

February 11, 2020

Monsieur Le Président de la République Emmanuel Macron  
Palais de l'Élysée,  
55 rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré  
75008 Paris, FRANCE

Monsieur Le Ministre de la Culture Franck Riester  
Ministère de la Culture  
182 rue Saint-Honoré  
75001 Paris, FRANCE

Madame le Ministre des Armées Florence Parly  
Ministère des Armées  
14 rue Saint-Dominique  
75007 Paris, FRANCE

Dear President Macron, Minister Riester, and Minister Parly:

The American Historical Association is deeply concerned by the recent change in policy, established by the Secrétariat général de la défense et de la sécurité nationale (SGDSN), regarding the declassification of documents from 1940 to present. That includes all those held at Vincennes and possibly in other repositories in France, including various branches of the Archives Nationales.

Scholars around the world depend on access to these invaluable documents for understanding both the history of France in the twentieth century and the history of major international conflicts ranging from the Second World War to the Algerian War. We are alarmed to hear that, since this rules change went into effect this past month, historians working at Vincennes are finding that many documents essential to their work have been rendered practically inaccessible and that they will remain so for an undetermined time since an effective procedure for declassification has not yet been put in place. That number includes many documents that have previously been open and accessible to scholars, students, and the general public.

The American Historical Association includes approximately 12,000 members across the world and promotes historical thinking, the work of historians, and respect for the integrity of historical scholarship. Some of our members have worked in the Vincennes archive, and have published work based on that research in our journal, *The American Historical Review*. Their work has enriched not only historical scholarship but also public understanding of nearly a century of French history.

We request that the SGDSN 1) state as soon as possible a clear policy for declassifying all documents held at Vincennes and 2) institute as brief a timeline for this work as is possible, so that the French government is not in the position of restricting or hampering vital historical research on topics of ongoing public importance around the world.

Sincerely,



Mary Lindemann  
President, American Historical Association