

DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 11652, Sec 3(E) and 5(D) or (E) NND# 740132

SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD - PAPERS

FIRST DRAFT

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Pages 1 to 25

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STATE-WAR-NAVY COORDINATING COMMITTEE

SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD

CLASSIFICATION AND DOWNGRADING PROCEDURES

Note by the Secretary

1. The use of classification to protect certain types of information from the enemy created a large and somewhat unwieldy bulk of classified documents in federal government during wartime. Few agencies and departments escaped receipt or origination of classified information.
2. The main responsibility of every official charged with classification is to protect certain vital information from the enemy. Unfortunately, classification has sometimes been abused in carrying out that responsibility. In wartime there was an occasional protest against the deluge of classified documents, but it was much easier to continue to classify all documents suspected of containing classified information than to indoctrinate all personnel in the correct use of the four classifications. As a result, there are now few government agencies and departments which do not have a great deal of classified material in their files which should presently be made available to the public.

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3. Along with the natural inertia which human beings feel toward beginning a difficult task, the declassification enthusiast was faced with confusion and conflicting opinions on downgrading procedure. Too often enthusiasm was strangled by red tape and details, and files of classified documents were transferred to the National Archives in desperation or pushed further back in the corner of a file room.

4. There are, however, many people in government service who feel that the downgrading problem is a serious one which should be faced as soon as possible. The National Archives is interested in the problem because public utilization of government records is limited by classification. The Library of Congress is concerned because they cannot send classified / documents to research and scientific libraries and other depositories until the classification is removed. Records Officers and Security Officers faced with the problem of carrying out the provisions of Executive Order No. 9784, are concerned with downgrading. The government historian has found that his use of government records is curtailed by classification. From the standpoint of administrative efficiency, which should be the concern of every government employee, it is only good business to face this problem and do something about it.

5. Many idealists have had visions of a startling new discovery which would revolutionize the present downgrading procedure. Those of us who had no such ideas of our own were waiting consciously or unconsciously for someone else to develop such a simplified procedure. At one time the Security Advisory Board shared the hope that a procedure might be evolved which would eliminate some of the detail and work of the present system.

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6. Considerable study has been given to developing such a system, but the resulting danger to security in every instance made the system inadvisable. The only conclusion which can be drawn after careful study of the problem is that there is no panacea which will cure the downgrading problem in one week or one year. Downgrading can only be accomplished by hard work and attention to detail. This is, in no way, an apology for the contents of this booklet on classification and declassification procedures. Although not setting forth any startling new method of handling the problem, it brings together all the downgrading guides under one cover and describes a suggested procedure for putting them into effect which if followed, should begin to solve the problem.

7. There are two important tasks which should be the duties of the Security Officers of the departments and agencies:

a. All personnel should be familiar with the current classification guides contained on Pages 8-15 of this memorandum. In addition, all personnel who will be working in downgrading should be familiar with the requirements on Pages 16-25 inclusive. The proper indoctrination of such personnel should be accomplished by, or under the guidance of, the Security Officer.

b. If the problem of downgrading is a simple one in a department or agency, it can probably be handled by the Security Officer alone. If there is any bulk of material, a Downgrading Committee might be given full authority to downgrade all material originated by an agency or department which no longer deserves its original classification.

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8. The services of the Secretary of the Security Advisory Board are available to any government agency or department who wishes to set up a downgrading mechanism within their agency, and the advice of the Board may be solicited whenever desired on downgrading problems.

Ruth C. Barton
Secretary

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UNCLASSIFIEDSECTION I. DEFINITIONS1. CLASSIFY

To grade a document or item as Top Secret, Secret, Confidential, or Restricted in order to indicate the degree of precaution necessary for its safeguarding.

2. DECLASSIFY

To cancel the classification of any document or item by proper authority when the necessity for maintaining the classification no longer exists.

3. DOWNGRADE

To lower the classification of classified documents or items.

4. UPGRADE

To raise the classification of classified documents or items from one classification to a higher classification, when it has been determined by proper authority that the assigned classification is not sufficiently restrictive.

5. REGRADE

To change the classification of a classified document or item, including both downgrading and upgrading.

