Extent

22 folders, approximately 1,103 pages

Summary

This collection consists of records related to the March 23, 1996 Presidential election held in the Republic of China. It includes records from March 1, 1996 to April 1, 1996. Open records include press guidance and National Security Council directorate guidance. The collection includes unclassified emails discussing the drafting of guidance and talking points. This set of records also includes press reports from news sources around the world related to the election. Many of the records in this collection have been withdrawn for national security or foreign policy reasons.

Scope and Content Note

The materials in FOIA 2013-1117-F are a selective body of documents responsive to the topic of the FOIA. Researchers should consult the archivist about related materials. Many of the records responsive to this topic have been withdrawn for national security or foreign policy reasons. This collection covers records related to the March 23, 1996 Presidential election held in the Republic of China. It therefore includes records from March 1, 1996 to April 1, 1996. Open records include press guidance and National Security Council directorate guidance. The collection includes unclassified emails discussing the drafting of guidance and talking points. This set of records also includes collections of open press reports from news sources around the world related to the election. The first direct election of the President and Vice President of the Republic of China (ROC), more commonly called Taiwan, was held March 23, 1996. Lee Teng-hui was elected as President and Lien Chan was elected as Vice-President. Lee was the incumbent and a member of the Kuomintang (KMT) party. He won the election with a 54 percent majority. Modern Taiwanese history can be said to begin in 1949. After losing the Chinese Civil War, the government of the Republic of China, led by the KMT, fled to the island of Taiwan. In 1949, the ROC

established a new government and retained their claim to rule all of Chinese territory. The communist government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) also claimed to rule all of Chinese territory including the prefecture of Taiwan. Control of Chinese territory still dominates cross-strait relations. That is largely why the elections of March 1996 were so important and so tense. Many observers noted that the PRC saw this election as the further establishment of an independence movement in Taiwan. It is also, as many people note, the reason that in July 1995 and March 1996, the Chinese military conducted military exercises. The March 1996 exercises were timed to end just before the elections and it appeared that the Chinese were attempting to exert pressure on the election by intimidating the electorate to vote for candidates that support one China or to not vote at all. Voter turnout for the 1996 election was estimated to be 76 percent. Short of intimidating people it appeared that Chinese military exercises angered many nationalist Taiwanese and helped Lee win a majority of votes. Some criticism has been leveled at the United States for interfering in the elections as well. As tensions grew across the Taiwan Strait, the United States feared an invasion of Taiwan. Two U.S. aircraft carrier battle groups were sent to the Pacific to monitor the Chinese military exercises. At the time, a number of newspapers around the world claimed that this action showed U.S. support for Lee and was an unfair intrusion into a sovereign election. Under what is commonly called the One-China policy and the three communiqués—Shanghai communiqué, February 28, 1972; Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, January 1, 1979; and the August 17 communiqué, August 17, 1982—the United States agreed that the PRC was the sole government of Chinese territory. The U.S. also agreed in the second communiqué to end diplomatic relations with Taiwan and to reduce arms sales to Taiwan. However, the United States maintains unofficial relations with Taiwan. President Clinton made only one public statement about the 1996 election. Following the President's remarks at the National Association of Attorney Generals, the President was asked, "Do you think that China and Taiwan are at a turning point now?" President Clinton responded, "Well, I hope they are. I was encouraged by some statements that came out of both sides in the aftermath of the election. And so I hope that is what is going on." (William J. Clinton, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1996, Book I (Washington: GPO, 1997), 508).

Record Type

Textual

System of Arrangement

Records that were responsive to this request were found in these collection areas—Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cable, Email, and Records Management System.

Access

Collection is open to all researchers. Access to Clinton Presidential Records is governed by the Presidential Records Act (PRA) (44 U.S.C. Chapter 22) and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552, as amended) and therefore records may be restricted in whole or in part in accordance with legal exemptions.

Copyright

Documents in this collection that were prepared by officials of the United States government as part of their official duties are in the public domain. Researchers are advised to consult the copyright law of the United States (Chapter 17 U.S.C.) which governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Provenance

Official records of William Jefferson Clinton’s presidency are housed at the Clinton Presidential Library and administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) under the provisions of the Presidential Records Act (PRA).

Processed by

Staff Archivist, November 2013. Previously restricted materials are added as they are released.

Last Modified Date

2015-03-04

Container List

The following is a list of documents and folders processed in response to 2013-1117-F:
Box 1
Clinton Presidential Records: NSC Cable, Email, and Records Management System
NSC Cables
Jan 1995-Dec 1996 [OA/ID 510000]
[Lee Teng-hui, Election, Taiwan]
[03/01/1996-03/06/1996]
[03/07/1996-03/11/1996]
[03/11/1996-03/14/1996]
[03/14/1996-03/15/1996]
[03/16/1996-03/18/1996]
[03/18/1996-03/20/1996]
[03/20/1996-03/22/1996]
[03/22/1996-03/25/1996]
[03/25/1996]
[03/25/1996-03/28/1996]
[03/28/1996-03/30/1996]
NSC Email
MSMail-Record (Sept 94-Sept 97) [OA/ID 590000]
[Lee Teng-hui, Election, Taiwan]
[03/04/1996-03/21/1996]
[03/21/1996]
[03/22/1996]
Box 2
[03/22/1996-03/25/1996]

[03/25/1996-03/26/1996]
[03/27/1996]
[03/28/1996-03/29/1996]
NSC Records Management System
[Lee Teng-hui, Election, Taiwan]
9601462 [OA/ID 1089]
9602196 [OA/ID 1093]
9602943 [OA/ID 1099]
9603278 [OA/ID 1101]