Special Staff Files, White House Special Files, 1969-1974

1969-1974
Descriptive Summary
Title: Special Staff Files, White House Special Files, 1969-1974
Dates: 1969-1974
Collection Number: 6004162
Extent: 2 linear feet, 7 linear inches; 6 boxes
Repository: Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
Abstract: These files were collected from various staff members who do not have a larger file group in the Special Files. This file group consists of selected materials from 19 staff members and concerns diverse topics and includes 2 boxes of George Bush material relating to his appointment as ambassador to the United Nations.
Language of Material: English
Access
Collection is open for research. Some materials may be unavailable based upon categories of materials exempt from public release established in the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974.
Publication Rights
Most government records are in the public domain; however, this series includes commercial materials, such as newspaper clippings, that may be subject to copyright restrictions. Researchers should contact the copyright holder for information.
Preferred Citation
Special Staff Files, White House Special Files, 1969-1974. Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
Acquisition Information
These materials are in the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration under the provisions of Title I of the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 (P.L. 93-526, 88 Stat. 1695) and implementing regulations.
Biography/Administrative History
The Special Files Unit was created in September 1972 to provide a central storage location for sensitive material. Early in 1970, John R. Brown III, Special Assistant to the President and Staff Secretary, conducted a review of the handling procedures for all Presidential papers. His report was contained in a memorandum to H.R. Haldeman, dated March 25, 1970. In it, Brown recommended the immediate establishment of a special files unit to handle the storage of all sensitive material, material of a personal nature, and material containing the President's handwriting. The consolidation of these files into a central location would, according to his recommendation, tighten up the procedures for handling Presidential papers. Two years later the Nixon administration acted on the recommendations by establishing a special files unit within the White House complex that was completely independent of the White House Central Files unit. To ensure the utmost security, the number of individuals who worked in the Special Files Unit was intentionally kept at a minimum. Gertrude Brown Fry, Staff Assistant for Security, was appointed to supervise the new White House unit. Her Assistant was Hazel F. Fulton, who had been a confidential assistant to Peter M. Flanigan, Assistant to the President. Prior to the establishment of Special Files, much of the sensitive materials generated by the White House staff was not forwarded to the White House Central Files for general storage, but it was dispersed throughout the White House complex and held by individual staff members in their own offices. Following the decision to set up Special Files, John W. Dean III, Counsel to the President, instructed Fry and Fulton to receive, index, and file all sensitive White House staff materials. They were also provided criteria to use in making determinations about items to include in Special Files. Under the criteria there were twelve groups of files that warranted special care and handling: investigative reports on individuals; applications and recommendations for positions; documents that contained derogatory remarks concerning the character, loyalty, integrity, or ability of individuals; documents relating to personal, family, or financial affairs of individuals; documents that contained information which could be used to harass living persons or relatives of recently deceased persons; information prejudicial to the national security; information prejudicial to foreign relations; communications addressed to the President in confidence, the immediate publication of which would result in discouraging confidential communications to the President in the future; documents that pertained to the President's personal, family, business, and financial affairs; security classified information; documents specifically restricted by the President; and politically sensitive information or documents. With these instructions Fry proceeded to set up, organize, and manage the Special Files. The first materials received by the new White House unit were the President's handwriting files and the files of the Staff Secretary. Fry and Fulton also began to review the Confidential Files in the White House Central Files, including the subject files and retired files of White House staff members, to determine which documents should be removed and placed in the Special Files. Furthermore, it was decided to continue the same arrangement scheme used by the White House Central Files unit rather than to devise a new filing system for Special Files materials. A cross-reference card was prepared for use by the White House Central Files unit to indicate the new location of
withdrawn items in Special Files. This practice, however, was not always done as time passed. It was the intention of the Special Files Unit that each senior White House staff member would send sensitive materials to Special Files for storage and exclusive retrieval by the staff member. In practice, however, Special Files did not receive sensitive materials from many top staff members. When staff members did resign their appointment or left the White House staff, the Special Files Unit received all their files and reviewed them for items that met the specified criteria for sensitivity and inclusion in Special Files. All nonsensitive materials were subsequently forwarded to the White House Central Files for general storage. If the Special Files Unit did not receive a large quantity of sensitive materials from a particular staff member, but only a few folders, these folders were placed in the file group known as Special Staff Files. Although Special Files was a development of the Nixon administration, it did not immediately end with the resignation of President Nixon on August 9, 1974. The Special Files Unit continued to operate for an additional eleven months by serving the needs of the Ford White House staff. On June 23, 1975, the Ford administration abolished Special Files, and all sensitive materials in its custody were transferred to the Confidential Files of the White House Central Files.

