

## **ISOO Notice 2023-002: Handling NATO Information Identified during Automatic Declassification Processing**

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June 23, 2023

### **Authorities**

1. Executive Order 13526, “Classified National Security Information”
2. NATO Security Directive C-M(2002)49-REV1 “Security Within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”
3. NATO 1-07, “Implementation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Requirements”

### **Purpose and Background**

The purpose of this ISOO Notice is to provide guidance to agencies for the proper handling of NATO classified information encountered in records under review for automatic declassification.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an alliance of 31 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 members. NATO administratively controls classified information NATO SECRET and above via a registry system. The NATO registry system acts as the main receiving and dispatching authority for the Nation for which it has been established, and in which individual records are numbered and listed in inventories. In support of the United States Security Authority to NATO (USSAN) and in compliance with NATO Security directives, the Central United States Registry (CUSR), operating under the auspices of the Secretary of the Army, oversees more than 140 sub-registries in the U.S. and abroad.

Pursuant to NATO Security directive C-M(2002)49-REV1 “SECURITY WITHIN THE NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)” NATO classified information is designated and marked as: COSMIC TOP SECRET (CTS), NATO SECRET (NS), NATO CONFIDENTIAL (NC), NATO RESTRICTED (NR), and ATOMAL. Records classified NATO SECRET and above and ATOMAL information classified at any level, must be controlled and accounted for within the registry system pursuant to NATO security requirements and the United States Security Authority to NATO 1-07, “Implementation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization Security Requirements.”

### **Identification and Handling of NATO Information**

NATO registry records are marked with a unique alphanumeric identifier located in the upper right corner of the cover page and by a NATO security designation. NATO records classified at the CONFIDENTIAL and NATO RESTRICTED levels do not call for NATO Registry numbers, but still require safeguarding, storage, and handling as NATO classified material. The absence

of a NATO registry number on NATO classified material *never* implies the overall NATO classification markings of the record do not apply or are otherwise in question. Security requirements for access, protection, and declassification review continue to apply and will be enforced pursuant to applicable U.S. and NATO security directives.

When encountering NATO information while conducting declassification reviews prior to the onset of automatic declassification, declassification programs should adhere to the following general guidance:

- **For NATO classified records in the custody of the originating department/agency and not yet legally transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) per the Federal Records Act, either within department/agency custody or stored with NARA's Federal Records Centers Program (FRCP):**
  - 1) Agencies with records containing Classified National Security Information stored with the FRCP shall establish a NATO POC with the FRCP and the CUSR to facilitate the recovery of records with marked NATO equity. When encountering marked NATO classified records in agency collections commingled with non-NATO records, segregate the NATO classified records from U.S. classified records. Notify and coordinate the transmission of the identified records with the NATO sub-registry authority within your agency, department, or command in accordance with NATO and USSAN 1-07 security regulations.
  - 2) For records stored with the FRCP: When encountering marked NATO classified records in agency collections stored with the FRCP commingled with non-NATO records, proceed in accordance with the pre-arranged Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) your department/agency has with the FRCP. The MOAs possess the following baseline elements: segregation of NATO classified records from non-NATO classified records, notification to the records owner agency NATO security point of contact (POC), notification to the records owner Agency Records Officer, notification to the records owner security manager, notification to CUSR, and notification to the NARA FRCP InfoSec & CUI Program Manager. The FRCP and the agency NATO security POC shall coordinate the transfer of custody of the material to the records owner to ensure proper control, safeguarding, and accountability protocol is followed in accordance with NATO and USSAN 1-07 security regulations. CUSR will coordinate discovery notifications with Defense Technology Security Administration (representing the USSAN), as appropriate. Agencies whose MOAs are not updated to reflect the above procedures shall use this Notice as mandatory guidance until such time as updates occur.

In cases where the originating agency/record owner is not apparent, refer to CUSR for guidance. The procedures for handling classified NATO information are specified in the USSAN 1-07.

- **For NATO classified records that will not be accessioned by NARA:**

When encountering marked NATO classified records in agency collections commingled with non-NATO records, contact the NATO sub-registry authority within that agency, department, or command. Segregate these records from non-NATO classified records and coordinate the return of the records to the records owner's NATO sub-registry authority within that agency, department, or command in accordance with USSAN 1-07 security regulations. In cases where the record owner is not apparent, refer to the CUSR for guidance.

- **For NATO classified records already accessioned by NARA:**


For NATO classified documents already accessioned by NARA, 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 315 with an indication of "NATO" in field 8. NARA will segregate the document during processing.

- **For NATO classified information found within a U.S. Government-originated record:**

When encountering what appears to be NATO classified information embedded in a U.S. Government-originated record (with or without NATO classification banner or paragraph portion markings present), consider the following points:

- 1) **Determine if the information is actually classified NATO information.** Not all mention of NATO constitutes classified NATO information. Many U.S. Government records 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 records, 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) **If you believe you are in the possession of NATO classified information, please follow the procedures as described in the section above.**

Please direct any questions regarding this ISOO Notice to: [isoo@nara.gov](mailto:isoo@nara.gov).

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark A. Bradley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end of the last name.

MARK A. BRADLEY  
Director