***PRIMER*  
*NARA 2 (College Park), Department of State Records*   
*RG 59 and RG 84 records and finding aids searchable online***

Below is a message with links and some basic explanation of the NARA Department of State (DOS) records you are most likely to find useful. The DOS frontpage is here: <https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/agency-records>

Assuming my schedule allows, I will try to consult with you about your specific research interests, but it is important to try to familiarize yourself as much as possible with the online finding aids first.

-Bill McAllister

**First, you must contact the NARA staff in advance for a consultation and then make a reservation. See** [**https://www.archives.gov/college-park**](https://www.archives.gov/college-park)

**Next, you must complete the orientation course** to demonstrate you know how to handle the records appropriately. It would be best to do that before you travel to NARA and print out a copy of the completion certificate. Go here:  
<https://rise.articulate.com/share/uK5NGkSpg74JHLTOcGPmM4e94MJyxQgD#/>

Finally, you must bring a quarter for the locker each day, but you get it back at the end of the day, so you only need one for the duration of your research.

*--- These documents are available online via online finding aids. ---*

**1: NARA AAD**(since these are available online, best to exploit them first, but these records only cover the period from mid-1973 to the end of 1979)  
<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-central-files/1973-1979>  
See general information an some specifics about utilizing the TAGS (Traffic Analysis by Geography and Subject) system here  
<https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-central-files/faqs.pdf>

--- *The records below are only available onsite at NARA II in College Park. ---  
--- The pages below will assist you in determining which records to consult. ---*

*--- After you arrive at NARA 2, you must go to the 3rd floor consultation area to consult the box lists that will enable you to order records. The staff will help you with this. ---*

**2: Record Group 59: the Central Decimal File**<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-central-files/1910-1963>  
The goal here is to figure out the most promising decimals most likely to contain information relevant to your research. The decimal system changed over time and then morphed into a subject-numeric system later.  
The 1965-73 Subject-Numeric classification handbook is attached to this message.

**3: Record Group 59: the Decentralized Files (commonly referred to as the “Lot Files”)**<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-59-decentralized-files>  
These are a more disparate and harder-to-utilize collection of internal files compiled by various DOS offices/bureaus located in Washington. If you can manage to identify a Lot that contains relevant documentation, this material can be really helpful.

**4: Record Group 84: the Post Files**<https://www.archives.gov/research/foreign-policy/state-dept/rg-84>These are the records created at U.S. embassies and consulates that were eventually retired back to Washington. I recommend looking at these last because they are often organized chronologically (rather than topically), so it’s best to amass as much information as you can from the above sources before attempting to target relevant documents in this collection. Also this collection is rather spotty—no guarantee there will be anything from the countries in which you are interested, especially after the mid-1960s.

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**Ancillary data**Key DOS officials are listed here by name, country, dates of service, etc.  
<https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/secretaries>  
and  
<https://history.state.gov/departmenthistory/people/principals-chiefs>

**NARA’s official citation guidance** is here: <https://www.archives.gov/files/publications/general-info-leaflets/17-citing-records.pdf>. It is not absolutely required to follow all these prescriptions to the letter, but the more you can conform to this type of approach the better for you and your readers.