Society for Military History

August 14, 2026

An Open Letter to Congress

I write to you with a concern about access and transparency in Federal government operations. I write to you as the current president of the Society for Military History.

Since the end of World War II, the Department of Defense (so named since 1947), has maintained an archive of documents, some generated internally, some by contractors, covering a wide array of technical, semi-technical, and plain historical topics, many of which were unclassified at their creation, others of which have since been declassified. In the decades of its existence, the accumulated unclassified material in what is now known as the **Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC)** has become a priceless historical archive, in addition to its ongoing function as a repository for emerging reports, many of which are legitimately classified or restricted.

Over the years DTIC has had different names, and during the internet era the web addresses have occasionally migrated, but these resources (all of which were generated through the expenditure of public funds) have remained online and publicly accessible through the DTIC search feature. Furthermore, the DTIC search engine was able to find materials based on subject keywords even if a researcher did not have a specific citation. Some examples are provided further down in this letter, but first, **the current problem**.

In a memo dated August 4, 2025, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, Emil Michael, reduced DTIC's civilian staff from 154 to 40. That memo, titled "Rationalization and Transformation of the Defense Technical Information Center" directed that the Reduction in Force of civilian employees would occur with two weeks of that date. Somehow, this reduction was intended to enhance "accelerating Defense R&D activities and maintaining a technical edge over our adversaries." In practice, this now includes excluding the public from access to the DTIC archive. Only holders of a Common Access Card (CAC) can now access the database. The current DTIC website has a promise that at some future date public access to the unclassified data will be restored, but there is clearly no plan to actually make that happen, and there is certainly no public timeline (https://discover.dtic.mil/public-access-search/)

The Society for Military History represents thousands of professional historians concerned with the role of war and the military in our society. Our members work in academia, in the military, the park service, state government, high schools, and in think tanks. Many of them rely on DTIC for research. DTIC is an incomprehensibly valuable resource for our work. As an organization dedicated to preserving and interpreting the historical record, we regret the loss of public access to DTIC without an apparent plan to restore that access in the near future. It constitutes an attack on the historical record, a record upon which military professionals and those that study and support the military continue to lean on for lessons about the past, and wisdom for the future. We urge Congress to insist on the rapid restoration of public access to the unclassified portions of DTIC.

What follows are seven examples of the kinds of material that formerly were easily accessible in searchable pdf format. These examples should indicate both the historical value of the material, and also the lack of current sensitivity of the subject matter. Each entry indicates the DTIC accession number, and its former web address.

1. **Derek H. Willard, *Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Project RED HORSE*.** Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, CHECO Division, 1969. The report traces the creation and employment of the Air Force's RED HORSE heavy civil-engineering squadrons in Southeast Asia. DTIC accession ADA486954.
   https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA486954.pdf

2. **C. W. Thorndale, *Project CHECO Southeast Asia Report: Defense of Da Nang*.** Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, 31 August 1969. The report examines Air Force participation in the defense of Da Nang during the 1968–69 Winter-Spring Offensive, including base defense, artillery, aircraft, and cooperation with Marine forces. DTIC accession ADA489301.
   https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA489301.pdf

3. **Army Ground Forces Historical Section, *History of the Armored Force, Command and Center*, Army Ground Forces Study No. 27 (1951).**
   This is particularly valuable historically because it is an official Army Ground Forces historical study prepared relatively soon after World War II. It deals with the development of the U.S. Army armored force, its organization, command structure, and institutional development. DTIC accession ADA955008.
   https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA955008

4. **Christopher R. Gabel, *Seek, Strike, and Destroy: U.S. Army Tank Destroyer Doctrine in World War II* (Combat Studies Institute, 1985).**
   This is one of the classic Combat Studies Institute studies of the origins, development, and wartime performance of U.S. tank-destroyer doctrine. DTIC accession: ADA532138
   https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA532138.pdf

5. **Headquarters, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *AirLand Battle 2000* (10 August 1982).**
   This is an especially good primary source for Cold War military history. Rather than being a later historical study, it records how TRADOC was thinking about the future battlefield, NATO-Warsaw Pact warfare, technology, command and control, aviation, and combined-arms operations at the beginning of the 1980s. Contemporary Army documentation identifies it as DTIC A127471 / ADA127471.
   http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a127471.pdf

6. **David M. Glantz, *Soviet Operational Art and Tactics in the 1930's* (Soviet Army Studies Office, 1990).**
   Glantz's report draws on material that had previously been classified or difficult to obtain to reconstruct the development of Soviet operational doctrine between the Russian Civil War and World War II. DTIC catalogs it as a technical report dated March 1990,

accession ADA232954.
https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA232954.pdf

7. ***Notes on Development Type Materiel and Preliminary Technical Manual for 120MM Rifle System XM89 HAW*** **(Harry Diamond Laboratories, 1 October 1960).** This is a useful example because it illustrates that DTIC contains much more than historical monographs and staff-college papers. It is a 1960 technical manual/report for an actual weapons-development program, covering the XM89 120-mm rifle system. Accession AD0319824 https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD0319824.pdf

8. **"When Pericles Met Goujian: Forestalling the Star-Crossed Future of Ancient Greek and Chinese "Traps" Keith Benedict, National Defense University, 26 May 2026** This paper is an excellent example of war college research that compares internal PRC communications with external public statements as it seeks to determine the likelihood of Graham Allison's "Thucydides Trap" occurring and misunderstanding unwittingly triggering a war between the U.S. and the PRC. Accession Number: AD1154037

In closing, we again urge Congress as well as the Department to restore public access to DTIC at the soonest opportunity. Like you, the members of the Society seek to learn from the past to ensure a better future for our nation. Access to DTIC is one tool that helps all of us in that task.

Sincerely,



Wayne E. Lee
President
The Society for Military History