Scope and Content of Collection

During the course of its normal operations, the Special Files Unit selected and eventually received quantities of folders from some White House staff members that required special care and handling. The Special Files Unit created the file group, Special Staff Files, to accommodate those folders for which there were no other materials in the Special Files already attributed to a particular staff member. This file group consists of materials from 18 staff members. Primarily these files came from the White House Central Files Confidential Files and are cross-referenced in those files. When the Special Files were examined prior to archival review, the archivist determined that several folders attributed to a particular staff member should be transferred to existing large file groups in Special Files rather than be retained in the Special Staff Files. A record of the transfer appears in the folder title listing. The remaining folders, consisting of a single name series, were arranged alphabetically by surname of the White House Staff member. The materials are arranged into one series: Name Files. Material in the folders have little relationship to each other in general and represent a broad range of subjects. On the subject of foreign affairs and national defense policy, there are files of telegrams supporting the U.S. position in Vietnam, a study of classified documents relating to the crisis in the Dominican Republic, and material concerning the Pentagon Papers controversy. Several folders contain information about the activities of agencies, such as the Post Office and the General Services Administration. Two staff members were involved in explaining governmental support for Presidential properties, and the content of their folders reflect this activity. All of the files from Frank Herringer pertain to efforts by the Nixon Administration to stop or to contain improper disclosures of information or "leaks" from agencies or the White House staff to the press. There are also a few folders concerning the Watergate case as well as other political campaign activities, including scheduling and advance work. Some folders contain information on Presidential meetings with Congressman, the Domestic Council, Jewish leaders, and civic groups. The issues of desegregation and busing legislation appear in few folders. In April 1973 Tom Lias received two boxes of correspondence from George Bush, U.S. Representative to the United Nations, covering the period March 1971-December 1972. They were was turned over to the Special Files unit, classified IT64 International Organizations-United Nations, and placed in the Special Staff Files-Sensitive Files. These correspondence files consist primarily of original incoming letters, petitions, and resolutions from the general public; school classes; civic, cultural, religious, and ethnic organizations; city and state Councils and legislatures; and a few U.S. senators addressed to George Bush, Sr. These letters are attached to copies of his outgoing letters. The materials also include an entire box of USUN Classified Summary Cables, dating from March 1971 to January 1973. In addition, there are many newspaper clippings and magazine articles. A great variety of topics are covered in these materials with expressions of either support or condemnation of positions taken by George Bush as U.N. representative. Several letters show confusion about the power of the U.N. over U.S. policy, particularly in regard to Vietnam. There are numerous letters voicing concern over U.S. financial and economic support of Communist regimes through U.N. organizations such as UNICEF. An increasing number of letters show concern over the growth of acts of terrorism such as the killing of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics, the attack at the Lod airport, and the fighting in Northern Ireland. Numerous letters pertain to the plight of Soviet Jews. International conflicts such as the Bangladesh-Pakistan war and the Israeli invasion of Lebanon caused citizens and organizations to write to Representative Bush to express their concern or to demand action. Several letters comment on the treatment of blacks and the government of South Africa, the treatment of individuals of other ethnic origins by Gen. Idi Amin of Uganda, and the treatment of Puerto Rico by the U.S. A sizeable portion of correspondence deal with the seating of the People's Republic of China and the removal of Nationalist China from the U.N. The Staff Member and Office Files of the White House Central Files contain additional materials for the following individual: William Rhatican.

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