



Department of Justice

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**UNITED STATES AND AUSTRIA RESUME MUTUAL LEGAL
ASSISTANCE IN WORLD WAR II NAZI CASES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Austria will resume rendering legal assistance to the United States in cases involving World War II-era Nazi crimes under an agreement that goes into effect today, the Justice Department announced.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding, which was approved by the Austrian parliament last January, the Austrian government will resume providing assistance to the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Such assistance was suspended by Austria in 1990.

Final agreement on the accord's terms was reached in May of 1996. It provides for the rendering of mutual administrative assistance in cases of individuals suspected of involvement "in war crimes or crimes against humanity committed prior to May 9, 1945." It permits authorities in each country to gain access to witnesses and archival documents in the other nation.

OSI Director Eli M. Rosenbaum noted that because the Department of Justice never ceased providing assistance to the Austrian Government in Nazi cases, the principal effect of the

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agreement's entry into force today will be to reestablish OSI's access to evidence located in Austria.

"This accord will renew the Justice Department's access to the treasure trove of documentary and testimonial evidence located in Austria," said Rosenbaum. Rosenbaum hailed the agreement as "a most welcome development, one that comes at nearly the last moment in history at which such evidence may still be put to law enforcement use."

Rosenbaum expressed appreciation for the efforts of diplomats of both nations to reach agreement on the terms of the accord.

OSI was created in 1979 to investigate suspected participants in Axis-sponsored acts of persecution and, where appropriate, to institute civil proceedings to revoke the naturalized U.S. citizenship of such individuals and remove them from this country. Since its establishment, 59 participants in Nazi crimes of persecution have been denaturalized as a result of OSI's efforts and 47 such individuals have been removed from the United States. There are nearly 300 persons currently under investigation by OSI, and more than 130 suspected Nazi persecutors have been excluded at U.S. ports of entry, according to Rosenbaum.

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