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# Re: U.S. Gov't System for Classified Information

From: [jan@cyberzone.net](mailto:jan@cyberzone.net) (Jan Aldrich)  
Date: Mon, 17 Nov 1997 17:39:22 -0800

Most of the post below is correct. However, there are several problems. The main concepts of the security classification system are that the individual requiring access must have:

- 1) the proper clearance with the required investigation or re-investigation and
- 2) a "need to know."

"Need to know" may be demonstrated by very formal access protocols such as being "read" into a special access program. However, it really all the same concept. A person must not acquire more knowledge than is required to discharge his duties. Many times this is honored in the breach. Take the Walkers and others for example.

The usual basic access document is the Security Clearance/Access Roster. On the roster the individuals with their clearances and levels of access are set forth for the agency or command and signed by the commander or the responsible individual.

Some people may have a TOP SECRET clearance and have only SECRET access. Some people may be listed as approved for access to U. S. TOP SECRET, but not NATO TOP SECRET which would be COSMIC TOP SECRET.

>From: [withheld by request]  
>Subject: Classification of information  
>Date: Thu, 13 Nov 1997 22:46:31 -0800

>Well it's actually very simple, when you get your clearance  
>the levels of classification are very straight forward. They  
>Drill them into you actually.

>Bottom to top they are:

>Confidential  
>Secret  
>Top Secret

Agreed.

>There was also a level between Confidential and Secret known  
>as Restricted that was phased out in the late eighties.

Wrong. RESTRICTED was below CONFIDENTIAL and it was deleted during the Eisenhower Administration. Most countries still have the RESTRICTED classification. If U. S. components are given a foreign RESTRICTED document, they generally treat it as CONFIDENTIAL.

To add to the confusion under the Atomic Energy Act certain nuclear data is RESTRICTED DATA (RD) or FORMER RESTRICTED DATA (FRD). There are additional penalties for disclosure of this material. When it is referred to or marked it must contain these warnings such as the following examples:

Confidential Former Restricted Data (CFRD)  
Confidential Restricted Data (CRD)

Secret Former Restricted Data (SFRD)  
Secret Restricted Data (SRD)

There are a host of other warnings that carry no additional penalties:

NOFORN No Foreign Access  
WNTEL Warning: Sensitive Intelligence Methods Used

Communication Security (COMSEC) material is either key or code and requires special handling. It is marked CRYPTO. Additional penalties do apply. There is a requirement that it must be continually accounted for, so the custody requires each person to sign for it, and when they transfer it, they must have the next holder sign also. If someone tells you they had a SECRET CRYPTO clearance, they are showing their age. The material is still marked CRYPTO, but clearance long ago stopped reflecting this.

NATO classified information is marked:

NATO RESTRICTED  
NATO CONFIDENTIAL  
NATO SECRET  
COSMIC TOP SECRET (which is the NATO designation for Top Secret data.)

NATO also has a version of RESTRICTED DATA: ATOMAL. For NATO SECRET and above continuous accountability is required. There are additional penalties for disclosure. To have access an individual must be briefed on a special form. ATOMAL required authorization for access. This authorization is acknowledged on the same form as the NATO briefing. The clearance/access roster might reflect access as CTSA: COSMIC TOP SECRET ATOMAL.

Karl Pflock told me he acknowledged his NATO briefing at the security officers computer. However, the same concepts applies. Access to NATO information is not transferred from one command or agency to another. If you had NATO access at one place, it ends at change of station or when the need no longer exists. Robert Dean to the contrary, there is no COSMIC TOP SECRET clearance. He may have had access to COSMIC TOP SECRET information at NATO Headquarters. Once he left there the access (or clearance, if you like) ended.

There are special access programs. The Personnel Reliability Program (PRP) for two-person nuclear weapons operations is an example. TOP SECRET clearances are not necessarily required. The PRP requires a person to be "read" into the program. Only those personnel who have the are authorized clearance and investigation with the "Personnel Reliable Program Considered" have access. You may have the required clearance and be high ranking but if you are not in the program you can't even look. The briefing which "reads" a person into the program is acknowledged on a special form. The access ends with change of station or when the need no longer exists.

TOP SECRET documents require special handling in that they too must have continuous accountability. Each person that reads a TOP SECRET document must sign an acknowledgement that he has seen it.

>There are however layers of Top Secret:  
>Namely code word which almost always has two word qualifiers,  
>you see these in the DOD budget. Prior to the 1950 they were  
>one word codes such as Ultra, Purple, etc.

