

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20504

October 14, 2022

Mr. Mark Bradley  
Director  
Information Security Oversight Office  
National Archives and Records Administration  
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Room 100  
Washington, DC 20408-0001

Subject: **Fundamental Classification Guidance Review 2022 Tasking**

Dear Mark,

In response to the Information Security Oversight Office's (ISOO) memorandum dated December 9, 2021, please be advised that the National Security Council (NSC), Executive Office of the President, completed actions to fulfill requirements established in section 1.9 of Executive Order 13526, "Classified National Security Information," and in its implementing directive, 32 CFR 2001.16. The NSC reviewed its Security Classification Guide (SCG) with subject matter experts and Original Classification Authorities, confirmed the necessity for maintaining each OCA, and completed the attached ISOO checklist.

Security Classification Guide Review:

With assistance from subject matter experts, users, and Original Classification Authorities, the NSC evaluated its Security Classification Guide and determined that each element within the SCG remains accurate and the accompanying classification instruction is current. The NSC's Executive Secretary and Chief of Staff, who is an Original Classification Authority (OCA), approved the SCG in April 2018. It provides authoritative classification guidance for all NSC staff to use when determining whether to classify information and, if so, at the appropriate level. Various elements within the SCG provide instructions for users to mark specific information as UNCLASSIFIED, SECRET, or TOP SECRET levels based on section 1 of E.O. 13526.

The NSC's SCG identifies the classified national security information (CNSI) originating in and created by the NSC, which correspond to the categories for classification found in section 1.4 of E.O. 13526. Importantly, the NSC's SCG also includes instructions for properly identifying and marking CNSI originating from other Executive Branch departments and agencies, including the Intelligence Community. The NSC opted to include this information based on user feedback on the prevalence of this type of information within NSC products. The OCAs agreed on the importance of NSC derivative classification determinations aligning with guidance contained in other agency SCGs.

The 2018 SCG updated the NSC's 2017 SCG and, as indicated earlier, was developed with contributions from OCAs, classification and declassification experts within the NSC and subject

matter experts from across multiple NSC Directorates. Staff reviewed individual elements in the SCG relating to their program areas and confirmed decisions on classification, the level of classification, and the duration of classification.

The NSC updated its SCG to coincide with the adoption of the automated Classification Management Tool (CMT). This tool is used to assist with electronic document marking, improve marking consistency and standards, improve user awareness of classification principles and processes (including marking information as unclassified), and aid overall information security and classification management. While the CMT focuses on the NSC SCG, it also includes the ability to cite other agency security classification guides that the NSC staff frequently consult to support their work. The CMT also is a means to share and read other agency SCGs, linking users to a library of agency SCGs. Additionally, the 2018 NSC SCG was created in a standard digital format and was not machine readable. As a result of the 2022 FCGR, the NSC has developed an XML version that is machine readable, newly searchable, and available to all users on the CMT.

The NSC's 2018 SCG specifically included a verification of all individual classification items that include an automatic declassification exemption. This review determined that all items currently exempted continue to meet the requirements for exemption as indicated in the SCG. None required modification nor were there any new items added.

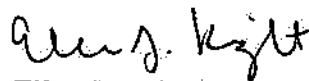
Original Classification Authority Confirmation:

As part of the FCGR, NSC conducted a review of existing Original Classification Authorities. Two were designated by the President: the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (National Security Advisor) and the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism. The President's National Security Advisor limited further delegation of TOP SECRET OCA to 7 positions within the NSC. OCA delegation at NSC is unchanged since it was drastically reduced during the 2017 FCGR.

The NSC reviewed its initial and refresher OCA training, as well as its derivative classification training, to ensure they reflected current marking guidance and classification requirements. The NSC OCA training includes training on use of the NSC SCG and the OCA's roll in standardization/formalization of classification decisions at the NSC. The training emphasizes to OCAs the importance of avoiding overclassification and highlights the role all classifiers have in challenging classification determinations they believe are incorrect.

As a Senior Agency Official and an OCA in the NSC, please contact me if you have any questions regarding this submission or about the NSC SCG.

Sincerely,



Ellen J. Knight

Senior Director, Record Access and  
Information Security Management