

House Map Room. How in the world would one expect to find another copy some place? There wouldn't have been one. Requests have been made to the Truman Library and the Eisenhower Library and they did a quick check of their list of indices and they found no listing for MJ-12. This is not a computerized check since it is not a computerized index. There are 11 different finders' aids for different portions of the NSC Files at the Eisenhower Library, alone. Nobody went through all of these to find anything.

There are some cross referencing techniques. These were checked, but the Eisenhower and Truman Libraries tell anybody who comes to visit "Here is a list of our finders' aids. You may go through these and you may select boxes that you would like to see. We will bring them to you for review." Some newsmen are shocked that it is impossible to push a few buttons and receive everything in the files on MJ-12 or on any other topic. There is no such filing available at the Eisenhower or Truman Library. Secondly, many people have the impression that even if there isn't a automatic downgrading of classified material after so many years, surely material from the '40s and '50s has all been declassified or at least is kept and can be declassified upon request, right? Wrong. One of the interesting experiences at the Eisenhower Library, for example, in going through the voluminous NSC materials, is how many times I would request a box, receive it and find that in the file folder that had drawn my attention in the first place, because of the date, the subject or whatever, that all I found were withdrawal sheets. At the Eisenhower Library these are pink sheets, some listing 10-12 different items, with very brief entries, "memo, TS, James Lay to Robert Cutler, July 16, 1954, 1 page." That does not give much useful information about that memo.

There is a procedure for requesting mandatory classification review though the NSC materials are NOT covered by the Freedom of Information Act; those at the Eisenhower Library, anyway. One fills out a form which gives whatever information is available such as the number of pages, the date, the security level, and whatever title information is given, if any. This is submitted to the Eisenhower Library which in turn passes on the request to the originating office, in this case the National Security Council. It will respond eventually. The average response time for the NSC has been running about 2 1/2 years for such requests. Some requests have taken as long as six years. Part of the problem is that while a given agency may have no objection to the release, they may insist that it be reviewed by somebody else such as the CIA or the Department of State, or the Department of Defence. And then this copy of the document has to be submitted in sequence to all of these.

My requests made in February 1988, for classification-review of a number of NSC documents had NOT been acted upon as of March 1, 1990. This gives some idea of how long it takes to get a ruling. And of course I have had the experience of being turned down. I went after the Operation Solarium reports after discovering that they were listed at the Eisenhower Library and in the NSC files.