

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL



September 17, 2024

Via Email: jasonleopold@gmail.com

Jason Leopold
Senior Investigative Reporter
Bloomberg News

Dear Mr. Leopold:

On August 23, 2024, we received your email in which you requested:

[A] copy of the following full, final report from the Office of Inspector General. The following summary was posted on the Smithsonian Office of Inspector General website.

1. OIG received information that an individual in Texas claimed to be in possession of the Omega watch once worn by Apollo 7 astronaut Donn Eisele while he was in space in 1968. NASA had purchased Omega watches for all astronauts for their use in space. The Omega watches remained the property of NASA and were returned to NASA by the astronauts upon their departure from the space program. NASA transferred this watch to the Smithsonian, and it became part of the National Air and Space Museum (NASM) collection. The watch was reported stolen from the Smithsonian collections while on loan to another museum in 1989. With the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), OIG identified the person who claimed to be in possession of the watch. Then, with the assistance of personnel from NASM, OIG was able to verify that the item was the stolen Omega watch. OIG, in coordination with FBI agents, recovered the Omega watch and returned it to NASM. The Omega watch has an estimated value of \$400,000 based on its historical provenance.

The Smithsonian Institution and its OIG are not subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, or the Privacy Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552a. *Dong v. Smithsonian Institution*, 125 F.3d 877 (D.C. Cir. 1997), *cert. denied*, 524 U.S. 922 (1998); *Requests for Smithsonian Institution Information*, Smithsonian Directive 807 (SD 807) (Feb. 4, 2009). Nevertheless, we provide information to the public in keeping with the Institution's mandate to increase and diffuse knowledge. See 20 U.S.C. § 41 *et seq.* The OIG answers requests for documents consistent with SD 807, and it adheres to the principles of FOIA, the Privacy Act, and relevant caselaw. In addition, the OIG must comply with the requirements of the Inspector General Act of 1978, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401-424, which places restrictions on what information can be released. Finally, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the laws, policies, and principles listed above. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

Accordingly, we are providing the attached 4 pages of responsive information. We have redacted portions of this document pursuant to FOIA exemptions 6, which protects from disclosure "personnel and medical files and similar files" if such disclosure "would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy," and exemption 7(C), which protects from disclosure records or information compiled

MRC 524
PO Box 37012
Washington DC 20013-7012
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www.si.edu/oig

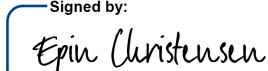
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for law enforcement purposes if disclosure “could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(6) and (7)(C).

You have a right to appeal a partial or full denial of your request. An appeal must be in writing, addressed to the Smithsonian Institution Office of the Inspector General, and made within 60 days from the date of this response letter. The request must explain your reason(s) for the appeal. The Smithsonian Inspector General will decide your appeal in writing specifying the reason(s) for the granting or denying of the appeal.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elin Christensen".

6319DBB3CE4342C...

Elin H. Christensen

Counsel to the Inspector General



Re: Request for Closure (OIG 18-001)(S)



MESSAGE HEADERS

MESSAGE

THREAD

[REDACTED] - to [REDACTED] ▾

Friday, March 2, 2018, 1:27 PM (2370 days ago)

[DISPLAY EXTERNAL RESOURCES](#) ⓘ

Ok to close.

On Mar 2, 2018, at 1:11 PM, [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> wrote:

[REDACTED]

For your review and approval for closure.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Office of Inspector General

Smithsonian Institution

MRC 524

[REDACTED] (Office)

[REDACTED] (Cell)

[REDACTED] (Fax)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, February 27, 2018 1:16 PM
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Subject: 18-001 (request to close)

On October 2, 2017, [REDACTED], a watch collector, telephoned the OIG to report that a person, later identified as [REDACTED], claimed to own former astronaut Donn Eisele's Omega watch, which [REDACTED] knows was stolen from the National Air and Space Museum collection in the 1980's. [REDACTED] provided OIG with photographs, reportedly sent to him by [REDACTED], of an Omega watch bearing Serial Number 34 (S/N 34).

OIG sent [REDACTED] photographs to [REDACTED] National Air and Space Museum (NASM), who preliminarily authenticated the watch as S/N 34. [REDACTED] confirmed that S/N 34 was stolen while on loan to a museum in Ecuador in 1989, and remains federal property.

