

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE
LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 665
TO BE ANSWERED ON 04TH FEBRUARY, 2022

PUBLICATION OF OFFICIAL WAR HISTORIES

665. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE
be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the History Division of the Ministry has constituted or proposes to have a panel of bureaucrats for drafting and publishing official war histories from the vetted declassified records in five years' time;
- (b) if so, whether officials can create the 'authoritative compilations' that may mould public understanding of historical events and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the panel is required to have prominent military historians on it, whose domain proficiency will ensure more authoritative accounts and if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) the details of the new policy on declassifying, compiling, publishing, and archiving war records including the significant declassification procedure from the Public Record Rules, 1997;
- (e) whether the defence organizations will implement an automated uniform system to categorize, preserve and declassify war records every five years till they are declassified in their 25th year; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

A N S W E R

MINISTER OF STATE
IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

(SHRI AJAY BHATT)

(a) to (c): The policy on 'Procedure for Archiving, Declassification and Compilation / Publication of War / Operations Histories' promulgated in June, 2021 lays down provision for a Committee to facilitate the compilation of war /operations histories. Further, it also makes a provision for inclusion of a prominent military historian in the Committee on need basis.

...2/-

: 2 :

(d): A copy of 'Government of India Policy on Procedure for Archiving, Declassification and Compilation / Publication of War / Operations Histories' is placed at **Annexure**.

(e) & (f): The responsibility for declassification of classified records rests with the originators of the records or Record Creating Agencies, as specified in the Public Record Act 1993 and Public Record Rules 1997, as amended from time to time. For the purpose of this policy, the time period within which records should ordinarily be declassified is 25 years.

ANNEXURE REFERRED TO IN PART (d) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.665 TO BE ANSWERED ON 04.02.2022 REGARDING 'PUBLICATION OF OFFICIAL WAR HISTORIES';

F.No. IDS/43019/I/TRADOC/T&P/WH(PC-I)/1803/D(GS-II)

Ministry of Defence

D(GS-II)

Room No.112,Sena Bhawan
New Delhi-110011.

Dated 17th June, 2021

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject : Policy on Archiving, Declassification & Compilation of War/Operations Histories-reg.

The undersigned is directed to convey the approval of Hon'ble RakshaMantri on the policy of archiving, declassification and compilation/publication of war/operations histories by the Ministry of Defence. The approved policy containing details such as Archiving, Declassification, Compilation/Publication of War/Operation Histories, Coordination, Composition of Committee, Timeline for Compilation/Publication of War/Operations Histories is enclosed herewith.

2. The responsibility for declassification of records rests with the respective organisations as specified in the Public Record Act 1993 and Public Record Rules 1997, as amended from time to time. According to the policy, records should ordinarily be declassified in 25 years. Records older than 25 years should be appraised by archival experts and transferred to the National Archives of India once the war/operations histories have been compiled.

3. The History Division will be responsible for coordination with various departments while compiling, seeking approval and publishing of war/operations histories. The policy mandates constitution of a committee headed by Joint Secretary, MoD and comprising of representatives of the Services, MEA, MHA and other organisations and prominent military historians (if required), for compilation of war/ operations histories.

4. The policy also set clear timelines with regard to compilation and publication of war/operations histories. The above-mentioned Committee should be formed within two years of completion of war/operations. Thereafter, collection of records and compilation should be completed in three years and disseminated to all concerned.

...2/-

: 2 :

5. The approved policy in this regard is circulated herewith to all the stakeholders for information and further necessary action.

Sd/-

(Raghunandan Singh)

Under Secretary to the Govt. of India

Tel. 23012938

Email :-raghunandan.singh@nic.in

Encl. As above.

To

1. Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs
2. Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs
3. MA to Chief of Army Staff
4. MA to Chief of Air Staff
5. NA to Chief of Naval Staff
6. DG, Assam Rifles
7. DG, Coast Guard
8. DG, National Archives of India
9. Director History Division
10. HQ IDS

...3/-

Government of India Policy on Procedure for Archiving, Declassification and Compilation
/ Publication of War / Operations Histories by Ministry of Defence

Archiving

1. (a) History Division, Ministry of Defence and concerned Ministerial/Departmental record rooms will be responsible for Archiving of historical/Operational/War Records of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces.

