



Office of the Chief
Records Officer for the
U.S. Government

Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.

October 26, 2022

Tonia Austin-Douglas
Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard
Attn: Records Manager
US Coast Guard Stop 7710
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20593-7710

Dear Tonia Austin-Douglas,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has received an allegation of unauthorized disposition from a private citizen. On December 30, 2020, this individual submitted a Freedom of Information Act request (FOIA 2021-CFO-00623) requesting all email and Skype conversations to/from a US Coast Guard employee that contained variations of the requestor's name. The USCG issued their final response on June 29, 2022, where emails were provided in response to the FOIA, but no Skype messages. On July 4, 2022, the requestor submitted an appeal asking for any Skype messages (Appeal 2022-CGAP-00051). The USCG response to the appeal letter (dated September 26, 2022) stated that "no additional responsive records could be located." However, this appeal response also stated, "In 2021, the USCG migrated messages to DoD 365. During the migration, each user's data was transferred to the cloud. In some instances, the data transfer did not make the target to DoD 365 and information is lost and not recoverable. If any Skype messages existed and were part of....data file, they did not make their final destination to the tenant."

In accordance with 36 CFR 1230.14(a), USCG must investigate this matter and provide NARA with the required report regarding this allegation of unauthorized disposition. If you determine that records have been lost or deleted without proper disposition authority, your report should include a complete description of the records with volume and dates if known; a description of the office maintaining the records; a statement of the exact circumstances surrounding the removal, defacing, alteration, or destruction of records; a statement of the safeguards established to prevent further loss of documentation; and details of the actions taken to salvage, retrieve, or reconstruct the records.

I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence R. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

LAURENCE BREWER
Chief Records Officer
for the U.S. Government

cc. Michelle Thomas, Department Records Officer, Department of Homeland Security



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January 30, 2023

Tonia Austin-Douglas
Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard
Attn: Records Manager
US Coast Guard Stop 7710
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20593-7710

Dear Tonia Austin-Douglas,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has received your agency's report regarding an allegation of unauthorized disposition from a private citizen. This allegation was based on a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request that was sent to the United States Coast Guard (USCG) on December 30, 2020 (FOIA 2021-CFO-00623), requesting all email and Skype conversations to/from a USCG employee that contained variations of the requestor's name. Initially, the USCG responded that they had no responsive Skype records after which the requestor submitted an appeal. In the USCG response to the FOIA appeal, (dated September 26, 2022), USCG stated that "no additional responsive records could be located" and "In 2021, the USCG migrated messages to DoD 365. During the migration, each user's data was transferred to the cloud. In some instances, the data transfer did not make the target to DoD 365 and information is lost and not recoverable. If any Skype messages existed and were part of....data file, they did not make their final destination to the tenant."

We understand that the USCG identified other areas of the USCG that had retained additional Skype records, conducted further searches of Skype messages saved by the USCG and no responsive records to this FOIA request were located. We further understand that in order to mitigate risks that this might recur, the USCG has implemented the following action items:

- Skype records from 2008 and 2022 have been transferred to ensure consistent, centralized, search practices are followed.

- Expanding stakeholder engagement with USCG offices to ensure comprehensive searches are completed.
- Explore additional records search tools, procedures, and training to continuously improve USCG capacity and proficiency with records searches.

Based on the information USCG provided, NARA considers this matter resolved. I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence R. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

LAURENCE BREWER
Chief Records Officer
for the U.S. Government

cc. Michelle Thomas, Department Records Officer, Department of Homeland Security