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**Indexes and Subject Cards to the
"Secret and Confidential"
Correspondence of the Office of
the Secretary of the Navy
March 1917-July 1919**



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Record Group 80

INDEXES AND SUBJECT CARDS TO THE
"SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL"
CORRESPONDENCE OF THE OFFICE OF
THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
MARCH 1917-JULY 1919

On the 11 rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced two name and subject indexes, two ship name indexes, and one series of subject cards to the "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, March 1917-July 1919. Included in the "secret and confidential" correspondence is the correspondence of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. In 1974 the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), acting under the authority granted by Executive Order 11652 (May 8, 1972), reviewed and declassified this correspondence. The indexes and subject cards, plus the correspondence to which they pertain, are part of General Records of the Department of the Navy, 1798-1947, Record Group 80.

History and Organization

The Department of the Navy was established by an act of April 30, 1798 (1 Stat. 553). Under this act the Secretary of the Navy was empowered to administer all functions associated with the Navy, except those assigned to the Marine Corps and to navy yards. On February 7, 1815, the Navy Department duties of procuring supplies and constructing and outfitting vessels were transferred to the new Board of Navy Commissioners, which was composed of three high-ranking naval officers. The Board was subordinate to the Secretary and exercised civil rather than military powers.

On August 31, 1842, the Board was abolished and its functions distributed among five bureaus. The duties and number of the bureaus gradually changed and expanded so that by 1917 seven bureaus were in existence: Yards and Docks, in charge of the construction and maintenance of shore facilities; Construction and Repair, in charge of the construction and maintenance of ships; Steam Engineering, in charge of the manufacture and maintenance of ships' engines and other machinery, including radio equipment; Supplies and Accounts, in charge of the acquisition and distribution of supplies and the accounting and disbursement of funds; Ordnance, in charge of weapons procurement and development; Navigation, in charge of personnel procedures; and Medicine and Surgery, in charge of health care. The Office of the Judge Advocate General, established in 1880, handled legal questions concerning the Navy.

In 1900 the General Board, consisting of high-ranking Navy officials, was established to advise the Secretary on naval strategy and preparations for war. Subsequent Navy regulations expanded the General Board's duties to include administrative matters. The Joint Board, established in 1903, included

representatives of the Departments of War and of the Navy, who provided advice on matters of mutual interest to the two Departments.

The Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, created by an act of March 3, 1915 (38 Stat. 929), took over many of the duties of the General Board, which thereafter acted solely as an advisory body. The primary functions of the Office concerned "the operations of the fleet" and "the preparation and readiness of plans for its use in war." An act of August 29, 1916, greatly enlarged the staff of the Office and empowered it to issue orders carrying the same force as those of the Secretary of the Navy. During World War I Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels further strengthened the Office by yielding broad authority to its Chief in the administration and coordination of naval operations. By 1918 the Office included the following units: the Aviation, Material, Naval Districts, Operating Forces, and Planning Divisions; the Armed Guard Section; the Board of Inspection and Survey; the Naval Communication Service; the Office of Gunnery Exercises and Engineering Performances; and the Office of Naval Intelligence.

The Office of the Chief of Naval Operations was responsible for many naval units that played vital roles in World War I and for the subsequent demobilization of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Division of Naval Districts directed the defense and administration of Navy shore facilities in 16 naval districts along the coasts of the United States and its territories. Three Navy fleets (Atlantic, Pacific, and Asiatic) were under the purview of the Chief of Naval Operations. Because the Atlantic Fleet was far superior in the number of ships and the firepower of its guns, it was renamed the United States Fleet in January 1919. Six months later, however, it resumed its original title and many of its ships were transferred to the Pacific Fleet in order to equalize forces. The U.S. Naval Forces Operating in European Waters, formed in June 1917 as a task force under the Atlantic Fleet, was the primary U.S. naval fighting command during the war. The Cruiser and Transport Force of the Atlantic Fleet, which originated in May 1917 under a different name, transported the majority of U.S. troops to France. The task of carrying supplies to the troops was delegated to the Naval Overseas Transportation Service, which was established in January 1918 under the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and was not a part of the Atlantic Fleet.

During the U.S. participation in the war from April 1917 to November 1918, the Navy Department temporarily assumed responsibility for the Coast Guard Service from the Treasury Department and for the Lighthouse Service and the Coast and Geodetic Survey from the Commerce Department. These organizations were returned to their original departments in 1919.