6. OVERCLASSIFY

To grade a document or item with a higher classification than is consistent with the proper safeguarding of the information contained therein.

UNCLASSIFIED7. PRIMARY INTEREST

a. An office which has "primary interest" in information is the office best qualified to determine its value, both when considering its original security classification and in downgrading it as conditions change.

b. "Primary interest" in any classified document or item will be considered to be held in that office which:

- (1) Originally classified the information;
- (2) Currently is charged with the information, or has primary control or jurisdiction over types of information similar thereto;
- (3) Has succeeded or absorbed an office formerly charged with primary control or jurisdiction over the information.

8. CUSTODIAN

An individual to whom a document or item is consigned or who inherits official possession of a document or item by succession to or absorption of the position of an individual formerly charged with custody of such documents and items.

UNCLASSIFIEDSECTION II. CURRENT CLASSIFICATION GUIDES1. A WORD ON CURRENT CLASSIFICATION

During wartime the anxiety of many government officials to protect classified information from an actual and potential enemy often led to careless classification. The belief that "it is better to grade a document too high and be safe than to grade it too low and risk not having it high enough" was the criterion which guided many a hand on the classification stamp. Too often this axiom was made an excuse for unfamiliarity with classification definitions or failure to read security regulations.

Today many harassed government officials, struggling to wrench classifications from documents which should rightfully be made available to the public or go from bulging files to proper depositories, feel the effects of the careless classification which took place during wartime. It should be the concern of every government official responsible for classification to make sure that documents and items are correctly classified. The protection of classified information is still the primary concern, but the sad experiences of many government agencies with declassification problems makes correct classification of vital administrative concern.

REMEMBER: A CARELESS CLASSIFICATION TODAY MEANS AN ADMINISTRATIVE
HEADACHE TOMORROW!

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UNCLASSIFIED2. AUTHORITY TO CLASSIFYa. TOP SECRET OR SECRET

Matters may be classified as Top Secret or Secret only by the head of a federal agency or department or by his designated representative.

b. CONFIDENTIAL OR RESTRICTED

Matters may be classified as Confidential or Restricted by the Chief or Head of a Bureau, Division, or Branch, by officials whose positions may be considered to be on equal level, or by their designated representatives.

c. PROCEDURE WITHIN DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES

If designation of officials who may classify matters in one of the four categories above has not been made in government agency or department, such designation should be immediately undertaken and an announcement of this authority made within the department or agency. Where such a list is already in use, it shall be the responsibility of the Security Officer to insure that this list and any future lists are current and workable within his department.

UNCLASSIFIED3. THE MENTAL APPROACH TO CLASSIFICATION

The importance of the use of mature judgment on the part of classifying officials cannot be stressed too highly. When an official classifies a document, he will, in most cases, have only his own judgment and the definitions set forth in security regulations on which he can depend as guides.

Before any classification is stamped or marked on a document, the classifying official should ask himself:

DOES THIS DOCUMENT CONTAIN INFORMATION WHICH
WILL ENDANGER THE NATION IF REVEALED TO UN-
AUTHORIZED PERSONS? IF SO, TO WHAT EXTENT?

The attitude of the classifying official should not be:

CLASSIFY IT HIGH AND SAFE.

Similarly classifications should not be placed on documents with an idea of expediting their handling or for any personal reason whatsoever. One document so classified depreciates the value of the entire system of classification.

It should be the responsibility of all officials charged with classification to familiarize themselves with the definitions of Top Secret, Secret, Confidential, and Restricted information, and to apply such definitions correctly.

UNCLASSIFIED4. CURBS ON CLASSIFIERSa. GENERAL

Matter shall be assigned the lowest security classification consistent with the proper safeguarding of the information or material concerned.

Matter of a classified character originated by another Government agency or department will be safeguarded in the same manner as if it had been classified within the receiving agency.

The classification given a document originating in another agency shall be continued on any material developed using classified portions of that document, unless the originating agency authorizes a change in classification.

b. PREPARATION

Whenever practicable, the classifying official will place a notation on the document that upon the happening of a specified event or the passage of a named date, the classification of the document will be reduced or canceled without reference to the originator.

