

## **Declassification Process**

### **Proficiency Code: A**

The proper marking of a classified document is the specific responsibility of the original or derivative classifier (i.e., the author or originator of the information). Derivative classifiers shall refer to the source document(s), SCGs, or other guidance issued by the OCA when determining the markings to apply.

The highest level of classified information contained in a document shall appear in a way that will distinguish it clearly from the informational text and shall be conspicuous enough to alert anyone handling the document that it is classified.

The holder of an improperly marked classified document shall contact the document originator to obtain correct markings and shall apply those marking as required.

You cannot apply classification or other security markings to any article or portion of an article that has appeared in a newspaper, magazine, or other public medium. If an article is evaluated to see if it contains classified information, record the results of the review separately. However, the article and the evaluation may be filed together.

To facilitate information sharing and declassification processes, whenever practicable a classified attachment, addendum, annex, enclosure, or similar section shall be used when classified information constitutes only a small portion of an otherwise unclassified document. Alternately, a separate product that permits dissemination at the lowest level of classification possible or in unclassified form may be prepared.

If a classified document has components likely to be removed and used or maintained separately, mark each component as a separate document. Examples are annexes or appendices to plans, major parts of reports, or reference charts in a program directive. If an entire major component is unclassified, it may be marked on its face, top and bottom "UNCLASSIFIED," and add the statement "All portions of this (annex, appendix, etc.) are Unclassified." No further markings are required on such a component.

Give particular attention to information intended for display on Web sites to ensure that the information carries all appropriate markings. Since Web technologies permit data access without viewing the initial and/or cover pages, page and portion markings are especially important to alert users to the presence of classified information and the level of protection it requires.

#### **Classification authority block**

The classification authority block shall appear on the face of each classified US document and shall indicate the authority for the classification determination and the duration of classification (i.e., declassification and downgrading instructions). The authority for the classification determination may be either original or derivative.

The only requirement for the placement of the classification authority block is that it be on the face of the document. While placement on the bottom left of the page is most typical, available space determines whether the block is on the right side, left side, or appears as one line. The classification authority block on electronic e-mails, messages, web pages and similar electronic material may appear as a single line of text.

Use the standard format “YYYYMMDD” when specifying dates in the classification authority block.

Include a “Declassify On:” line on the face of each classified U.S. government document, except those containing RD or FRD. Documents containing both RD or FRD information and national security information (NSI) must include a “Declassify On:” line annotated as follows: “Not Applicable (or N/A) to RD/FRD portions” and “See source list for NSI portions.” The source list, which must be included and not listed on the first page, must show the declassification instructions for each of the NSI sources. Do not mark documents containing only RD or FRD with declassification instructions. Downgrading instructions are not required for every classified document but require placement on the face of each document to which they apply. A downgrading instruction is an addition to, and not a substitute for, declassification instructions. Downgrading instructions shall not be applied to documents containing FGI, RD, or FRD.

Commanders and directors ensure that all classified information intended for destruction is destroyed by authorized means and appropriately cleared personnel. Classified information that cannot be destroyed shall be reevaluated and, when appropriate, downgraded, declassified, or retired to a designated record center. Control classified information in a manner designed to minimize the possibility of unauthorized removal and/or access. A burn bag may be used to store classified information awaiting destruction at a central destruction facility. Refer to AFI 16–1404 and AFI 110-701 and local directives for more guidance on destroying classified information.