Records Description

The "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, March 1917-July 1919, to which the indexes and subject cards reproduced in this microfilm publication refer, reflects the military and administrative history of the U.S. Navy during the U.S. involvement in World War I and the period of demobilization that followed. Correspondence subjects include the arming of U.S. merchant ships against German submarine attack; the deployment of other antisubmarine measures, such as mine barrages, destroyers, convoys, and detection devices; suspected German espionage; the development and use of weapons; and the improvement of radio communications. There is also extensive coverage of personnel matters; Navy ship movements; forwarding of mail to ships; relations with the Allies and Latin American nations; naval aeronautics, including the first successful transatlantic flight by a U.S. airplane in 1919; postwar minesweeping missions; and meetings of the London Naval Board on Claims and the Paris Naval Board on Claims in 1919 concerning financial liability for damages caused by U.S. naval forces.

The series of "secret and confidential" correspondence was begun in March 1917, when documents considered to be of a confidential nature were segregated from the general correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy. General correspondence file number 28754 was chosen to identify each item of the new series through March 1918. After that date, the prefix "C" was used to identify confidential documents, and "S" was used to identify secret documents. Occasionally documents maintained with the general correspondence under file citations other than 28754 or documents maintained in other Navy Department files were transferred to the series of "secret and confidential" correspondence. Before December 1917, index cards prepared for "secret and confidential" correspondence continued to be filed in the name and subject index to the main general correspondence, although the security-classified correspondence itself was filed separately. This name and subject index from March to November 1917 is reproduced in NARS microfilm publication M1052, *General and Special Indexes to the General Correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, July 1897-August 1926*.

Subject headings were created for the "secret and confidential" correspondence as the need arose. By 1919 there were 56 such headings, each identified by a master number from 1 to 56. The subject headings and corresponding master numbers are listed at the end of these introductory remarks. The first piece of correspondence placed under a subject heading was identified by the prefix (file No. 28754, "C," or "S") and the master number, as was any further correspondence immediately related to the first piece. Subsequent correspondence on a new subtopic of the same subject heading received the prefix, master number, and a sub-number. For example, file number 28754-12 was assigned to the first communication dealing with "Mexican affairs." This was a

memorandum dated March 29, 1917, from the President of the Naval War College to Secretary of the Navy Daniels concerning German intrigue in Mexico. A copy of an April 3, 1917, letter from Daniels forwarding the memorandum to the Secretary of State also received file number 28754-12. The next item concerned a different aspect of Mexican affairs and was designated 28754-12-1 (a copy of a memorandum dated Apr. 9, 1917, from Daniels to the Secretary of State acknowledging receipt of a despatch concerning German agents who had repaired a wireless telegraph plant at Chapultepec). A copy of a memorandum of the same date from the Chief of Naval Operations referring the despatch to the Office of Naval Intelligence also was assigned file number 28754-12-1. Communications on subsequent Mexican issues received consecutive subnumbers, thus the last entry, dated September 26, 1919, is numbered S-12-247.

Frequently so many items were assigned to a subtopic that a further division into second-level subtopics was required. This division was indicated by appending a numerical suffix to the subtopic number and separating the two numbers by a slash. For example, the four divisions of subtopic 189 under Mexican affairs bear the file designations C-12-189, C-12-189/1, C-12-189/2, and C-12-189/3.

The filing system described was changed in August 1919, when the Planning Division assumed responsibility for filing "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations. For some time after August 1919, however, many "secret and confidential" documents continued to be filed and indexed according to the system described previously. The following, in order of their appearance in this publication, are the four indexes and one series of subject cards that were prepared by the Navy Department as finding aids to "secret and confidential" correspondence, March 1917-July 1919.

Name and Subject Index, Dec. 1917-Mar. 1918

The name and subject index for December 1917 to March 1918 consists of 3- by 8-inch cards arranged alphabetically by name and subject and is reproduced on roll 1 of this publication. Entries are recorded on each card generally in chronological order. An entry includes an abstract of the content of the document, the name or title of the writer or addressee, the file number, and, frequently, the date of the document. The cards give no indication of whether incoming communications were filed with the "secret and confidential" correspondence or forwarded elsewhere. Many of the card headings are for persons and organizations with which the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations corresponded, or for persons and organizations that were mentioned in the correspondence. Also indexed are places and subjects except ships. Some cards refer to correspondence dated several months before December 1917.

Name and Subject Index, Apr. 1918-July 1919

This is the largest of the four indexes presented and is reproduced on rolls 2-4 of this publication. This index continues the name and subject index for a subsequent period, April 1918 to July 1919, with a few entries dated as late as January 1920. This index differs from the first in the size of the card, 3 by 5 inches, and in the inclusion of the date of the communication at the beginning of each entry.

Ship Index, Dec. 1917-Mar. 1918

The third index refers exclusively to individual ships mentioned in the correspondence and is otherwise identical to the name and subject index format for the December 1917 to March 1918 period. The ship index is arranged alphabetically by name or designation of vessel, including Navy, commercial, and foreign-owned vessels, and is reproduced on roll 5 of this publication. Ships named after persons (e.g., the *Harry Luckenbach*) may be indexed either by first name or by surname, but more often by the latter.

