



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Index to Ground Photography Master Negatives Files, ca. 1999 - 2000 Record Group 263

Updated May 29, 2020

1. What information is found in the Index File?
2. What are the photographs that are described in the Index File?
3. How can I access a specific photograph cited in the Index File?
4. How can I access the caption information on a specific photograph?
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6. How can I access a copy of the full file?

1. What information is found in the Index File?

The Index File contains item level identification and descriptive data for the 761,983 black-and-white negatives in the series "Ground Photography Master Files, 1947 - 2000" (National Archives Identifier 608894). Information for this series is organized in seven fields: National Archives and Records Administration Box Number, agency-assigned image serial number, country or region name, year, copyright indicator, original job number, and original box number.

2. What are the photographs that are described in the Index File?

The Index File describes 761,984 photographs from the Ground Photography Master Files (National Archives Identifier 608894) that are in the custody of the Still Pictures Division of the National Archives.

The Central Intelligence Agency used these photographs in conjunction with aerial imagery for intelligence gathering and analysis activities. This series consists of black-and-white photographs that were acquired by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) from various sources, including government employees and U. S. citizens traveling abroad. Images were also photographically copied by the CIA from both U.S. and foreign books and popular magazines.

Captions on the photographs, which are photographically printed on most images, provide the subjects of the photographs, dates, former security classifications, references to copyright, and the sources of the photograph.

3. How can I access a specific photograph cited in the Index File?

Upon locating a photograph citation in the Index File, you may contact the Still Pictures Division

NATIONAL ARCHIVES *and*
RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

8601 ADELPHI ROAD
COLLEGE PARK, MD 20740-6001

www.archives.gov

for access to the photograph. The Still Pictures Division may be reached at:
National Archives at College Park - Still Pictures (RRSS)
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001
Phone: 301-837-0561
Email: stillpix@nara.gov

Photographs may be located by citing the NARA Box Number, Image Serial Number, Country, and Year.

4. How can I access the caption information on a specific photograph?

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) makes available online, the CREST (CIA Records Search Tool) system, which allows researchers to access caption information contained on the photographs. As of July 2018, CREST may be accessed at <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/collection/crest-25-year-program-archive>. Search under “Ground Photo Caption Cards” within the Collection list.

In addition to the Image Serial Number, Country, and Year, the majority, if not all, of the photographs also contain an “R-Number” that will facilitate searching, but it is not necessary to use CREST. You may also contact the Still Pictures Division to receive the “R-Number” for any given photograph to assist you in searching CREST.

5. What is the date range covered by the photographs?

The index covers negatives of images that date back at least to 1906, although primarily it covers the date range of 1930 - 1980. Many negatives are dated 1900. According to agency documentation, the date 1900 was used to represent any unknown date. Although the coverage dates span 1900 - 1981, the agency did not begin to create this index until approximately 1999.

6. How can I access a copy of the full file?

The raw data file, along with the associated technical documentation, may be downloaded from the National Archives Catalog at: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. There you can search by the series name, Index to Ground Photography Master Negatives Files, or using the National Archives Identifier 2386676, which is the description identifier for this series.

In the results, select to view the full series description. Click on the link “file unit(s) described in the catalog” next to “Includes:” for a list of the file units within this series. Then select the file unit containing the records of interest to you. The file unit description will include the list of electronic records and documentation files available for viewing and/or downloading.

Additional information about downloading electronic records from the Catalog is available at: <https://www.archives.gov/research/electronic-records/access-in-catalog-faqs>.

Please keep in mind that the data file consists of the raw structured data as loaded into AAD (i.e. the coded values without meanings), but without the AAD software that displays the meanings for coded values and field titles. For more details about using files containing raw structured data, you may wish to review our "Introduction to Raw Data" at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/electronic-records/raw-data-intro.pdf>.