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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

27 June 2012

Mr. John P. Fitzpatrick
Information Security Oversight Office
700 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20408-0001

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick:

In response to your letter of 23 January 2012, this is the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) final report on the results of the Fundamental Classification Guidance Review required by Executive Order 13526, Classified National Security Information signed by President Obama on 31 December 2009.

The CIA has been fully engaged in this fundamental classification guidance review since the signing of the Order in 2009. Unlike many other agencies, the CIA has maintained only one comprehensive classification guide rather than individual guides for projects, programs or categories of information. The CIA classification guide is a document intended to be used by trained intelligence officers. As a result, the guide takes into account the extensive training provided to CIA Intelligence Officers. The scope of the CIA mission is vast and the complexities of intelligence tradecraft and operations are staggering. Context plays an important role in classification of intelligence. When the information was collected, the significance of the details, and the sensitivity of the source all contribute. There is often no simple rule or formula that will ensure that only the protection needed can be applied to the information. Knowledge and experience are an integral part of the classification process along with guidelines that establish the outer limits to prevent over classification.

Nevertheless, we did undertake a zero-based review of our comprehensive guide. Our review determined that greater precision in the use of our guide might be possible if we take the 19 key intelligence disciplines that are represented in the guide and consult senior subject matter experts (SMEs) in each

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discipline. We have assembled a team of classification guidance professionals to engage with our SMEs in a way that will help us identify in great detail why specific elements of our business and tradecraft are classified and to correctly identify those aspects that are not classified or can stop being regarded as classified. With each such topic and fact we will determine the appropriate level and duration of classification and use this careful work to either validate or change our existing guidance.

While I can't, in this letter, discuss the specifics of the review of CIA classified information, I can report that we have seen some previously classified information now listed as "unclassified" and other information listed at a lower classification level. As you know, carrying out this work in a highly professional manner requires engaging with our most senior experts in each intelligence discipline within the scope of the CIA mission. In times of high operational tempo, we also must balance the need to provide critical intelligence to our policy makers with this engagement. We are optimistic, however, that the current pace will ensure the highest quality review in a reasonable amount of time.

The use of exemptions from declassification as part of our classification guidance is also under review and is an integral part of our revised declassification guide that is being prepared for ISCAP review. The ISCAP has not yet voted on the CIA declassification guide, but we expect that the number of exemptions we use as part of current classification guidance will be significantly less than the exemptions approved for material over 20 years old. This winnowing of exemptions ensures that much of the information classified currently will either be declassified automatically at 25 years, or carefully reviewed for any applicable exemptions in the future.

Intelligence collection, analysis and reporting is an inherently classified business and as a result CIA Intelligence Officers spend a great deal of time learning how to weigh the need for classification with the pressing need to share products with those to bring intelligence to action. Our work on revising the CIA guide is moving apace. I fully expect that the results will ensure greater precision in the way CIA officers classify information. It is our plan to transform a comprehensive guide with 19 key elements into a guide with at

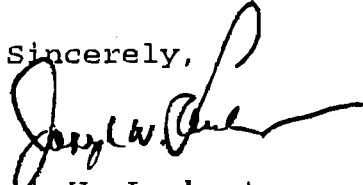
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least 19 appendices that each represents a unique intelligence discipline. We will augment the guide changes with additional training for CIA intelligence professionals in derivative classification. We believe that learning to appropriately classify intelligence information is as much a part of the intelligence business as the collection and reporting itself.

CIA looks forward to continuing work with you and your staff as our review and guidance revision continues.

Sincerely,



Joseph W. Lambert
Director, Information Management Services

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