Ship Index, Apr. 1918-July 1919

The last of the four indexes is a continuation of the preceding ship index and utilizes the same format and card size as the name and subject index for the April 1918 to July 1919 period. This index is reproduced on rolls 5 and 6 of this publication.

Subject Cards, Mar. 1917-July 1919

Information about each "secret and confidential" communication sent or received by the Secretary of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations from March 1917 to July 1919 was recorded on a series of 5- by 8-inch cards that are reproduced on rolls 7-11 of this publication. These subject cards are arranged according to the 56 subject headings represented by the master numbers and listed in appendix 1 at the end of these introductory remarks. Also in the note on roll 7 is a list of subtopics for the first subject heading (master No. 1) "Arming of merchant vessels." The remaining 55 master numbers contain subtopics, which are not titled.

The subject heading or subtopic, prefix "C" and the master number, and the card number are recorded at the top of most subject cards. There are separate numerical sequences for each subject heading. Beneath these notations are entries for each communication, generally in order of subnumber and numerical suffix. Some entries are continued on insert cards and thus interrupt the sequence of the other entries; e.g., under master number 3 ("Unclassified subjects"), entries C-3-357 through C-3-363 are recorded on card 103; they are followed by entries C-3-357/1

through C-3-357/22 on insert cards 103-A through 103-A3. The usual sequence resumes with entry C-3-364 at the beginning of card 104.

Each subject card entry provides the following information about the document(s) being indexed: name or title of the writer or addressee, date, and brief abstract of contents. The date that incoming correspondence was received usually is given at the end of the entry. If an incoming item was referred to a unit of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, the symbol "ops" or "op-" followed by a number or abbreviation corresponding to the particular unit usually appears after the date of receipt; e.g., items referred to the Division of Material are identified by the notation "op-mat." The designation "FILED" indicates that an incoming item was placed in the "secret and confidential" correspondence file.

Terms used in the indexes are more specific than the 56 subject headings by which the subject cards are arranged; e.g., the name and subject indexes contain such specific terms as "Battery," "Depth charges," "Guns," "Howitzers," "Mines," and "Torpedoes," all of which refer to correspondence filed under the "Armament and ammunition" subject heading (master No. 44). However, the indexes are less complete than the subject cards with regard to the numbers of pieces of correspondence cited; e.g., the index cards prepared for "Torpedoes" cite only the first of three items about torpedoes listed on the subject cards under file number C-44-143.

Related Records

Closely related to the records previously described are two other series in Record Group 80, the general correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1897-1926, and the "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1919-27.

Richard Noble prepared the introduction and contents for this microfilm publication, and Thomas Whitfield edited them.

APPENDIX 1

Master numbers and subject headings for the "secret and confidential" correspondence of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, 1917-19:

<u>Master No.</u>	<u>Subject Heading</u>
1	Arming of merchant vessels
2	German espionage in America
3	Unclassified subjects
4	Protection to yards and stations
5	German submarine activities
6	Mobilization
7	Asiatic situation
8	Defensive sea areas
9	Aeronautics
10	Japanese activities
11	Central and South American affairs
12	Mexican affairs
13	Shipments
14	Protection to private plants
15	German activities in the United States
16	German refugee ships
17	Lighthouse Service
18	Ships movements and orders
19	Pearl Harbor correspondence
20	Cooperation with allies
21	Fitting up naval vessels
22	Cuban affairs
23	War diaries
24	Haitien and Santo Domingo affairs
25	Preparedness for war reports
26	Defense against submarines
27	Naval bases
28	Signal books of allies
29	Radio matters
30	Vessels for foreign service other than naval
31	Transports, Navy
32	Strikers in plants making munitions for the Navy
33	Vessels on duty in naval districts, weekly reports of
34	Characteristics of vessels
35	Personnel
36	Confidential publications

<u>Master No.</u>	<u>Subject Heading</u>
37	Requisitioning of vessels
38	Philippines
39	Russia
40	Mail
41	Intelligence reports
42	Panama Canal
43	Repairs
44	Armament and Ammunition
45	Guam
46	Naval Forces in Europe
47	General reports from Admiral Sims
48	Azores
49	Convoy
50	Loss of vessels
51	Casualties (deaths, injured and missing)
52	Censorship
53	Codes and signals
54	U.S. submarines, construction of
55	Fleet maneuvers
56	Demobilization

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	Ship Index, Dec. 1917-Mar. 1918
5	<i>Actaeon</i> , SS - 2-2, USNSS Airship
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