Documents referring to classified matter but not in themselves revealing any classified information should not be classified.

Documents, including extracts from classified documents, except cryptographic material, shall be graded according to their own content and not according to their relationship to other documents. The classification of a file or group of physically connected documents shall be that of the highest graded document therein. Documents separated from the file revert to their individual classification.

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Whenever classified information and unclassified information is issued together, the information should be so prepared that the classified can be separated from the unclassified and each part handled appropriately. Classified documents, such as reports, tabulations, magazines, or other bound material being prepared for distribution will have the individual items, columns, pages, appropriately classified, or marked as being unclassified, whenever possible, in order that extracts may be made from the documents without the necessity of assigning the same security classification as the document. REGARDLESS OF THE FACT THAT PAGES, PARAGRAPHS, SECTIONS, OR COMPONENTS OF THE DOCUMENT MAY BEAR DIFFERENT CLASSIFICATIONS, THE DOCUMENT ITSELF WILL BEAR ONLY ONE OVERALL CLASSIFICATION.

c. TRANSMITTAL

A letter of transmittal shall be given the highest classification carried by any of its enclosures, unless the letter of transmittal contains information warranting a higher classification.

A CLASSIFIED LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL WHICH DOES NOT IN ITSELF REVEAL ANY CLASSIFIED INFORMATION MAY BE DECLASSIFIED WHEN THE ENCLOSURES ARE REMOVED. Such letters of transmittal should always bear a notation that they may be declassified when the enclosures are removed. Such notation may be a part of the body of the transmittal letter or it may be typed or stamped on the letter itself.

A suitable stamp for this purpose would read:

TO BE DECLASSIFIED WHEN ATTACHMENT IS REMOVED

UNCLASSIFIEDd. OVERCLASSIFICATION

Overclassification will be avoided. It causes unnecessary delay in the transmission of documents and depreciates the importance of classified information in the minds of handling personnel.

Cases of flagrant overclassification will be reported by any official to the Security Officer of the department or agency. If the document originated in his own department or agency, the Security Officer will discuss the matter directly with the originator. If the document was received from other sources, it will be reported to the Security Advisory Board for appropriate action.

e. UPGRADING

If the recipient or custodian of classified matter believes the assigned classification is not sufficiently restrictive, he shall safeguard the matter in accordance with the classification he deems appropriate and shall refer the question to the originator. Unclassified material received from any source which is judged to be deserving of classification by the recipient shall be similarly treated.

When matter is upgraded, the originator shall notify all custodians and addresses.

UNCLASSIFIED5. MARKING PROCEDURESa. GENERAL

After the classifying official has assigned a security classification to a document, clerical personnel are responsible for marking them. All clerical personnel who will have these duties should become familiar with the procedures set forth below.

b. LETTERS AND REPORTS

The appropriate security classification on letters and reports, the pages of which are not permanently and securely fastened together, will be marked or stamped at the top and bottom of each page, in such a manner that the marking at the top will not be hidden when the pages are clipped or stapled together.

c. BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

The appropriate security classification on books and pamphlets, the pages of which are permanently and securely fastened together, will be marked in large print on the cover, title page, and first page, back page and back cover. NOTE: Requisitions for duplicated material shall show the classification mark to be placed on the documents.

d. PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

Classified photographs and maps shall be marked with the appropriate classification in large print in a conspicuous place, usually under the scale where appropriate.

e. ADDITIONAL MARKING FOR TOP SECRET AND SECRET DOCUMENTS

In addition to the appropriate security classification stamp, Top Secret and Secret documents shall bear the following information:

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1. Name of the Branch, Division, or Office originating the document.
2. Name and title of the authority assigning the security classification shown.
3. Date of classification.

f. MARKING FOR DOCUMENTS FURNISHED PERSONS NOT IN FEDERAL SERVICE

Documents containing classified information furnished persons other than those in the Federal Service shall, in addition to being marked Top Secret, Secret, Confidential, or Restricted, bear the following notation:

"This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Act, 50 U.S.C., 31 and 32, as amended. Its transmission to or the revelation of its content in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law."