(b) Ministry of Defence, Services Headquarters, Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, Assam Rifles, Headquarters Coast Guard or any organization raised under Ministry of Defence, Government of India in future, (referred to as 'Record Creating Agencies' hereinafter), will transfer the Historical/Operational/War Records including War Diaries/Letters of Proceeding/Operational Record Books as well as make available all other records pertaining to training, manpower, procurement, etc., to History Division (Ministry of Defence), through respective History Cell/Division/ nominated branch/directorate of Services HQs for writing the histories and proper upkeep. The concerned Services Headquarters/other Record Creating Agencies may retain certain classified documents till such time it is felt that the contents may endanger national security. The records will be forwarded both in hard and soft copies. The soft copies are to be in un-editable format like pdf, etc., or submitted as scanned copies. All record Creating Agencies are to maintain a branch-wise catalogue of records earmarked for preservation and send a copy of the same to the respective ministerial/service record room/historical sections. Nil returns are unacceptable.

Declassification

2. The responsibility for declassification of classified records rests with the originators of the records or Record Creating Agencies as specified in the Public Record Act 1993 and Public Record Rules 1997, as amended from time to time. For the purpose of this policy the time period within which records should ordinarily be declassified is 25 years. Keeping records classified for longer period can be an exception rather than a rule and each record so retained must be accompanied by detailed justification giving reasons for withholding it. Records older than 25 years must be appraised by archival experts and transferred to the National Archives of India once the war/ Operations histories have been compiled.

Compilation/Publication of War/Operations Histories

3. History Division, Ministry of Defence is responsible for compiling and publishing War/Operations Histories. If outsourced to an external agency/Eminent Historian(s), Director, History Division, Ministry of Defence, will be the Member Secretary.

Coordination

4. History Division, Ministry of Defence will be responsible for coordination with various Ministries/Departments while compiling, seeking approval and publishing of War/Operations Histories.

Composition of Committee

5. (i) The composition of the Committee for compilation of War/Operations Histories is as follows:-

- | | | | |
|-----|--|---|------------------|
| (a) | Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence
(in charge of History Division) | - | Chairman |
| (b) | Director, History Division (Ministry of Defence)/
or Eminent Historian(s), if outsourced | - | Chief Editor |
| (c) | Serving representatives of all Services HQs | - | Members |
| (d) | Representatives of Ministry of External
Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)
and other agencies (as required) | - | Members |
| (e) | Prominent Military Historian(s) (if required) | - | Members |
| (f) | Director, History Division, Ministry of Defence
(when compilation of history outsourced) | - | Member Secretary |

Official Secrets Act – 1923

6. All nominated members in the Committee will be governed by the Official Secrets Act-1923.

War/Operations Histories

7. A compiled War/Operations History based on classified records would bear the appropriate security classification 'Secret or lower classification'. Once finalised, a copy of said History would be forwarded to all stakeholders in order to draw relevant lessons. The history should be declassified as early as possible and not later than 25 years from the date of compilation.

Timeline for Compilation/Publication of War/Operations Histories

8. The timeline for compilation and publication of War/Operations Histories would be as follows :-

<u>Compilation/Publication of War/Operations Histories</u>		
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Formation of Committee for compiling War/Operations History, and if outsourced, appointment of Chief Editor	2** Yrs (0-2 Yrs)	- Within 02 years of completion of War/Operations/Military Campaign/Cessation of Hostilities
Compilation of War/Operations History	3** Yrs (2-5 Yrs)	- Collection of historical/Operational and relevant non-operational/War Records including interviews of participants and stake holders, etc. - Compilation of War/Operations History. - Vetting of War/Operations History by all stakeholders and other agencies concerned. - Incorporation of suggested changes, editing, and finalization of War/Operations History.
Approval and Dissemination of Compiled War/Operations history	1 Year	- One copy of compiled War/Operations History to be forwarded to all stakeholders by History Division (for official use).

: 6 :

Declassification	Review every 3 years/ declassification not later than 25 years	- Review for declassification of the compiled War/Operations History by stakeholders and agencies concerned.
Publishing of War/Operations History	1 Year	- Clearance for publication by Services HQs. - Publishing of War/Operations History by History Division, Ministry of Defence (within 1 year of clearance)

** In case of unavoidable circumstances, appointment of Chief Editor/Formation of Committee for Compiling War/Operations History may be deferred by two more years on the request from Services HQs/HQs IDS. This would result in delay in all the timelines by two years.
