This presentation focuses on the legal usefulness, in environmental cases, of the official agency histories and records concerning U.S. industrial mobilization for war and defense during World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War.
As environmental law practitioners, you may be involved in retroactive liability settings such as CERCLA matters where you are seeking to show that the U.S. government exercised substantial control over certain industrial facilities and therefore should bear all or a portion of related environmental remediation costs. The recent decision of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Shell – see http://www.cafc.uscourts.gov/images/stories/opinions-orders/13-5051.Opinion.4-24-2014.1.PDF has underlined the importance of historical documentation in proving substantial government control. This presentation will introduce you to the highly useful official histories of industrial mobilization in WWII and the Korean War, as well as the equally valuable, surviving civilian agency records held at the National Archives.
What Were These Programs?

- WWII War Production Board (WPB) and successor Civilian Production Administration produced dozens of detailed histories, special studies of mobilization, and published a one volume monograph, *Industrial Mobilization for War*

- With FDR’s blessing, WWII effort under overall Bureau of Budget and Committee on Records of War Administration issued *The United States at War* and many other works along with special mobilization planning reference “files” and collections, including WPB Policy Documentation File and related materials now held at National Archives

- Effort continued with Korean War NPA and DPA studies (63 published), Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) Blue Books, and still more critical mobilization records
Crucial to these historical programs and records creation initiatives was presidential approval, prompting scholarly and objective analysis and completeness of historical record preservation.
FDR, in a letter just four months after Pearl Harbor, specified that he wanted a “current record of war administration” that drew on “whatever scholarly talent may be necessary.”
Truman for his part echoed FDR and directed that a mobilization historical and recordkeeping program be established to “keep the record clear on what the Federal Government is doing to mobilize for defense” and provide “a critical, evaluative analysis of policy and administrative developments” that would have a positive usefulness to planning officials.
A Short Virtual Tour of
An Impressive Array of Products

- WWII Mobilization Histories: *Industrial Mobilization for War*
  and *The United States at War*

- WWII Special Study Sample: *Aluminum Policies of the War Production Board*

- Big Data, Bad Old Days Variety: WWII and Postwar
  Finding Aids and Planning “Files” for Mobilizers

- 63 Special Studies Done to Document Korean War Mobilization

The following slides introduce and illustrate the range of informative official histories and related records collections issued and compiled to document industrial mobilization for war and defense. These extensive materials were prepared and carefully kept with the express aim of assisting mobilization planners to understand “lessons learned” from WWI and Korea should further wars, including a possible World War III, require renewed official involvement in mobilization and control of U.S. industry.
This first volume of *Industrial Mobilization for War* was prepared and published by War Production Board historians, who also drafted a second volume, available at the National Archives, which focused on supply and procurement. These detailed studies drew on an extensive collection of “policy documentation files” specific to given industries and products; this collection, compiled by WPB archivists, also survives intact at the National Archives and can be used to document government involvement in expediting production of specific, strategic goods such as gasoline, metals, ordnance, aircraft and chemicals.
Another “30,000 foot” overview of the WWII “war program” for mobilization was produced at the same time by the Bureau of the Budget, then a White House agency. The Bureau’s War Projects Unit also created well-organized and extensive inspection files (also surviving at the National Archives) on nearly every plant featuring any significant level of WWII government ownership of facilities or equipment, as well as a large series of additional inspection reports on major war materiel producers.
The War Production Board historians did not simply prepare high-level general histories but also delved into documenting the history of U.S. involvement in production programs for specific, strategically crucial wartime materials such as aluminum. These “special studies” – a total of more than 50 were published, with many hundreds more drafted in manuscript – are all available at the National Archives. Similar to the published Petroleum Administration for War (PAW) history, so often cited in the recent Shell decision, the special studies draw on the thousands of documents contained within the “policy documentation files” organized pursuant to FDR’s mandate and likewise saved at the National Archives.
As this outline of the aluminum program history reveals, the special studies covering the WWII mobilization directly chronicled key aspects of U.S. government control, including “details of the expansion program” and “mandatory priorities.” The later Korean War mobilization studies took the same approach and can be used to find out what steps the U.S. took to ensure that wartime production was expedited.
The National Archives itself joined in the collective official effort to document the mobilization effort of WWII, producing in 1950 a still-handy guide to Federal Records of World War II. Though locations of records in this guide have been superseded by more recent information, these two volumes remain a resource when seeking to determine what types of records were kept by both civilian emergency agencies and military commands involved in procurement and oversight at specific industrial sites.
By the late 1940s, the WWII era mobilization histories and reference collections were already proving their essential worth. Well before the outbreak of the Korean War, the Office of Mobilization Procedures and Organization, within the National Security Resources Board (NSRB), worked with the National Archives and drew on the War Production Board “policy documentation files” to create a “mobilization planning file” culling out plant and company-specific production data for use by planners. This collection, along with the original much larger one from which it was drawn, survives in part at the National Archives.
Truman’s backing spurred a renewal of official efforts during and after the Korean War to record the steps the U.S. government once again took during the “partial remobilization” necessitated to meet wartime production needs for the Korean conflict. Under the National Production Authority (NPA), a successor to the War Production Board, no less than 63 “historical reports on defense production” were prepared. These reports began to chronicle government activities under the Defense Production Act of 1950, as amended – a legal regime which continued in place throughout the Cold War, incorporating such provisions as “rated orders” industry was required to fulfill and reservation of the government’s right to seize and operate strategically critical plants. The Defense Production Act and others also introduced the idea of a “national reserve” of crucial plants which the government could “recapture” if warranted.
The historical and recordkeeping efforts documenting WWII and Korean War mobilization were taken seriously indeed. Like the earlier policy documentation and mobilization planning files, key Korean War industrial ramp-up records were regarded as “indispensable.”
The successful, comprehensive civilian agency programs to document wartime and defense mobilization for WWII and the Korean War were highly regarded by the military. The Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF) and its successor the National Defense University (NDU) drew on these studies and issued hundreds of their own for Cold War logistics planners under the rubric of the “Blue Books”; these ICAF and NDU studies also bear review in considering government control arguments in CERCLA and related cases.
In the end, thankfully (!), World War III and mutually assured destruction did not occur. Interestingly, though planners realized by the 1960s that even if no one would have time to mobilize industry in the face of incoming Soviet missiles taking just 23 minutes to reach the U.S., the mobilization histories and records remained relevant to possible post atomic war national reconstruction, when it was thought that the government would need to direct the reconstruction of U.S. industry. And in the current era of appropriate apportionment of environmental liabilities and costs, the histories and files which trained historians can locate and consult definitely retain their usefulness to litigators and allocators seeking to gauge the level of U.S. government involvement associated with select sites and industries.
About the Presenter

Mike Reis is a vice president at History Associates, where he directs litigation research services for the company. These projects have included investigations for determining environmental site histories, documenting corporate succession, reconstructing legislative histories, and providing historic context statements for preservation and cultural resources management.

Since 1981, History Associates has worked on hundreds of investigations for lawyers, crisis managers, and their clients. Our broad understanding of historical context and our expert knowledge of where to find crucial documentary evidence has helped to establish the facts.
Questions?

Contact

Mike Reis
301-279-9697
mreis@historyassociates.com

History Associates
300 N. Stonestreet Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850