center and Vital Records Program many of the services necessary to an effective Vital Records Program were curtailed. The discontinuance of the Availability Register, reduction in EDP equipment, reduction in inter-filing, etc. In order that we may improve our services I believe that it is essential that permanent personnel be assigned to Vital Records Repository Operations. I further believe that these employees should be separate from any Records Center operations. To effectively correct this deficiency and to provide the Agency offices with current accounting of their resources and assure them that their Vital Records are current and accessible would require three (3) employees.

I am certain that the benefits to be gained would certainly justify the expenditure of salaries for three employees. At the present time it is necessary for certain offices to send employees [redacted] to interfile their Vital Records. In many cases this involves GS-13's.

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G. ALL VITAL RECORDS DEPOSIT SCHEDULES BE REVIEWED BY THE OFFICE HEAD, THE RESPECTIVE EMERGENCY PLANNING OFFICER, AND THE RECORDS OFFICER, BEFORE SUBMISSION TO THIS OFFICE FOR OUR REVIEW AND APPROVAL.

This should be accomplished as soon as practicable, following the Vital Records Seminar. This will also assist in achieving better liaison as defined in Recommendation "C".

H. SEPARATE VITAL RECORDS INTO TWO CATEGORIES: THOSE NEEDED FOR IMMEDIATE OR CONTINUED OPERATION; AND THOSE NEEDED FOR RECONSTRUCTION PURPOSES.

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This refinement in the selection of Vital Records could result in permitting the storage of those records not needed for immediate use at a more remote underground protective area. I feel that this decision must await the redefining of our various offices emergency missions.

I. THE VITAL RECORDS PROGRAM MANAGER SHOULD ATTEND EMERGENCY PLANNING MEETINGS.

As Vital Records is one of the essentials to a successful Emergency Program, it is imperative that I attend such meetings. I feel that if this was presently in effect we could have prevented some procedural changes that have caused deterioration in our Program.

J. ALL CHANGES AFFECTING VITAL RECORDS DEPOSIT SCHEDULES AND PROCEDURES BE APPROVED BY THE AGENCY VITAL RECORDS OFFICER.

There have been certain changes in the Vital Records Deposits that have caused considerable concern among Agency Vital Records Officers. Many times the depositing office is not the user of the record. It is therefore imperative that all proposed amendments to schedules and changes in procedures be reviewed and approved by the Agency Vital Records Officer who has overall knowledge of Vital Records Deposit Schedules.

K. CONDUCT ANNUAL RELOCATION TESTS TO DETERMINE THE ADEQUACY OF ALL RELOCATION FACILITIES AND VITAL RECORDS.

The optimum would be the reactivation of Operation Alerts, simultaneous relocating of all Government agencies, but if this can't be accomplished I recommend that we conduct our own Agency tests. There is no better way to evaluate our "Total" program than to attempt to operate with only the facilities and records that would be at our disposal at time of emergency. I am certain that such tests would provide us with much food for thought, and permit us the opportunity to critique our findings and implement improvement.

12. Because this whole Emergency Program must be considered an insurance program we must take immediate steps to assure that we obtain the maximum benefit from such a necessary program. Unlike other Records Programs it is not possible for us to show monetary benefits to be derived, but the benefits to be realized concern much higher stakes - the national security of our country.

13. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss these views with you at your convenience.



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Attachments:

Exhibits A through F

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FEDERAL REGISTER

Saturday, April 19, 1952

EXECUTIVE ORDER 10346

Preparation by Federal Agencies of  
Civil Defense Emergency Plans

Sec. 2. In addition to the plans required by section 1 hereof, each Federal department and agency shall prepare plans for maintaining the continuity of its essential functions at the seat of Government and elsewhere during the existence of a civil-defense emergency.



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PROTECTING VITAL OPERATING RECORDS

General Services Administration  
National Archives and Records Service  
Office of Records Management

The Federal program has been based on certain ground rules that have been generally accepted as valid. These basic assumptions, which are applicable to State and local governments as well as to the Federal agencies, are seven in number:

1. That in the event of war the city of Washington will be a prime target for atom, hydrogen, or other bombing.
2. That other large metropolitan and industrial centers will be equally prime targets for atom, hydrogen, or other bombing.
3. That the entire concept of "protection" must be based on relative rather than on absolute safety, since probably no vault that is near or above the surface of the ground could withstand a direct hit by the most destructive bombs. Adequate underground storage facilities are not available in many areas.
4. That the need for duplication of records will vary according to the value of the record, the normal distribution of copies, and the relative safety of the places to which the copies are distributed.
5. That evacuation to a non-target area is the most practical means of providing protection, with the realization at the same time that the hitherto non-target area may become a target area as soon as the valuable material is moved into it.
6. That a calculated risk must be taken with regard to certain records of lesser value than those identified as vital records.
7. That each agency affected is responsible for planning and putting into effect action necessary to protect its records.

**On File GSA Release Instructions Apply**

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TASK FORCE REPORT ON  
PAPERWORK MANAGEMENT

January 1955

APPENDIX I

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

13. THE OFFICE OF DEFENSE MOBILIZATION, IN COOPERATION WITH THE GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION, COMPLETE A PROGRAM FOR THE PROTECTION OF VITAL RECORDS.

The proper functioning of the Government in time of emergency will depend on the survival and availability of vital records. The Office of Defense Mobilization should assure that agency relocation plans and vital records programs are closely coordinated. Agency reports on their vital records should be subject to a systematic, continuing review. Also, the program should be extended to principal offices outside the Washington area. Steps should be taken to insure that agency officials will know of the location of their vital records in times of emergency.

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PUBLIC LAW 754 - 81st CONGRESS

CHAPTER 849 - 2d SESSION

RECORDS MANAGEMENT; AGENCY HEADS

"Sec. 506. (a) The head of each Federal agency shall cause to be made and preserved records containing adequate and proper documentation of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency and designed to furnish the information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency's activities.

"(b) The head of each Federal agency shall establish and maintain an active, continuing program for the economical and efficient management of the records of the agency. Such program shall, among other things, provide for (1) effective controls over the creation, maintenance, and use of records in the conduct of current business; (2) cooperation with the Administrator in applying standards, procedures, and techniques designed to improve the management of records, promote the maintenance and security of records deemed appropriate for preservation, and facilitate the segregation and disposal of records of temporary value; and (3) compliance with the provisions of this title and the regulations issued thereunder".

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REPORT ON OPERATION ALERT 1956



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8. Office of Basic Intelligence

- a. Deficiency - Coverage. Emergency reproduction of an NIS section would require full-time use of that section by OBI for a period of a week or more. Because the sections for which reproduction was necessary would in all likelihood be the same ones needed by the analysts at the Relocation Center, the one copy of each NIS now in the Vital Materials Repository would not, in most instances, be adequate to satisfy the conflicting demands.

Recommendation - It is planned to place another complete set of published NIS in the VM Repository, this set to be charged to and releasable only by OBI. This set, along with the negatives of half-tones and multi-color maps now deposited in VM, will provide this office with reproduction copy for all published NIS elements. OBI will then be able to carry out its responsibility to furnish multiple copies of the NIS in event of an emergency.

Action - OBI has already added the extra NIS to its current VM Schedule.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Wednesday, January 12, 1966

TAKING NO CHANCES

Shell Oil Moves Underground,  
Hughes Disperses; Behind  
the Door at Iron Mountain

L. E. Yont, president of National Storage Company,  
Boyers, Pennsylvania says: "There isn't much  
sense in a records protection system unless you  
also have a place where the remainder of manage-  
ment can pull a company together".

CPYRGHT