

wants the robot demonstrator to be able to move. Although the committee warned that the development of this ability is too ambitious for a short-term project, Verderame says, "We will have a vehicle."

The development of expert systems would help train soldiers to handle and repair sophisticated equipment. For example, to analyze the numerous ills of the M1 tank with its new turbine engine, the committee recommends the creation of an elaborate diagnostic system. The technical manual for the tank totals 61,000 pages. The report notes, "An individual working inside the turret of an M1 tank . . . cannot at present easily flip through the pages of the repair manual." With the computer system, a person could use a transmitter, receiver, floppy disk, and a computer that can understand verbal commands to fix the tank

more efficiently. But the report cautions, "Any Army diagnostic system should be easily understood by any operator. . . ." Choosing alternatives offered by the software "is not necessarily easy for a semiliterate person."

The committee also recommended a few other projects but assigned them a lower priority. It urged the creation of a "dog tag chip," in which a soldier's medical history could be encoded. The dogtag would be used to speed up the treatment of injured soldiers. Such research is already under way at Purdue University. To eliminate the need for soldiers in the loading and unloading of supplies (especially ammunition) near the front lines, the equivalent of an automated forklift truck should be built, the committee said. And, as in the DARPA plan, an expert system to evaluate information during a battle should be created.

The Army already spends about \$11 million on artificial intelligence research. Last year, it asked Congress for an additional \$15 million to develop a sentry robot, but was turned down. Verderame believes that the National Research Council's report will lend considerable weight to the Army's request the next time around.

Given the goals of DARPA and the Army, does all this planning mean that future wars will be fought and planned by robots and fifth-generation computers? Verderame says, "I can't imagine that a war will be fought and won by robots. Robots will be an assistant to man, not a substitute." The DARPA report doesn't explicitly address this question, but if its proposal is approved, the multimillion dollar program would go a long way in changing the present nature of battle.—MARJORIE SUN

## Historians Deplore Classification Rules

### *New restrictions on classification and declassification of documents are hampering historical research*

Scholars of diplomatic and military history have never been happy with what they have to go through to obtain copies of historical documents from the government. They have to wait for years for material to be reviewed and declassified, and are sometimes rewarded with a pile of nearly blank pages reflecting the deletion of sensitive material.

But some recent actions of the Reagan Administration are making an unsatisfactory situation worse, and historians, perhaps belatedly, are "finally pulling themselves together" to look for new ways to address the problems, says Anna Nelson of George Washington University.

A major focus of concern is Executive Order 12356, issued by President Reagan in August 1982, which governs the classification and declassification of government documents. In essence, the order eliminates automatic declassification of any documents, puts low priority on the systematic review of documents that would ordinarily be declassified after 30 years, and permits reclassification of some material.

The Reagan directive constitutes a reversal of a trend dating from the end of World War II—or, as one government document says, it is "taking the bold step of bucking the trend of prior Orders." This trend moved toward putting

greater weight on the public interest when balancing it against national security interests, and toward putting the burden of proof on the government that disclosure of a given document would damage the national security.\* As critics see it, the new policy may be summed up as "When in doubt, classify."

At this point it is not clear how severely the new order will hamper historical research because the lag time between a request for material and its delivery is so great that few requests made since the order have been processed. But policy is not the only problem.

- Delays in declassification have been greatly exacerbated by drastic budget and personnel cuts at the National Archives and Records Service, which has been assigned by the Administration to do the bulk of the reviewing. According to Edwin Thompson of the Archives declassification division, the old goal of reviewing all material by the time it is 20

\*The shift in emphasis away from what the government calls the "negative tone" of the old Carter directive is shown in these excerpts: the Carter order said eligible material "may not be classified unless . . . its unauthorized disclosure reasonably could be expected to cause at least identifiable damage to the national security." This section has been changed to read that information "shall be classified when . . . its unauthorized disclosure, either by itself or in the context of other information, reasonably could be expected to cause damage to the national security."

years old has given way to a 30-year goal. But to realize even this would be impossible without a doubling of staff, which now stands at around 40. Under Reagan, staff and budget have been cut by 60 percent. The bulk of material reviewed has decreased from tens of millions of pages to about 3 million pages a year, according to Steven Garfinkel of the General Services Administration's Information Security Oversight Office. Priority is being put on reviewing material in anticipation of user needs rather than on systematic declassification. But historians rely heavily on information that can only be gained through access to complete records in a given area.

- Historians have also been alarmed by recent actions of the National Security Agency (NSA), which took the unusual step of closing some public files at the George C. Marshall Library in Lexington, Va. The library contains the papers of two former NSA employees, including William F. Friedman, a renowned cryptographer whose career extended from World War I to the 1950's. Last May a book, *The Puzzle Palace*, by James Bamford, was published which drew from unclassified papers in the Friedman collection. Afterward, NSA operatives appeared at the library and ordered some

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of Friedman's papers, including personal documents, to be reclassified and others to be closed to the public.