Here is my \*biggest\* objections to this post. There are \*no\* layers to TOP SECRET. There are special access to certain programs which is just an extension of the "Need to Know" concept. This sounds like playing with words. I agree there is no level above TOP SECRET. Layering may be one way to explain it. However, I think that makes these "Above TOP SECRET" bombasts sound reasonable--which they are not.

Timothy Good has been beating this drum for a long time--that there are levels above TOP SECRET. He is excused because he is "naive." After a certain time, one must stop being naive and come into the real world. However, to do so would probably decrease book sales.

Stan Freeman and Robert Wood to the contrary, the first most telling thing about the Special Operation Manual 1-01 is that it claims that things are classified in levels above TOP SECRET. This "tell" makes this document immediately suspect.

Compartmentalized information in special access programs is the way to get out of creating more levels of classified information. To gain access to compartmentalized information the level of investigations is higher and more rigorous. The individual must be nominated for what is called Sensitive Compartmentalized Information (SCI) and approved from a centralized granting authority. In the case of the Army it is the Central Clearance Facility.

SCI information is sent through a special communications channel. Many times high ranking officers also use this communication system as an informal back channel:

"To: General Seymour A. Gordon, Commanding General, Underground Base Division, Toole, Utah.

Flash, that briefing COL Phubar gave us was trash. The guy must have been drunk. You should consider putting him out to pasture.

--Lukie

Luke E. Skywalker, CG, 39th Crashed Saucer Depot."

Certain SCI programs have code words: like "Flash Fire," for a made up example. However, the idea is compartmentalization. If a new weapons system is being designed, the communications people probably do not need to know what the target acquisitions people are doing. So each has only required contact with the other. While the commo people may have access to Flash Fire, their compartment will only deal with commo and overlaps where they may affect other systems. There obviously needs to be different levels of compartmentalization within Flash Fire, and compartments above them to figure out how Flash Fire might be intergrated into the battle field, but these are not "levels above TOP SECRET." People that are trying to sell this, are selling cow manure and moonbeams.

>The project names are drawn from the same list as code words.

>Just holding a Top secret clearance does not clear you for  
>everything. You have to have access to a specific project or  
>information that was code word protected.

Agreed.

>Example I once worked on a project that was Top Secret "Long  
>Broom". It was cancelled in the cut backs in the nineties but  
>you had to be cleared to work that hardware. But "Long Broom"  
>was only a piece of a larger project with it's own code word.

This is essentially correct.

>That was how information or technology was compartmentalized.

>There was also levels of access on how you work on something.

>That would vary from must be examined only in a secure area to  
>the buddy system where you could not examine something alone  
>but only in pairs.

>Physical security was also addressed at this level.

>These levels were numbered 1 through 5 for the physical security  
>required but that may have changed.

The amount of physical security is generally provided by regulations.  
However, local commands and agencies may, and usually do, add to them.

Corso's filing cabinet is a laugh. The physical security he  
described doesn't cut it for what he said was in there.

>I've seen some of the BS out there about other levels, but there  
>isn't a need [because?] you can so layer a project in sub-project  
>each within a layer of physical, access and compartmentalized  
>security. Just think if there were more layers you'd have to  
>write those long winded regulations for how each type would be  
>dealt with and train those 19 year old MP's how to enforce those  
>regs.

>The badge colors I remember were Green or Blue had no clearance,  
>yellow would be confidential, Red was Secret and Top Secret. The  
>physical security whether a cypher locked door, Safe or guard  
>enforced the difference between secret and top secret and the  
>project access. Either you were on the list or you weren't. If  
>you weren't you could have a gold badge with Ultra top secret  
>majestic whatever and you would not get in regardless of rank.  
>No enigma wrapped with in a riddle but that doesn't make a good  
>X-files.

Colored badges is some type of local requirement.

Now to the last thing; so near and dear to the heart of every  
ufologist: "Eyes Only." Some messages are marked "Eyes  
only General Wallbanger." The message center clerk then has  
to either deliver it personally to Generally Wallbanger or  
wrap it up so General Wallbanger will know if someone else has  
seen it, and each person in the delivery chain must sign for  
the package. This is not some kind of security classification.  
It is an order. No one can look at this item but General  
Wallbanger.

I found some documents at the National Archives from the British  
in the HQ USAF files. The Deputy Director of Intelligence for  
Collection marked some TOP SECRET document he had received from  
the RAF: "Eyes Only Directorate of Intelligence." Now if a Naval  
Officer with access walked into the USAF Directorate of Intelligence  
and an USAF officer showed the Naval Officer, who had the proper  
clearance one of these documents, the Air Force officer did not  
necessarily violate a security regulation, but he sure as hell  
disobeyed a lawful order.

--

Jan Aldrich  
Project 1947

<http://www.iufog.org/project1947/>

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