



# The Digital National Security Archive A Case Study



## D.J. Kinney

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For D.J. Kinney, a PhD candidate in the Department of History, Florida State University, access to DNSA provided essential information for his article *"The Otters of Amchitka: Alaskan Nuclear Testing and the Birth of the Environmental Movement"*, published in *The Polar Journal*, volume 2, issue 2, 2012.

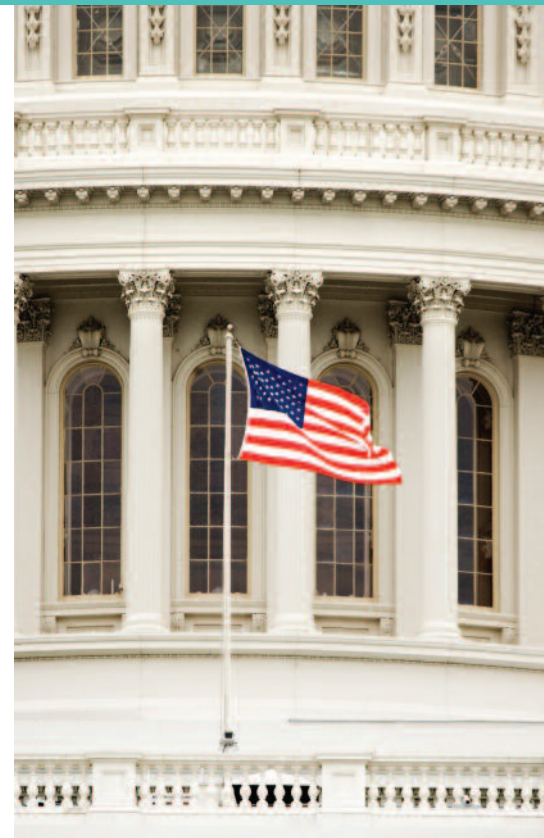
The online version of the National Security Archive collection, *The Digital National Security Archive (DNSA)* from ProQuest, is expertly compiled from the documents on file at the National Security Archive in Washington DC. An independent non-profit research organization, the Archive exists to open the secret government files most important for historical research, accountability, and current policy debates; and to provide context and access to previously unavailable sources about how the United States has formulated its foreign policy and affected global relations.

Kinney specializes in the history of science and technology during the Cold War, and the investigation of the relationships between science, policy, and politics is a key element of his research. This includes, but is not limited to, environmental sciences, the military applications of science, and nuclear armaments and issues. "The documents in the *DNSA* really illuminated the mentality of high ranking government officials in a critical period of nuclear testing tension," he says. "The standard story has always been that the nuclear tests in Amchitka, Alaska, were not dissuaded by the protests of 1970 and 1971, and that the U.S. government did not connect the environmental movement with the anti-nuclear movement. But in reality, as the *DNSA* shows, Kissinger and Nixon were engaged in private conversations that clearly show that they were aware that these were environmental protests rather than simply anti-nuclear. In short, the *DNSA* shows that there is an important additional catalyst for the environmental movement that no-one

has really looked at before. Without these primary source documents, the arguments would make sense, but have no historical underpinnings. The collection is really invaluable."

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Searching the *DNSA* can unlock the hidden relationships between documents and even subject areas and time periods, providing a new perspective on historical issues. Kinney clearly relishes having such a powerful tool at his disposal: "While the documents are available in Presidential collections or other archives, it would be prohibitively expensive and time consuming to gather them. What is more important about *DNSA* is that a savvy researcher who has the ability to think about phrases and wording that might be peripheral to the main idea can



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**TOP SECRET**

October 27, 1950

DENT:

The Secretary of Defense recommended that you suspend an underground atomic test, recommendations as to be made at a later date. On June 28, you approved, in principle, the conduct of an atomic test subject to approval of a specific follow-up report by the Special Committee of the Commission on Atomic Energy reviews the need for such further recommends conducting an atomic test which needs a site and time for both tests.

use the very effective search engine to pull up documents that an archivist might not even have realized are connected to the subject."

With *"The Otters of Amchitka: Alaskan Nuclear Testing and the Birth of the Environmental Movement"* now published, Kinney is using the *DNSA* to create a framework for a larger book

project on civil defense and continuity of government in an era of mutually assured nuclear destruction: *Civil Defense and Survival in the Cold War*.

*"DNSA allows a quick cross-reference that immediately makes this connection clear."*

Additionally, the ability to cross-search documents in *DNSA* speeds up research that might otherwise take months. Kinney further noted: "An archivist might be able to pull up the thousands of records in the Nixon Library that deal with the environment or environmentalism, but might not realize that *Amchitka Nuclear Testing* also talks about the environmental movement, even though it is housed in a folder dealing with the anti-ballistic missile defense. *DNSA* allows a quick cross-reference that immediately makes this connection clear."

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## About The Digital National Security Archive

The *Digital National Security Archive* provides authoritative access to the original documents – most of them formerly classified and previously unavailable – that underlie the crucial decisions facing presidents from Harry Truman to Barack Obama. Researchers can directly access the documents that shaped responses to crucial issues of the second half of the 20th century right up to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and beyond.

*DNSA* now provides access to more than 95,000 declassified records. Boards of experts, including former and current policymakers, scholars, and journalists guide the acquisition of the Archive's documents. Filing hundreds of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for the key documents used by decision-makers ensures access to the most recent and comprehensive U.S. government releases of documents.

The interface and enhanced functionality of *DNSA* are uniquely tailored for conducting in-depth research and viewing

the documents that shaped U.S. history. Topical collections compiled by National Security Archive subject experts contain records pertinent to a defining event or policy issue. Librarians on-staff at the Archive then catalog, abstract, and index all documents, based on an in-house authority file accumulated over 20+ years with more than 56,000 verified names, organizations, and subject terms.

### Enhanced functionality for fast, efficient research:

- Quick Search across all content.
- My Archive – a user-created workspace to save records and searches between sessions.
- Marked List – email, print, or download directly from a marked list.
- Keyword highlighting displays in the full records.
- Durable URLs for bookmarking content.
- Exporting into citation software managers.
- Enhanced Help information.
- Search History.

## Content and Context

In addition to invaluable primary source documents the *DNSA* also includes detailed research aids. Scholarly essays, photographs, glossaries, chronologies, and bibliographies, prepared by on-staff intelligence and foreign policy experts, provide valuable context and background information for use by students, teachers, and researchers.



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