



## **Report to Congress on The Foreign Relations of the United States Historical Series for 2025 22 U.S.C. § 4354(e)**

### **I. Executive Summary**

The Department of State remains committed to meeting its statutory requirement to publish the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) series in accordance with 22 U.S.C. 4354(e). In keeping with President Donald J. Trump’s emphasis on government transparency and efficiency, in 2025 the Department released its first FRUS volume documenting the foreign policy and diplomacy of President George H.W. Bush; modernized production processes and introduced policies that enabled publication of three FRUS releases; and saw a 54 percent increase in visits to its website, which hosts FRUS publications. Despite these gains, meeting the 30-year publication timeline continues to be a challenge. Although the Department has made progress working with its interagency declassification partners, the slow pace of interagency declassification reviews remains the largest single obstacle to timely FRUS publication. Our staff spent an estimated 35 hours on the preparation and clearance of this report.

### **II. Background**

Public Law 102-138 (105 Stat. 647, codified in relevant part at 22 U.S.C. § 4351 et seq.), enacted in 1991 and amended in 2022, directs the Office of the Historian (OH) within the Bureau of Administration to publish a “thorough, accurate, and reliable documentary record of major United States foreign policy decisions and significant United States diplomatic activity” using documentation from across the national security establishment. FRUS enables all Americans to learn the history of U.S. foreign policy and the actions taken by past presidential administrations. The series builds and maintains confidence in our public institutions and is a highly visible manifestation of the U.S. Government’s commitment to transparency and accountability.

The Office of the Historian’s award-winning website, [history.state.gov](https://history.state.gov), makes the more than 550 published FRUS volumes – containing over 300,000 documents – readily available to the public, complete with advanced search capabilities and downloadable e-book editions of every volume. In 2025, 20 million users visited the website, a 54 percent increase over 2024 that represents a significant rise in the website’s reach and engagement. It is consistently among the Department's top-five public engagement websites and is a trusted public-facing resource for declassified official U.S. Government records.

### III. Foreign Relations of the United States Publications Released in 2025

2025 was a landmark year for FRUS publication. The Department released the first of 33 planned volumes documenting the foreign policy and diplomacy of President George H.W. Bush. OH also introduced a new approach to publishing that enables the Department to provide the American people access to historically significant documents more quickly: releasing individual chapters of a volume as they are cleared for publication. This approach prevents any single chapter – or document – from needlessly delaying the publication of an entire volume, enabling faster public access to important historical records that otherwise would be inaccessible.

#### Volumes Published:

1. **National Security Policy, Part 1, 1985–1988**: This volume covers the Ronald W. Reagan administration’s efforts to modernize U.S. strategic forces, identify Soviet compliance and noncompliance with existing arms control agreements, and pursue the Strategic Defense Initiative, which President Reagan announced in March 1983 and subsequently made a central objective of his presidency.
2. **START I, 1989–1991**: This volume documents the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) I agreement, which President George H.W. Bush and Soviet Union General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev signed on July 31, 1991. Documentation covers key moments in both the high-level and working-level negotiations – including the frenetic “endgame” after President Bush declared his intention to travel to Moscow to meet with Gorbachev to finalize and sign the START I treaty in the summer of 1991 – set against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War and a growing crisis in the Persian Gulf.

## Chapters Published:

1. **Western Europe, 1977–1980: Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, and Nordic Countries Chapters**: This volume documents U.S.-West European relations during the administration of President Jimmy Carter. The Canada chapter focuses on themes such as U.S.-Canadian economic relations, energy and environmental issues, Cold War defense policy, and Canadian unity. The Federal Republic of Germany chapter covers the administration's policies toward West Germany, including economic issues and topics such as relations with the Soviet Union and nuclear strategy. The Nordic Countries chapter documents U.S. relations with Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, with emphasis on East-West security issues, strategic arms control, energy, and bilateral concerns. The remaining six chapters in the volume will be published as they are cleared for publication.

