

# CLASSIFICATION GUIDE

CLASSIFY official information ONLY if it requires safeguarding in the INTERESTS OF NATIONAL DEFENSE.

CLASSIFY official information or DOCUMENTS or EXTRACTS therefrom ACCORDING to its own CONTENT. NOT because of its RELATIONSHIP to OTHER classified information. Documents which REFER to classified information NEED NOT bear the CLASSIFICATION of the material REFERRED to if the reference is made by lower classified or unclassified identification.

CLASSIFY official information in the LOWEST CLASSIFICATION category consistent with the PROTECTION REQUIRED. Determine the classification as follows: If the information came into UNAUTHORIZED hands:

- COULD IT be PREJUDICIAL to the defense interests of the nation? If so, it is CONFIDENTIAL.
- COULD IT result in SERIOUS DAMAGE to the nation? If so, it is SECRET.
- COULD IT result in EXCEPTIONALLY GRAVE DAMAGE to the nation? If so, it is TOP SECRET.

AVOID OVERCLASSIFICATION and UNNECESSARY CLASSIFICATION. They UNDERMINE our SECURITY system and JEOPARDIZE the protection of VITAL MILITARY SECRETS just as surely as does neglect.

DO NOT CLASSIFY official information NOT AFFECTING THE NATIONAL DEFENSE. Official information believed to require safeguarding IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST shall be handled in accordance with SECNAV INST 5570.1 (effective edition).

DO NOT CLASSIFY official information, otherwise releasable, because its release might reveal ADMINISTRATIVE ERROR; or INEFFICIENCY; or MIGHT BE EMBARRASSING.

DO NOT CLASSIFY official information when PROTECTION IS NOT FEASIBLE because of necessary DISPLAY, UNCONTROLLED ACCESS PUBLIC AVAILABILITY.

DO NOT CLASSIFY official information WHEN the known necessary DISSEMINATION is so EXTENSIVE that protection is NOT PRACTICAL or when known that effective CONTROL must PASS FROM responsible U. S. AUTHORITY.

REFER to Chapter 4 (OPNAV INSTR. 5510.1 (effective edition)) NAVY SECURITY MANUAL for examples of information in the 3 categories defined below.

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Our authority to classify is derived from Executive Order 10501 of 5 November 1953, in which the three classification categories are defined as follows:

**TOP SECRET:** Except as may be expressly provided by statute, the use of the classification Top Secret shall be authorized, by appropriate authority, only for defense information or material which requires the HIGHEST DEGREE OF PROTECTION. The Top Secret classification shall be applied only to that information or material the defense aspect of which is paramount, and the unauthorized disclosure of which would result in EXCEPTIONAL GRAVE DAMAGE to the Nation such as leading to a definite break in diplomatic relations affecting the defense of the United States, an armed attack against the United States or its allies, a war, or the compromise of military or defense plans, or intelligence operations, or scientific or technological developments vital to the national defense.

**SECRET:** Except as may be expressly provided by statute, the use of the classification Secret shall be authorized, by appropriate authority, only for defense information or material the unauthorized disclosure of which could result in SERIOUS DAMAGE to the Nation, such as by jeopardizing the international relations of the United States, endangering the effectiveness of a program or policy of vital importance to the national defense, or compromising important military or defense plans, scientific or technological developments important to national defense, or information revealing important intelligence operations.

**CONFIDENTIAL:** Except as may be expressly provided by statute, the use of the classification Confidential shall be authorized, by appropriate authority, only for defense information or material the unauthorized disclosure of which could be PREJUDICIAL to the defense interests of the nation.