Information about the search for person-related records from the Second World War (and from 1919 onwards) in the Department Military Archives

Searching for person-related records of members of the Wehrmacht or Waffen-SS one must distinguish between

1. personnel records
2. award documents for orders and decorations (e.g. Iron Cross) and
3. records of trials before courts of the Wehrmacht (court martial)

The Department Military Archives keeps award documents and records of trials before courts of the Wehrmacht relating to all ranks.

Please note however that the Department Military Archives only stores the personnel records of officers (rank of Leutnant and above) and civil servants of the German Army and Air Force. Concerning the navy our department only keeps the personnel files of admirals (very seldom also the personnel files of the rank Kapitänleutnant and above).

Personnel records of other ranks and of non-commissioned officers and enlisted personnel of army, navy and air force are kept by the Department Personenbezogene Auskünfte (Abt. PA) of the Bundesarchiv. The latter is also in charge of clarifying the fate of missing soldiers and soldiers killed in action, as well as of furnishing proof of captivity as a prisoner of war. If you are not sure whether the person enquired about was an officer, you are recommended to address your request to the Abteilung PA first.

Bundesarchiv
Abteilung Personenbezogene Auskünfte
Eichborndamm 179
13403 Berlin
Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 30 41 90 44 40
Email: poststelle-pa@bundesarchiv.de

Personnel files of soldiers of the Waffen-SS are kept by the Abteilung PA and by the Department Bereitstellung (Abteilung BE) of The Federal Archives in Berlin.

Soldiers of the Waffen-SS were subject to courts of the SS and police. Records of trials before courts of the SS and police are kept by the Department Bereitstellung (Abteilung BE) of The Federal Archives in Berlin.

Bundesarchiv
Abteilung BE
Finckensteinallee 63
12205 Berlin
Germany
Phone: +49 (0) 30 18 77 70 - 420
Email: berlin@bundesarchiv.de
**Protection period**

In principle, information from personal archival material may only be provided to the person concerned. As stipulated by the Bundesarchivgesetz (Federal Archives Act), personnel records are freely accessible to everyone not earlier than 10 years after a person’s death (or 100 years after his/her birth if the date of death is not known). Irrespective of this, the protection period may be shortened under certain conditions. If the person concerned gives his/her consent then the personnel records will be made available. If it is not possible to get the consent then The Federal Archives decides if it is possible to shorten the protection period. The decision is made considering carefully the rights of the individual for protection of his/her personal data and the interests of researchers and the public. There may also be conditions for the use of the documents to safeguard the interests of the person concerned such as, for example, that names of individuals from the files must not be disclosed or have to be made anonymous in a publication.

If the person concerned is already dead then for close relatives (spouse, parents, siblings, children and grandchildren) as a rule the protection period will be shortened. To be able to consider your access to personnel files it is therefore required that in your request for use you state your subject and the purpose of access to the archives as accurately as possible.

**Request for a search**

In order to initiate the required search you are kindly requested to fill in, sign and return the Benutzungsantrag (request for use) as well as the Rechercheauftrag (Order form for a person-related research). You may return the signed requests via email (scanned version) or by post or by fax. Please note that the English version of the Benutzungsantrag (request for use) is only meant for your information. Due to legal reasons you have to fill in, sign and return the German version please. Please include as well some form of official photo identification (for example a copy/scan of your passport or your driver’s licence). You may return the signed requests and the photo identification via email (scanned version) or by post or by fax.

For the desired search, please give the full name of the person to be investigated as well as the dates of birth and death. If you can give us further information (for example, about the person’s military unit, occupation, places of residence or deployment) this may be helpful for our search and for references to other agencies. If you do not know the full names and dates of birth and death then just send us the information about the person that you have and we will see if it is possible to search our records based on the incomplete information.

**Fees and costs for copying**

Please note that costs may arise from tracing archival material and providing information. Fees for search will be incurred no matter whether documents are found or not. Such fees amount to a minimum of € 15.34 (up to half an hour of search time); as a rule, they will be between € 15.34 and € 30.68.

Please also note that expenses may be caused by the preparation of copies and their mailing. Should relatively large numbers of copies of archival material be desired or
needed, such copies will be produced by contract firms of the Federal Archives that will charge you directly for the respective cost.

If you wish, you may state in your request the maximum amount you would be prepared to pay without further notice. For this you can use the bottom of the “Order form for a person-related research”.

For further information on the terms of business and prices of the Federal Archives’ contract firms, the Federal Archives Costs Directive (Bundesarchivkostenverordnung), the Federal Archives Act (Bundesarchivgesetz) and the use regulations, see www.bundesarchiv.de under the topic “Benutzung”. If you wish, our office can of course also send you information by post or email.

Access to records

Large numbers of written documents were lost during the Second World War. Quite often the search shows that no documents about an individual soldier are preserved in our collection. And due to the nature of the documents and the finding aids the users cannot conduct the search themselves either online or in our reading room. This means that the staff of the Department Military Archives first has to ascertain if documents about an individual soldier are preserved. After you have received our answer with the search result you are very welcome to order copies/scans or to make an appointment to examine the documents in our reading room. You can also ask a person you know or a private research service to examine the documents for you. Sometimes depending on the number and condition of the documents that were found it will be necessary to examine the documents in the reading room. The way such records are presented to you is at the discretion of the Federal Archives. The Federal Archives does not charge a fee for consulting documents in the reading room.

The Federal Archives receive a large number of enquiries. Consequently, it may take some time to process your request. Please do not contact us for enquiring as to the processing status of your request; you will be notified immediately upon completion of the search.

Should you answer by email, you are requested to please use the general address of the Bundesarchiv, Abteilung Militärarchiv: militaerarchiv@bundesarchiv.de

For telephone enquiries, please dial the following number:
+ 49 (0)7 61 47 8 17 860

Records in other archives

The Department Military Archives of The Federal Archives is not the only department that keeps person-related records from the time of the two World Wars (or more generally for the 19th and 20th century). It is not easy to find out in detail which agency stores what kind of documents. On our website you can find overviews on archives and departments keeping personnel records for the time of approximately the end of the 19th century to 1945.