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# Data Communications Group Classification Guide



**Version 1.0**

**26 September 1997**

**Classify By:** Howard J. Mitchell, Brig Gen, USAF  
**Reason:** (1.5c) Intelligence Sources and Methods  
**Declass. On:** (X1) Intelligence Sources and Methods  
**Derived From:** Original Classification Authority

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# I. Executive Summary (U)

**(U) Introduction and Purpose:** This Data Communications Group (DCG) Classification Guide describes the security classification and control system determinations for various elements of National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) COMM Directorate information. The objective of the guide is to:

- 1) Provide general guidance on the relative national security value and sensitivity of the NRO Relay Satellite Program;
- 2) Establish appropriate classification determinations for the relay satellite program; and
- 3) Aid in establishing a baseline for program protection efforts in the NRO and the COMM Directorate.

~~(FOUO)~~ Determining the appropriate security classification level to assign to information, technology or a product is not a simple process. Numerous factors, based on the Executive Order 12958 criteria for classification must be considered. A comprehensive review was conducted by senior program technical officers on the existing protection provided to the relay satellite programs acquisition, schedules, ground operations, research and technology development. These officers concluded that the security classification philosophy would be focused on the protection of the following key elements:

- 1) The user mission;
- 2) Cryptography;
- 3) System survivability;
- 4) System vulnerabilities; and
- 5) Advanced technologies.

Certain information in this classification guide when standing alone is unclassified; however, this information may become classified when associated with overhead reconnaissance or the National Reconnaissance Office.

**(U) Approval:** Effective this date, the DCG Classification Guide is approved for use by all personnel authorized access to NRO Relay Satellite Program information.

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Acquisition and Operation

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# Table of Contents (U)

- I. (U) Executive Summary .....2
- II. (U) Overview.....4
- III. (U) Key Sections Index .....9
  - Attachment 1 .....11
  - Attachment 2 .....12
- IV. (U) Classification Guidelines.....13
  - 1.0 Relay Satellite - General Information .....13
  - 2.0 Systems Acquisition Plans and Schedules.....16
  - 3.0 Modular Communications Program(s) .....17
  - 4.0 Relay Satellite - Detailed .....18

- 9.0 Backup Mission Control System .....28
- 10.0 Laser Communications .....30
- 11.0 Relay Satellite Research and Technology Development .....33

(b)(3)

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## II. Overview (U)

**(U) Changing National Security Environment:** The analytic process used to produce this guide took a number of complex factors into account. Principal among these was the end of the cold war. In short, an era passed thus prompting a reexamination of long standing secrecy requirements. It is important to note that this reexamination, which is ongoing, does not imply that basic security tenets are no longer needed. Policy makers and users of the NRO product will accept secrecy requirements as long as they are justified and supported by facts. The provisions of Executive Order (EO) 12958 on the classification of national security information, signed by the President on 17 April 1995, illustrates this point. Moreover, the EO formed the basis for evaluating the information listed in the guide. Other factors that influenced the effort to produce the guide included the declassification of the NRO organization, the disclosure and release of obsolete NRO systems and products (i.e., CORONA), US sponsored technology transfers, the commercialization of space technology, and the need to make NRO assets more readily available to warfighters and other users such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Lastly, the process took into account the fact that much of our relay technology has evolved into a mature capability.

~~(FOUO)~~ **Exposure Analysis:** A key part of the analytic process used to produce the guide involved an exposure analysis of relay satellite information available through open sources. The objective of the exposure analysis was to provide a reference point to measure NRO information loss. The exposure analysis took into account information published on NRO programs and systems in 76 open source documents published between 1984 and 1995. The exposure analysis also took into account some of the information losses resulting from inadvertent exposure of relay satellite information, as well as information losses from official releases. The scope of exposure nearly covers the relay satellite program end-to-end i.e., from launch integration, to orbits, to mean mission duration and to ground stations.

**(U) Analytic Tool:** A classification/compartimentation decision tool, based on EO 12958 criteria was developed and used to analyze the various items of the Relay Satellite program. As shown in attachment 1 the tool is essentially a decision model that aids the Original Classification Authority (OCA) in the process of:

- 1) Assessing the impact of exposure.
- 2) Determining whether to classify (i.e., does the information meet EO 12958 criteria)
- 3) Determining a classification level.
- 4) Determining whether to compartment.
- 5) Determining which compartment.