OIG contacted the [REDACTED], who confirmed that a person named [REDACTED] resided in [REDACTED] and is employed as [REDACTED]. OIG contacted [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], who confirmed that [REDACTED] pawnbroker records indicated that [REDACTED] sold several expensive watches to area pawnshops over the last few years. [REDACTED] also confirmed that [REDACTED] had no criminal history.

On October 3, 2017, OIG and FBI consulted [REDACTED], who agreed that the best course of action was to approach [REDACTED] and recommend that he return the watch to avoid further law enforcement action. On October 13, 2017, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] visited [REDACTED] at his residence and [REDACTED] agreed to surrender the watch to the FBI. [REDACTED] FBI sent photographs of the recovered

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18-001 (request to close)



MESSAGE HEADERS MESSAGE THREAD

[DISPLAY EXTERNAL RESOURCES](#) ⓘ

On October 2, 2017, ██████████ a watch collector, telephoned the OIG to report that a person, later identified as ██████████ claimed to own former astronaut Donn Eisele's Omega watch, which ██████████ knows was stolen from the National Air and Space Museum collection in the 1980's. ██████████ provided OIG with photographs, reportedly sent to him by ██████████ of an Omega watch bearing Serial Number 34 (S/N 34).

OIG sent ██████████ photographs to ██████████ National Air and Space Museum (NASM), who preliminarily authenticated the watch as S/N 34. ██████████ confirmed that S/N 34 was stolen while on loan to a museum in Ecuador in 1989, and remains federal property.

OIG contacted the ██████████ who confirmed that a person named ██████████ resided in ██████████ and is employed as ██████████. OIG contacted ██████████ and ██████████. ██████████, ██████████, ██████████, who confirmed that ██████████ pawnbroker records indicated that ██████████ sold several expensive watches to area pawnshops over the last few years. ██████████ also confirmed that ██████████ had no criminal history.

On October 3, 2017, OIG and FBI consulted ██████████ who agreed that the best course of action was to approach ██████████ and recommend that he return the watch to avoid further law enforcement action. On October 13, 2017, ██████████ and ██████████ visited ██████████ at his residence and ██████████ agreed to surrender the watch to the FBI. ██████████ FBI sent photographs of the recovered watch to OIG and ██████████ opined that it was likely S/N 34.

On November 11, 2017, ██████████ took custody of the watch from the FBI, and upon further examination, confirmed that the recovered watch is S/N 34. Based upon the aforementioned facts, I recommend this inquiry be closed as substantiated.

██████████
██████████
Office of the Inspector General
Smithsonian Institution



Telephone ██████████
Cell ██████████
Fax ██████████
E-mail: ██████████

Case Management System

View Case List

View People

Case Opening Memo



New



Delete



Find



Complaint 18-001 National Collections Issue

18-001

Complaint

Routine

National Collections Issue

10-2-2017

3-2-2018

S - Closed

Complaint / Case No.

Status

Priority

Offense Code

Date Received

Case Opened

Date Closed

RoI

Offense Information:

On October 2, 2017, [REDACTED] a watch collector, telephoned the OIG to report that a person, later identified as [REDACTED] claimed to own former astronaut Donn Eisele's Omega watch, which [REDACTED] knows was stolen from the National Air and Space Museum collection in the 1980's. [REDACTED] provided OIG with photographs, reportedly sent to him by [REDACTED], of an Omega watch bearing Serial Number 34 (S/N 34).

Location:

NASM

Disposition:

OIG sent [REDACTED]'s photographs to [REDACTED] National Air and Space Museum (NASM), who preliminarily authenticated the watch as S/N 34. [REDACTED] confirmed that S/N 34 was stolen while on loan to a museum in Ecuador in 1989, and remains federal property.

Investigator:

[REDACTED]

Lock : No

People

Running Resumé

Interviews

Evidence

Intake

Results

Attachments

Comments

Last Name

Subject Type

Subject Notes

Telephone

ADD PERSON

FIND PERSON

DocuSign Envelope ID: E1E78FA5-256A-4FBB-8034-30D47382B0F4