UNCLASSIFIEDSECTION III. DOWNGRADING GUIDES1. A WORD ON DOWNGRADING

Whether downgrading is undertaken by one individual, a group of interested workers, or a Board or Committee to which classified documents could be funnelled, there are a few inescapable facts to be faced.

1. Downgrading will require a great deal of work and continued diligence before it can be effective.
2. Downgrading cannot be undertaken unless personnel doing the work are thoroughly familiar with downgrading procedures.
3. Downgrading cannot at any time be considered more important than the maintenance of security. The first consideration for any official authorizing the downgrading of a document should be, "Does the information in this document still deserve the classification which it holds?"

The first steps of setting up a downgrading mechanism are the most difficult, of course. Once such initial steps have been taken and the actual mechanism has been created, there is no reason why declassification should not be a routine matter. It is urged that Security Officers in federal departments and agencies make every effort to establish such a mechanism as soon as possible.

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UNCLASSIFIED2. AUTHORITY TO DOWNGRADEa. GENERAL

It is the responsibility and obligation of all government officials to keep classified matter of current interest or continuing value constantly under review and to downgrade it as soon as conditions permit.

b. AUTHORITY

The official making the original classification, or higher authority in the same agency or department, may cancel or change the classification of a document.

In any case when the originator of the document cannot be determined or is unavailable, the office having primary interest in the document may downgrade it when appropriate.

Authority to downgrade documents originating in an agency may be delegated to a Downgrading Board or Committee by the head of that agency or department.

UNCLASSIFIED3. COORDINATION AND RESPONSIBILITYa. DOCUMENTS AFFECTING ONLY OFFICE OF ORIGIN

Documents which affect only the office of origin and documents which contain information of primary interest to one office only will be downgraded by that office or higher authority within the agency. Higher authority need not and ordinarily should not be consulted. Coordination with the military services is not necessary for downgrading in this case, except where the action affects information in which either or both services have a major interest.

b. DOCUMENTS AFFECTING INTERESTS OF TWO OR MORE OFFICES OR AGENCIES

If a classified document contains information affecting the interests of two or more offices or agencies, the one desiring to downgrade the document will consult the others and attempt to reach an agreement. Normally, the office which has the primary interest in the document as a whole will assume the responsibility for coordination with all other agencies interested in portions thereof and will downgrade the document to the classification agreed upon.

c. DOCUMENTS AFFECTING INTERESTS OF A FOREIGN NATION

If a classified document was classified solely to accord with conditions imposed by a foreign nation, it may be downgraded or declassified with the consent of the nation concerned or by the approval of the Department of State.

If a document was originally classified or prepared in conjunction with a foreign nation, it may not be downgraded until the consent of that nation has been secured.

UNCLASSIFIEDd. DOCUMENTS AFFECTING THE INTERESTS OF THE MILITARY SERVICES

If a classified document contains information affecting the interests of the Army or Navy, appropriate authorities in the War or Navy Departments shall be consulted before the documents are downgraded.

e. DOCUMENTS CONTAINING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL DATA

Executive Orders of the President Nos. 9568 and 9604, dated 8 June 1945 and 25 August 1945, respectively, require that all scientific and technical information, prepared by or for the U.S. Government, financed with Government funds, or obtained from the enemy, which is of any possible value or aid to business, industry or science shall be reviewed and declassified if there is no objection on the grounds of military security, and a copy of the declassified document forwarded to the Publication Board of the Department of Commerce. In the event of certain doubtful cases in which the government agency concerned may not be able to determine the extent of military interest in a document of this category, the item in question may be forwarded to the Publication Board, Department of Commerce, who will take it up with the appropriate military services and obtain their concurrence before declassification and release.

For full information regarding procedures on classified documents containing scientific and technical data, see SAB no. 2, dated 28 May 1946.

f. NON-CONCURRENCES

In the event no agreement can be reached by two offices within the same agency regarding the proper classification of a document

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the problem will be referred for decision to the lowest superior common to the disagreeing offices.

In the event no agreement can be reached by an agency as to the proper classification of a document, the problem will be referred for decision to the Security Advisory Board, State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, Washington 25, D. C. This reference will include the document or examples of the information in question and a full statement of the views of the differing agencies.

