

TJAGLCS Practice Notes
Faculty & Staff, The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center & School

Legal Research Note

Congressional Research Service

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The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides detailed, objective research on issues relevant to members and committees of the U.S. Congress. The CRS, formerly known as the Legislative Reference Service, has provided analysis to Congress since 1914.¹ The agency's staff analyzes current policy and legal issues in a legislative context. One might find CRS reports on the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill, the Open Government Initiative, or transportation security.

The CRS staff produce reports exclusively for Congress and do not make the documents publicly available. An internal website provides twenty-four hour access to representatives, senators, and several legislative branch agencies.² If the report is released at all, a member of Congress may release the report. Without a publicly available database of CRS reports, researchers must use other avenues to locate reports.

Individuals wanting a copy of a CRS report may contact the senator or representative who requested the specific study. Numerous organizations make the released reports publicly available on the web and offer a quicker, online alternative. Open CRS, a project of the Center for Democracy and Technology, is one of the most comprehensive archives for CRS reports and is a free, searchable database.³ The Federation of American Scientists (FAS) is a popular resource for faculty at The Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School (TJAGLCS) because the FAS collection contains CRS reports on national security, intelligence, foreign policy, and related topics.⁴

Another notable CRS web archive of interest to military lawyers is the U.S. Department of State, which has CRS reports available by date, topic, and region. The listing for more recent reports is fairly extensive, but there is limited coverage going back to 1999.⁵ The Air War College has select CRS reports on homeland security, military topics and legal issues.⁶ For attorneys searching for a general collection, the University of North Texas's CRS Digital Collection is freely searchable and has reports dating back to 1990.⁷

There are numerous other online resources for CRS reports, including subscription databases. A comprehensive reference for CRS collection databases is Stephen Young's article, *Guide to CRS Reports on the Web*, which provides a list of databases broken down by subject matter and cost.⁸

For more information contact the Electronic Services Librarian at TJAGLCS-Digital-Librarian@conus.army.mil

¹ History and Mission, THE LIBR. OF CONG., CONG. RES. SERV., <http://www.loc.gov/crsinfo/about/history.html> (last visited Feb. 21, 2011).

² 2009 CONG. RES. SERV. ANN.REP. at 37.

³ Open CRS, <http://www.opencrs.com/> (last visited Feb. 21, 2011).

⁴ CONG. RES. SERV. (CRS) REP., FED'N OF AM. SCIENTISTS, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/> (last visited Feb. 21, 2010).

⁵ CONG. RES. SERV. REP. (CRS) AND ISSUE BRIEFS, U.S. DEP'T OF STATE, <http://fpc.state.gov/c18185.htm> (last visited Feb. 21, 2011).

⁶ SELECTED CONG. RES. SERV. (CRS) REP., AIR WAR COLL., <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/crs/> (last visited Feb. 21, 2011).

⁷ CONG. RES. SERV. REP., THE UNIV. OF N. TEX. DIGITAL LIBR., <http://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/CRSR/> (last visited Feb. 21, 2011).

⁸ Stephen Young, *Guide to CRS Reports on the Web*, LLRX.com (September 17, 2006), <http://www.llrx.com/features/crsreports.htm>.