The classification/compartimentation decision tool does not produce right or wrong answers. It is not a matter of simply pouring a question into the top of the tool and turning a handle to produce a result. The process of reaching a classification decision is highly subjective. It is a process that is dependent upon the expertise, judgement and facts available to the OCA making the decision. Recognizing this, the tool, through a series of questions, forces a uniform analysis based on available data and accepted fact(s). Documented supporting data and facts are essential in order to formulate answers to the questions in the tool. In addition, the questions are structured to facilitate the elimination of intuition, and/or anecdotal information that may introduce bias or

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unduly influence a classification decision. Essentially, the tool aids the compilation and organization of data in order to establish why an item of information is either classified or not. The tool also aids in minimizing variances in classification determinations made by individuals who have different levels of subject matter expertise. Lastly, the tool forces one to document how and why a determination meets the criteria in EO 12958. As a matter of security policy, the tool was adopted NRO-wide to aid in the development of classification decisions.

**(U) Executive Order 12958 Classified National Security Information:** This EO has had a significant impact on how and why national security information is classified. And as mentioned previously, the EO formed the basis for the classification/compartimentation decision tool that was used to evaluate information in the guide. Under EO 12958 information may not be considered for classification unless it falls under one or more of the following categories:

1. Military plans, weapons systems, or operations.
2. Foreign government information.
3. Intelligence activities (including special activities), intelligence sources or methods or cryptology
4. Foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States including confidential sources.
5. Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security
6. United States programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities.
7. Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, projects or plans relating to national security.

**(U) Classification Levels:** The EO further states that information may only be classified at one of the three levels: Top Secret, applied to information, the unauthorized disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause exceptionally grave damage to the national security; Secret, applied to information, the unauthorized disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause serious damage to the national security; and, Confidential, applied to information, the unauthorized disclosure of which reasonably could be expected to cause damage to the national security. Any release of classified information to non U.S. persons must be coordinated with the program office.

**(U) Classification Authority:** It is important to understand that with implementation of EO 12958, only a limited number of NRO officials have Original Classification Authority. All remaining NRO personnel have the authority to classify information derivatively. In establishing the information categories and classification levels of an item of information, the EO further directs that the Original Classification Authority must be able to identify or describe why unauthorized disclosure would result in either damage, serious damage, or exceptionally grave damage to the national security. In cases where there is serious doubt or debate about the classification level of an item of information, the EO states that the item of information in question shall be classified at the lower level.

**(U) For Official Use Only (FOUO):** FOUO is not a classification marking. Originators should mark information when they create it to call attention to FOUO content. An FOUO marking does not imply the information will be automatically withheld under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). However, an FOUO marking will ensure

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a review of a requested record. FOUO information should be destroyed in a manner that would preclude reconstruction of the material.

~~(S/B)~~ **Information Categories:** This guide contains four categories of information

- 1) Classified information compartmented BYEMAN (BYE);
- 2) Information that is classified and compartmented TALENT-KEYHOLE (TK);
- 3) Information that is classified collateral; and
- 4) Unclassified information.

It is important to understand that an item of information listed in the guide as SECRET is no less classified than an item of information labeled SECRET BYE or SECRET TK. The SCI designators BYE and/or TK do not imply a higher level of classification, only a higher level of protection as prescribed by the Director Central Intelligence Directive (DCID). The Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) designator simply limits access to the information on the basis of need-to-know.

~~(S/B)~~ **Designation of SCI:** Various items of information in the guide have been designated either exclusively BYE or exclusively TK. For the most part, the information that has been designated as BYE deals with survivability and vulnerability of systems, subsystems and/or components, budget, some command and control operations, classified relationships and sensitive sources and methods used in the research, development and operation of systems. The information in this guide that has been designated TK, for the most part, includes information on new systems and or modifications to current ones that the user community needs for planning purposes, certain capabilities relating to tasking, ground station locations and sensitive/perishable product capabilities. **UNDER no circumstance is it permissible for a single item of information to be listed as both BYEMAN and TALENT-KEYHOLE simultaneously.** The determination of the control system to be used will be made based upon the audience. For instance, not all contractors are accessed at the Talent-Keyhole level; therefore, certain information would need to be protected in Byeman channels especially when generated in contractor development and manufacturing facilities. However, the same information could be handled in the Talent-Keyhole system when going to the Intelligence Community.

**(U) Classification Sources:** For reference purposes the classification guides in Section II include a "Source" column that lists numbers that identify the original classification authority for the item of information. As one will note, most of the items of information in the guide pertain to the NRO Relay Satellite program. As such, many classification determinations were made and source number 4 (Original Program Classification Guides) and number 5 (Existing Program Security Guidelines) are frequently listed. For completeness, a number of items of information are listed in the guide that deal with programs outside the management cognizance of the Director of Communications. These items were derivatively classified and the appropriate source number(s) listed. The sources, preceded by their corresponding number, are as follows:

- 1) Central Imagery Office (CIO) Imagery Policy Series.
- 2) Signals Intelligence Security Regulations (SISR).
- 3) Security Control Manual and Classification Guide for National MASINT Reconnaissance Materials (MASINT Policy Series).

