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Information Security Oversight Office

National Archives and Records Administration

700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20408



ISOO Notice 2009-06: Handling NATO Information Identified during Automatic Declassification Processing

December 12, 2008

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an alliance of 26 countries from North America and Europe committed to fulfilling the goals of the North Atlantic Treaty signed on April 4, 1949. NATO information is information that has been generated by or for NATO, or member nation national information that has been released into the NATO security system. NATO controls its classified records through a registry system, in which individual documents are numbered and listed in inventories. The Central United States Registry is located in Arlington, Virginia, and oversees more than 125 sub-registries in the U.S. and abroad. NATO registry documents are marked with an alphanumeric identifier located in the upper right corner of the cover page and by a NATO security classification (i.e., COSMIC TOP SECRET, NATO SECRET, NATO CONFIDENTIAL, NATO RESTRICTED, NATO UNCLASSIFIED, and the ATOMAL designation).

Classified NATO information may also be embedded within documents produced by the U.S. Government.

Declassification reviewers who encounter NATO information while conducting declassification reviews prior to the onset of automatic declassification should adhere to the following general guidance:

For classified NATO documents already accessioned by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) or which will be accessioned by NARA: For documents that are clearly classified NATO registry documents, tab the document with an SF 715 Declassification Review Tab, indicated as a referral to "NARA" in field 9 of Part A of the SF 715 and with an indication of "NATO Registry" in field 8. NARA will enter that document into its sub-registry upon processing. All such records have been exempted from automatic declassification by the Office of the Secretary of Defense or the Department of State.

For classified NATO documents that will not be accessioned by NARA: If you encounter classified NATO registry documents in your own collection, mixed with non-NATO documents, contact the NATO sub-registry authority within your agency, department, or command. The procedures for handling classified NATO information are specified in the United States Security Authority for NATO Affairs Instruction 1-07, "Implementation of NATO Security Requirements."

For classified NATO information in a U.S. Government document: If you encounter what appears to be classified NATO information embedded in a document produced and classified by the U.S. Government, consider the following points:

1. **Determine if the information is actually classified NATO information, not U.S. Government information.** Not all mentions of NATO constitute classified NATO information. Many U.S. Government documents will discuss interaction with NATO member countries, aspects of combined military exercises, or other topics that would not necessarily require coordination with NATO. Information requiring coordination with NATO might include comments on extracts of classified NATO policy documents, classified meeting summaries with detailed paraphrases from other NATO representatives, or similar cases where NATO's interest is clearly involved in the classification of that information.
2. **Determine if you can exempt that document.** If your ISCAP-approved declassification guide allows your agency to exempt the potential NATO information from automatic declassification under 25X6 (foreign relations) or 25X9 (treaty or statute)—or if your agency may otherwise exempt the document—then exempt that document from declassification.
3. **Determine to whom to refer the document.** If your agency may not exempt the potential NATO information, or if your agency wishes to declassify your equity in the document, then determine which U.S. agency has the responsibility to coordinate the information with NATO. In general, refer information regarding diplomatic negotiations and civil issues to the Department of State, and refer information regarding military issues to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Information regarding nuclear weapons, furthermore, will also be referred to the Department of Energy.

Please direct any questions regarding this ISOO notice to: isoo@nara.gov.

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