## IV. Factors Affecting Publication at 30 Years

Declassification remains the single greatest factor impeding publication at the 30-year mark as the FRUS statute requires. Production of the 46 volumes currently undergoing declassification review – 25 of which have been in the declassification process for five years or more – has been slowed by factors such as interagency reviews that exceed the statutory 120-day completion timeline; the backlog of declassification referrals concerning historically significant covert actions; the treatment of Formerly Restricted Data information; and outdated analog review processes. This past year, the Department has made progress on the acknowledgement of historical covert actions and in improving processes with the Department of Defense (DoD). The Department will continue to work with its interagency partners on addressing these challenges.

1. Progress on Acknowledgement of Historical Covert Actions

In 2016, the longstanding process to acknowledge historically significant covert actions in FRUS effectively halted, stalling the declassification of multiple FRUS volumes spanning several presidential administrations. In 2025, with the support of the National Security Council (NSC), the Department piloted a new process that resulted in NSC acknowledgement of seven historically significant covert actions. At NSC's direction, agencies then started the declassification review of those records pertaining to the historical covert actions, leading to positive progress for these long-stalled volumes.

The Department aims to build on this progress to reduce the backlog of the affected volumes in 2026.

## 2. Interagency Partner Declassification Reviews

Many declassification reviews continue to take too long – often a decade or more – to complete. Factors contributing to this are many. Declassification review professionals throughout the national security establishment continue to work diligently. However, declassification reviewers at all agencies face competing priorities (including ever-increasing volume of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and related litigation, and special discretionary declassification projects), meaning FRUS declassification reviews are deprioritized despite the agencies’ statutory obligations. Moreover, declassification of FRUS volumes requires considerable investment to identify what has been previously declassified and released, along with agency guidance on what can be safely declassified, to provide the most transparent reviews. Inefficient processes and outdated guidance result in delays and overly protective reviews that require appeal. Such factors significantly hinder the Department’s efforts to comply with the statutory requirement to publish at 30 years.

Process reforms initiated by OH in 2024 resulted in improvements in the quality and timeliness of DoD declassification review decisions in 2025. Quarterly meetings with the DoD review team helped establish review priorities and provided a forum to resolve OH concerns with initial DoD declassification determinations. In addition, OH provided detailed justifications in support of the release of additional information which resulted in reduced redactions and fewer appeals.

Despite such positive developments, reviews of documents containing Formerly Restricted Data information related to the military aspects of nuclear weapons continue to lag – despite the fact that FRUS documents programs and/or technologies that are now obsolete and which have, in some cases, been previously declassified. Progress has been further stymied by the Department of Energy and individual DoD components that have declined to release FRD information that meets the declassification criteria outlined in 10 C.F.R. 1045, Classification and Declassification of Nuclear Information. Without positive reforms in this space, FRUS volumes documenting historical policy pertaining to nuclear weapons will continue to stall.

### 3. Additional Factors Affecting Publication

The lapse in appropriations in October through November led to the postponement of additional FRUS publications originally planned for 2025 and will result in delays in the planned publication of other volumes in 2026.

## V. Conclusion

Since the publication of the first FRUS volume in 1861, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series has provided the American people visibility into the critical historical foreign policy decisions that have shaped our nation and the world. The reforms introduced by the Department in 2025, which have already produced encouraging results, will further accelerate FRUS production in 2026. The Department is committed to remaining at the forefront of U.S. Government transparency by innovating and collaborating with its interagency partners, maintaining the statutory requirement to publish timely FRUS volumes that are “thorough, accurate, and reliable,” and providing seamless access to information that the American people expect. Doing so makes the United States stronger, safer, and more prosperous by providing critical historical context for current policymaking and building and maintaining confidence in public institutions by demonstrating the U.S. Government's commitment to transparency.

## **Errata**

Last updated: February 27, 2026

1. The phrase “award-winning” at the top of page 2 in reference to the Office of the Historian’s website was an error. The Office of the Historian’s public website has not received any awards, to the best of the knowledge of the Office of the Historian. However, in 2014 in a report to Congress, the Department of State identified the website as one of the Department’s top-five public engagement websites. (Date added: February 27, 2026)