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- 4) Original Program Classification Guidelines
- 5) Existing Program Security Guidelines
- 6) Security Implementation Plan for Compartmentation Restructure, November 18, 1993.
- 7) DNRO briefings and Staff Memoranda.
- 8) Implementation Plan for Further Decompartmentation and Declassification of the National Reconnaissance Office, April 24, 1995.
- 9) Executive Order 12951, Release of Imagery Acquired by Space-Based National Intelligence Reconnaissance Systems, February 22, 1995.
- 10) Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-49 regarding National Space Policy.
- 11) Declassification of the terms "Talent-Keyhole" and the satellite mission designator "KH" and their general relationship to intelligence, February 23, 1995.

**(U) Reason for Classification:** Under the provisions of EO 12958, the reason(s) for a classification decision must be documented. To meet this requirement, the EO specifies that, at a minimum, reference to the pertinent classification category(ies) described in Section 1.5 of EO 12958 plus the letter(s) that correspond to the category(ies) should be listed (e.g., 1.5 (a) equates to: Military plans, weapons systems, or operations). The classification categories preceded by their corresponding letter designators are listed below:

- (a) "Military plans, weapons systems, or operations."
- (b) "Foreign government information."
- (c) "Intelligence activities (including special activities), sources or methods, or cryptology."
- (d) "Foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States, including confidential sources."
- (e) "Scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to the national security."
- (f) "United States programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities."
- (g) "Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, projects or plans relating to the national security."

**(U) Declassification Instructions:** With regard to declassification, EO 12958 specifies that the original classification authority will apply a date or event for declassification that corresponds to the lapse of the information's national security sensitivity. And, the date should not exceed 10 years. Individuals who have original classification authority, however, may determine that certain information must remain classified beyond 10 years. In this case, the information must be annotated with the letter "X" plus a numerical designation that corresponds to a specific exemption category or set of exemption categories described in Section 1.6 of EO 12958 (e.g. X1 equates to: Reveals an intelligence source, method, or activity, or a cryptologic system or activity). The X markings and corresponding declassification exemptions are as follows:

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- X1 Reveals an intelligence source method, or activity, or a cryptologic system or activity.
- X2 Reveals information that would assist in the development or use of weapons of mass destruction.
- X3 Reveals information that would impair the development or use of technology within a United States weapons system.
- X4 Reveals United States military plans, or national security emergency preparedness plans.
- X5 Reveals foreign government information.
- X6 Would damage relations between the United States and a foreign government, reveal a confidential source, or seriously undermine diplomatic activities that reasonably are expected to be ongoing for period greater than 10 years.
- X7 Would impair the ability of responsible United States Government officials to protect the President, the Vice President, and or other individuals for whom protection services, in the interest of national security, are authorized.
- X8 Would violate a statute, treaty, or international agreement.

**(U) Portion Marking:** The EO mandates that all classified information carry an appropriate portion marking. The NRO has been granted a limited exemption from this requirement. The NRO does not have to portion mark information generated and maintained within the NRO by its government staff and/or contractors. Information produced by the NRO that is disseminated externally, however, must be portion marked. In this case, the term external is defined as any organization or entity outside the management cognizance of the Director of the NRO. Prior to disseminating this classification guide to an organization external to the NRO, individuals must first contact the DCG Security Staff.

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### III. Key Sections Index (U)

- 1.0 (U) Relay Satellite - General Information .....13
  - 1.13 Number of active satellites .....14
  - 1.16 Multi-Mission Bus .....15
  - 1.17 Drawings, models and photos of a relay satellite .....15
  - 1.21 Program cover stories .....15
- 2.0 (U) Systems Acquisition Plans and Schedules .....16
  - 2.1 General information .....16
  - 2.2 Funding .....16
- 3.0 (U) Modular Communications Program(s) .....17
  - 3.10 Relationship between HS-A11 and all Business Units .....17
- 4.0 (U) Relay Satellite -Detailed .....18
  - 4.1 Communications .....18
  - 4.2 Cryptography .....19
  - 4.3 Ground Operations .....20
  - 4.4 Launch and Orbital Operations .....21
  - 4.5 Controlled Deorbit .....23

~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET~~

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**9.0 (U) Backup Mission Control System .....28**

**10.0 (U) Laser Communications.....30**

**11.0 (U) Relay Satellite Research and Technology Development .....33**

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**Attachment 2**

**Classification**  
(As appropriate when form filled in)

**DCG Classification Guide Change Request**

**Change Request No.:**  
(Assigned by DCG Security Staff)

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**Originator:**  
(Name, Organization, Functional Activity)

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**Contact Information:**  
(Address, Phone and FAX Numbers)

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**Date:**

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**Proposed Change:**                      **New Item**  **Modification**  **Classification**  **Other**

**Item/Listing:**  
(Guide Section, Item Number, Page)

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**Change Description:**  
(Detailed to include other items affected)

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**Rationale:**

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**Action:**  
(To be completed by DCG Security)

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