

From the National Archives  
CREST

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CREST (CIA REcords Search Tool) is the name of the CIA database of declassified intelligence documents. The CREST system contains records released electronically by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA, known until November 2003 as NIMA, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency) under their 25-year review programs.

CREST contains the CIA and NGA records that have been declassified wholly or in part under the systematic and automatic declassification review programs mandated by a series of executive orders in the past decade. The records are released into CREST once annually and now total 8.5 million pages. At least another 50 million pages await release under the 25-year declassification rule. The date range of these records is from World War II into the 1980s, but most are from 1947-72.

The records in CREST are subdivided into six collections. The Consolidated Translations collection contains translated reports of foreign-language technical articles of intelligence value. Each document covers a single subject. The General CIA Records collection has records that are 25 years old or older. They include a variety of finished intelligence reports, field information reports, high-level CIA policy papers and memoranda, along with other documents produced by the CIA. The Ground Photo Caption Cards collection has cards used to identify NGA ground photographs. The master negatives of the photographs have been accessioned separately to the National Archives. The cards should be used to identify negatives that researchers want to request. The NGA Records collection has NGA records that are at least 25 years old, and are mostly photographic intelligence reports. The Scientific Abstracts collection has abstracts of foreign scientific and technical journal articles, with a special emphasis on Soviet and Warsaw Pact nations' scientific research. The STAR GATE collection includes the records of a 25-year Intelligence Community project to use remote viewers with claimed clairvoyant or telepathic abilities to study targets blocked from ordinary surveillance methods.

The nature of the materials in CREST varies considerably, but includes large numbers of administrative records, intelligence reports from the CIA and other agencies, National Photographic Interpretation Center reports, and a wide range of memos and correspondence from selected offices. There are large numbers of documents from the Intelligence Advisory Committee (1947-1958) and its successor agency, including organizational records, agenda, minutes, and other records. What researchers will *not*

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find in CREST are CIA Directorate of Plans/Operations records, budget or personnel numbers, official histories, biography or name files beyond a few released under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, and signals and photographic intelligence.

The CIA has provided four computers with printers and paper for CREST users. CREST has the virtue of being very easy to use, with many search options, including by keyword. It contains the largest release of documents in CIA history, many in areas where heretofore there have been few or no releases.

The CREST database is available to researchers in Room 3000 of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration building (Archives II) located at 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001 (tel.: 1-86-NARA-NARA or 1-866-272-6272 ).