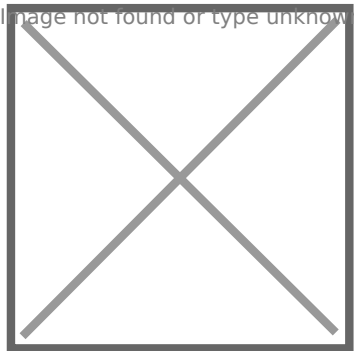


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United States Information Agency (USIA): Records, 1981-1989

Finding Aid Type

Federal Records

Disclaimer

This collection is available for research use. You may access this collection in our research room.

Collection Date

1981-1989

Extent

0.2 l.ft.

Record Type

Textual

Processed by

Library Staff

Biography

Agency Description

The United States Information Agency (USIA) was a United States government agency devoted to propaganda which operated from 1953 to 1999. The agency's primary mission was to promote a favorable view of the United States abroad, focusing nearly exclusively on international audiences.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower established the United States Information Agency on August 1, 1953, during the height of Cold War tensions. The USIA's mission was "to understand, inform and influence foreign publics in promotion of the national interest, and to broaden the dialogue between Americans and U.S. institutions and their counterparts abroad." The USIA was established "to streamline the U.S. government's overseas information programs and make them more effective. The agency regularly conducted research on foreign public opinion about the United States and its policies to inform the president and other key policymakers. It conducted public opinion surveys throughout the world. It issued a variety of reports to government officials, including a twice-daily report on foreign media commentary around the world.

In 1978, USIA was merged with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the Department of State into a new agency called the United States International Communications Agency (USICA). Use of the name United States Information Agency (USIA) was restored in 1982. At this time, the USIA was the largest full-service public relations organization in the world, spending over \$2 billion per year to highlight the views of the U.S. while diminishing those of the Soviet Union, through about 150 countries.

USIA was widely known for broadcasting information, cultural exchanges, press services, and a motion picture service. USIA ran the well-known Voice of America (VOA)/Radio Free Europe (RFE) radio broadcasting network. VOA broadcasted widely in at least 40 languages and with 35 million listeners. The VOA was used to "tell America's stories ... to information deprived listeners behind the Iron Curtain."

USIA was involved with international cultural and educational exchanges (including the Fulbright Scholarship Program and high school exchange students). USIA would

mount exhibitions in its libraries overseas to reach people in other countries. The USIA published sixty-six magazines, newspapers, and other periodicals, totaling almost 30 million copies annually, in twenty-eight languages. USIA failed to create a collaborative film effort with Hollywood filmmakers, so they began producing their own documentaries.

Starting in the Reagan Administration under Director Charles Wick, the USIA's educational and informational activities started to expand to include *The Washington File* information service regarding the workings of the federal government; a Speakers and Specialists Program, sending Americans abroad for various public speaking and technical assistance roles; operating foreign press centers in the United States; creating Information Resource Centers abroad and supporting the creation and expansion of Worldnet cable and satellite services for video broadcasting.

Beginning with the 1958 Brussels World Fair, the USIA directed the design, construction, and operation of the U.S. pavilions representing the United States at major world Expos.

With the ending of the Cold War, the need for a separate U.S. propaganda agency became less relevant. The Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998, enacted October 21, 1998, abolished the U.S. Information Agency effective October 1, 1999. Its information and cultural exchange functions were folded into the Department of State under the newly created Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

Scope and Content Note

This collection consists of material obtained by the Library through an unsolicited donation. The material consists of two briefing books for President Reagan's spring 1984 trip to the People's Republic of China. Both briefing books were in binders.

The first binder was a Department of State/White House briefing book for the press accompanying the President on his trip. The second book was issued by the Coordinating Group for Public Diplomacy. This group was established by the National Security Council consisting of public affairs officers from multiple agencies and White House personnel to create a public affairs plan for the China trip.

Both of these binders were the working documents of George F. Beasley, China Officer at USICA/USIA. Mr. Beasley's annotations and notes can be found within the second binder - President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book. The Library has very little information about Mr. Beasley, other than he was an African-American who spoke fluent Chinese. He was long-time diplomat with the State Department who served for a short time in the mid-1980s at USIA. We found a posting for him as the Public Affairs officer at the American embassy in Sweden immediately after his time with USIA. The donor of this material had no relationship with Beasley.

The folders contain material regarding the issues and policies expected from Reagan's trip to China; schedules; press participants; background information and maps on China and the cities visited; policy papers and speeches establishing U.S. policy towards China; information on the Chinese language and how to read simple Chinese symbols; and biographies of the members of the delegation to China and the Chinese participants. The President also stopped in Alaska on the return trip and met with John Paul II. Notes and biographies are included for this meeting.

Last Modified Date

2025-09-26

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Status	Title
OPEN	The Trip of President Reagan to the People's Republic of China, 04/26/1984-05/01/1984: Press Briefing Book (1)
OPEN	The Trip of President Reagan to the People's Republic of China, 04/26/1984-05/01/1984: Press Briefing Book (2)
OPEN	The Trip of President Reagan to the People's Republic of China, 04/26/1984-05/01/1984: Press Briefing Book (3)
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (1)
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (2)
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (3)

Status	Title
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (4)
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (5)
OPEN	President's China Trip 1984 Public Affairs Guidance and Background: Briefing Book (6)