UNCLASSIFIED4. MARKING PROCEDURESa. GENERAL

After a downgrading authority has agreed that a classification of a document can be cancelled or changed, he should write or stamp over the mark at the top of the first page and such other pages as necessary to indicate the action, "Classification cancelled or changed to _____, by authority of (Official authorized to change), date, by (name and position person making the change)."

EXAMPLES:

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED

TO _____ BY AUTHORITY
OF _____ ■ DATE _____
BY _____

CLASSIFICATION CANCELLED
BY AUTHORITY OF _____
DATE _____

b. LETTERS AND REPORTS

Downgraded letters and reports, not permanently and securely fastened together, will be marked or stamped with the new classification at the top and bottom of each page and the old marking lined through. If the classification is cancelled, the markings on each page will be lined through.

c. BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Books or pamphlets being downgraded which are permanently and securely fastened together will be marked or stamped with the new appropriate classification on the cover, title page, first page,

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back page, and back cover, and the old markings lined through on all pages. If the classification is cancelled, the markings on all pages will be lined through.

d. BULK FILES OR SUPPLIES

When a document has been downgraded, bulk files or supplies thereof need not be marked as provided herein until copies are charged out for use. The change or cancellation of security classification will be indicated inside the file drawer or other storage container.

Under no circumstances, will declassified documents be forwarded to the National Archives or to the Library of Congress or other depositories until they have been appropriately marked as declassified.

UNCLASSIFIED5. DOWNGRADING NOTIFICATIONSa. GENERAL

The office which originally downgrades a document will, when practicable, notify all recipients or holders of copies thereof. All holders will, upon such notification mark a downgraded document in their possession as prescribed in Section III, Part 4.

b. RESPONSIBILITY FOR NOTIFICATION

If the document is not widely held, it shall be the responsibility of the Downgrading Authority to notify all recipients or holders of copies.

If the document is widely held in government agencies, a request may be forwarded to the Security Advisory Board for announcement of the action taken to all Security Officers of agencies concerned. Such a request will be accompanied by a list of known agencies holding the document.

c. TYPE OF NOTIFICATION

All notices of downgrading will specifically identify and describe the document or information, its office or origin, former classification, new classification, if any, authority for downgrading and date thereof.

UNCLASSIFIED6. DISPOSITIONa. RECORD COPIES

Care will be exercised at all times to insure that a record set of declassified documents is maintained in the files of the agency concerned, if the documents are needed in the conduct of current business. If such documents are not needed for current business they should be transferred to the National Archives or proposed for other disposition in accordance with law, according to Executive Order No. 9874, dated September 25, 1946.

b. EXCESS COPIES OF DECLASSIFIED BOOKS OR PAMPHLETS

Copies of declassified books or pamphlets originated by a government agency or department, which convey information of a more or less permanent character, may be transferred to the Library of Congress for distribution to other libraries which are depositories of Government publications, when such copies are excess to agency needs for current use or record purposes.

The Library of Congress will also accept copies of classified documents, if such documents are excess to the needs of the agency for current use or record purposes. They will be maintained in their classified status within the Library of Congress under proper security protection until notification is made to the Library that the documents have been declassified. No transmittal of classified documents will be made to the Library of Congress except by accepted means of transmittal for classified documents,

UNCLASSIFIEDc. DESTRUCTION

Declassified documents may be destroyed by the custodian thereof when it has been determined that:

- (1) The documents are not needed for record purposes.
- (2) The documents are excess to the number required for the Library of Congress or for agency needs.
- (3) A copy has been supplied to the Publication Board, where appropriate.

Classified documents, originated or received by any government agency, which do not fall into any of the above categories, may be destroyed by the custodian thereof without reference to declassification authority.

Top Secret, Secret, or Confidential documents and registered documents, which are to be destroyed, will be burned by the custodian or his authorized representative in the presence of a disinterested official. A certificate of destruction will be signed by both the custodian and the witnessing official in the case of Top Secret or Secret documents or registered documents and submitted to the authority directing the destruction, when appropriate.

Restricted documents may be destroyed in any manner which will render them useless.