



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

Sent Via Email. No Hard Copy to Follow.

March 1, 2021

Stephen McGinley
Agency Records Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media
300 Independence AVE SW
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Mr. McGinley,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) received a letter from the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) acting Chief Executive Officer, Kelu Chao, on February 25, 2021 notifying NARA of an allegation of unauthorized disposition. Per the letter, during the course of an Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigation into allegations of whistleblower retaliation, the OIG found evidence that a former senior official requested that employees communicate using Signal, a mobile messaging application, installed on personal devices. The OIG was informed by USAGM employees that communication on Signal regarded substantive agency matters. Additionally, the settings on the application were adjusted so messages that were sent and received would disappear after one week.

In accordance with 36 CFR 1230.16(b), you must submit a response to NARA within 30 business days and provide us with a report documenting the loss of these records. This report must include a description of the records, documentation of the office maintaining the records, a statement of the exact circumstances surrounding the removal and destruction of these records, established safeguards established to prevent further loss of records, and documentation of any actions taken to reconstruct or retrieve these records.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

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

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

cc. Jeffrey McDermott, Assistant Inspector General, OIG, Department of State
Kalu Chao, Acting Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Agency for Global Media



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April 8, 2021

Stephen McGinley
Agency Records Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media
300 Independence AVE SW
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Mr. McGinley,

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) received your report in response to our letter dated March 1, 2021, that opened an allegation of unauthorized disposition based on evidence that a former senior official requested that employees communicate using the mobile messaging application, Signal, on personal devices and that the settings on this application were adjusted so messages would disappear after one week. This evidence was discovered during a recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) whistleblower retaliation investigation.

In your report, you detailed the efforts taken by USAGM in order to recover as many of these texts as possible by meeting with employees and having them save all the messages they had and move them to USAGM systems in order to preserve them. Additionally, the report discussed mandatory training that USAGM rolled out for all employees and a communication to all employees to remind them of the policies and procedures, in particular the prohibition against using unauthorized accounts and applications.

Based on the information that USAGM provided in their report, NARA considers this allegation resolved. Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact me at laurence.brewer@nara.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurence v. Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L' and a distinct 'v.' before the last name.

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

cc. Jeffrey McDermott, Assistant Inspector General, OIG, Department of State
Kalu Chao, Acting Chief Executive Officer, U.S. Agency for Global Media