The NSA has justified its action in a memorandum responding to Representative Glenn L. English (D-Okla.), chairman of the House Government Operations Committee's government information subcommittee. It explained that Bamford's book made reference to papers the NSA thought were closed to the public and that an archivist at the library had opened them without authorization. It said all classifiable material is protected until the government specifically indicates otherwise. The memo also claimed that, under the NSA act of 1959, the agency has a right to protect "information from the government—regardless of whether the information is contained in official or private papers."

The situation has drawn the attention of a Washington group, the Center for National Security Studies, which claims the NSA had no authority to remove information that is not only unclassified but is also no longer in the government's possession. The Center is planning a lawsuit, which is being joined by the Organization of American Historians (OAH).

OAH head Joan Hoff-Wilson says the seemingly open-ended classification authority claimed by the NSA is of great concern to historians.

- A recent Justice Department interpretation of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act could make it prohibitively costly for some historians to obtain material. The act's provisions include search fees for requests made by corporations but waives them for those who seek information in the public interest, such as scholars and journalists. The Justice Department has narrowed this exemption by allowing the responding agency to decide whether the information requested would really benefit the public. There have been at least two instances where fee waivers were reportedly denied—one in which biographers of John J. McCoy sought files from the State Department and another in which a historian requested files on a now-defunct civil rights organization from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Denial of the waiver can put an end to some quests, since search fees have been known to go as high as several hundred thousand dollars.

- Historians are particularly irritated with current State Department procedures for processing sensitive material. In 1979 a new bureaucracy, the Classification and Declassification Center, was

set up to regularize procedures and cope with the rising level of FOI requests. It is manned by a host of retired foreign service officers who tend to err on the side of caution, in the opinion of observers. The CDC has the job of reviewing all the documents intended for inclusion in the department's series, *Foreign Relations of the United States*. According to historian Walter LaFaber of Cornell University, the quality of material in the series has declined markedly since the CDC took over. This "used to be the number one documentary publication in the world," he says. Now, "the key operational documents are no longer there."

State Department historian David Patterson defends the quality of the series and says progress has been impeded by the difficulty of getting documents cleared by other agencies. He emphasizes another factor which is bogging

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down declassification of all diplomatic and military material: review of 30-year-old documents has now moved into the early 1950's. There was massive and relatively swift declassification of World War II and postwar material in the past, but now review is focused on the Cold War era and the roots of modern American foreign policy. This was a time of rapid multiplication of government agencies, and there are now many more inter-agency documents which have to be reviewed by every agency involved. Bulk declassification is no longer appropriate; it now has to be done item by item and even page by page. Times have changed, says Patterson. "Foreign relations are more sensitive now—we live in a dangerous world."

Historians would contend that we have lived in a dangerous world for quite some time, and that this is no excuse for caprice and even downright silliness on the part of reviewers.

LaFaber says for example that CDC justified tightening some procedures on the grounds it was getting complaints from foreign officials that their names were being improperly made public. Asked for examples, they came up with an Icelandic official named in a 1949

document. "We have to watch out for what Russell Baker calls 'Moscow envy' " says LaFaber.

Another historian, Athan Theoharis of Marquette University, says that a few years ago he requested an FBI file going back to the 1930's. Half of it, containing the name of an FBI informer, was delivered in 1980. The other half finally arrived last year, with the name of the informer deleted. He says that in a separate batch of material, on a highly publicized case involving a union official whose phone was tapped by the FBI, the word "wiretapping" was deleted.

These various difficulties are spurring historians to "think more about the question of who really owns history," says Joan Hoff-Wilson. An OAH committee is currently collecting examples of scholars who have run afoul of the new policies. Meanwhile, the American Historical Association (AHA) wants to "quit relying on presidents" to set declassification policy, says Anna Nelson, and get the policy stabilized by means of legislation that would establish some baseline standards. AHA's research arm has formulated some proposed amendments to the Federal Records Act which it will present to the AHA council in December. These would require that for security classification to be valid it must be accompanied by a termination date. The dates could be revised at any time, but extensions would be limited to 5 years. Historians say the lack of dating is a big problem because it means that regardless of what policy was in effect at the time of classification, those documents eligible for declassification stay locked up until someone reviews them. The proposal stipulates that costs of declassification would be borne by the relevant agencies. (The State Department is currently footing most of the bill for review of the documents it has turned over to the Archives.) Standards would apply to all agencies, including the NSA.

The historians' worries about excessive government secrecy have been given additional impetus by Reagan's directive last March calling for prepublication security reviews of writings by government officials, and expanding the use of polygraph tests.

Tackling the declassification issue is an extremely complicated business. Leaving aside the slowdowns imposed by sparse budgets, it is likely that the difficulties are ascribable more to the overall tone of the Administration, as reflected in the discretionary decisions of government employees, than to the wording of the rules.

—CONSTANCE HOLDEN