

5 FAH-3 H-700 E.O.12958 LINE

E.O. 12958: SECURITY CLASSIFICATION GUIDANCE-LINE

(TL:TAGS-18; 08-30-2000)

Under Executive Order 12958, decisions made when classifying information must be documented and shown on the face of each originally classified document. These decisions include: (1) classification level; (2) classification authority (by name and position); (3) specific reason(s) for classification; and (4) declassification instructions. Each of these steps is described below:

STEP 1: Classification Level

Information may be classified at one of the following levels. If there is significant doubt about the appropriate level of classification, it is to be classified at the lower level. The first step is to identify the classification level of each portion. A portion is ordinarily defined as a paragraph but also includes subjects or titles, tables or graphs. Only in this way can the overall classification level be determined. Portion markings consist of the letters “(U)” for Unclassified or “(SBU)” for Sensitive But Unclassified, “(C)” for Confidential, “(S)” for Secret, “(TS)” for Top Secret and should be placed at the beginning of each portion (including the subject line). The overall classification level is determined by the highest classification level of any of the portions. Place the overall classification at the top and bottom of all pages.

STEP 2: Classification Authority

On the face of each message indicate the classification authority. For originally classified documents, indicate the name and position title of the original classification authority including the office and the agency (unless otherwise evident). Original classification means an initial determination that the information requires, in the interest of national security, protection against unauthorized disclosure. Original classification authority means an individual authorized to classify information in the first instance. Delegations of original classification authority must be in writing and can only be made by the Secretary or the Under Secretary for Management. The Department positions currently delegated original classification authority were listed in 2000 State 101063 and in a Department Notice dated May 26, 2000.

For telegrams, enter the “Classified By” and “Reason(s) for Classification” as free-form text in the first paragraph of the telegram text, following the last line in the header (REF line, or SUBJECT line if no REF line is entered).

Example: Classified By: David Smith, Director, WHA/CAN.
Reason(s) 1.5 (d) and (e)

Derivative Classification

If using a classified source document or classification guide as the basis for classification, the markings on the source document determine the markings to be applied to the new document. Derivative Classification is the act of incorporating, paraphrasing, restating or generating in new form information that is already classified, and carrying forward the original classification. Briefly identify the source document(s) used as the basis for classification and carry forward the declassification information from the source document. The “Reason for Classification”, as specified in the source document(s), is not required. Mark the document (as described in Step 1) with portion markings and highest overall classification level.

For telegrams, enter the “Derived From” and source document information as free-form text in the first paragraph of the telegram text, following the last line in the header (REF line, or SUBJECT line if no REF line is entered).

Examples:

Derived From: 2000 State 112345 dated 6/12/2000;

Derived From: Memorandum dated 6/14/1999, From WHA/CEN, David Smith, Subj: Chile Declassification Project

STEP 3: Reason for Classification

Information may not be considered for classification unless it concerns one or more of the classification categories set forth in Section 1.5 of E.O. 12958. The reason(s) for the decision to classify must be shown with the “Classified By” information. Include the number “1.5” plus the letter(s) that correspond to the pertinent classification category(ies) below:

1.5(a) military plans, weapons systems, or operations;

1.5(b) foreign government information *

1.5(c) intelligence activities (including special activities), sources or methods, or cryptology;

1.5(d) foreign relations or foreign activities of the U.S., including confidential sources;

- 1.5(e) scientific, technological or economic matters relating to national security;
- 1.5(f) USG programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities; and
- 1.5(g) vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, projects or plans relating to U.S. national security.

* Documents containing foreign government information (FGI) shall be marked to indicate the source government and classification level. If the identity of the source government must be protected, the pertinent portions of the document should be marked "FGI" together with the classification.

STEP 4: Declassification Action

E.O. 12958 requires declassification and public release of information that no longer meets the Order's standards for classification. Declassification means the authorized change in the status of national security information from classified to unclassified information. A declassification authority may be 1) the official who authorized the original classification, if still serving in the same position; 2) the originator's current successor in function; 3) a supervisory official of either; or 4) an official delegated declassification authority in writing. There are three choices when selecting a declassification option: 10 years, less than 10 years, or longer than 10 years.

- (a) A date or event less than 10 years from the date of original classification when the national security sensitivity of this information will lapse.

Example: DECL: 08/01/2005

Example: DECL: At the end of conference

- (b) A date 10 years from the date of original classification

Example: DECL: 10/14/2005

- (c) A citation from one of the exemption categories in Section 1.6 of E. O. 12958 that the national security sensitivity of the information will exceed 10 years. Include the number "1.6" and the pertinent category(ies) listed below:

1.6 X1: Reveal an intelligence source, method or activity, or a cryptologic system or activity.

1.6 X2: Reveal information that would assist in the development or use of weapons of mass destruction.

- 1.6 X3: Reveal information that would impair the development or use of technology within U.S. weapons systems.
- 1.6 X4: Reveal U.S. military plans or national security emergency preparedness plans.
- 1.6 X5: Reveal foreign government information
- 1.6 X6: Damage relations between the U.S. and a foreign government, reveal a confidential source or seriously undermine diplomatic activities that are reasonably expected to be ongoing for a period longer than 10 years.
- 1.6 X7: Impair the ability of responsible USG officials to protect the President, Vice President and other individuals for whom protection services are authorized in the interest of national security.
- 1.6 X8: Violate a statute, treaty or international agreement.

Example: DECL: 1.6 X.6, X8

For telegrams, enter the declassification instructions on the E.O 12958 line.

UNCLASSIFIED AND SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED (SBU)

On Unclassified and Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) telegrams, the notation "N/A" (Not Applicable) should appear on the E.O. 12958 line.

Example: E.O. 12958: N/A

For More Information

The Office of IRM Programs and Services (A/RPS/IPS) and the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS/IST/ISP) share responsibilities for the implementation of E.O. 12958. For more details on E.O. 12958, please refer to information on the Office of IRM Programs and Services FOIA Electronic Reading Room on the unclassified Intranet, OpenNet at <http://arpsips.a.state.gov/foia>.