

SUBJECT: SYSTEMATIC REVIEW FOR DECLASSIFICATION

SYNOPSIS:

The program of Systematic Review for Declassification mandated by Executive Order 12065 is a disaster. It is not cost effective; it syphons off valuable, scarce resources from CIA's primary mission; and it poses security risks. It should be abolished. The General Accounting Office has also recommended its abolition.

BACKGROUND:

Section 3-4 of Executive Order 12065 (E.O. 12065) effective 1 December 1978 requires the Executive Branch to institute programs to review all "permanently valuable records" when they reach 20 years of age (30 years for foreign government information) to determine whether the records should remain classified. If they remain classified after such review, they then must be reviewed again 10 years later, and every 10 years thereafter until declassified, unless a longer period is agreed to by the Director, Information Security Oversight Office (ISOO). Such ISOO exemptions can be difficult to come by.

The above requirement is not new. The idea started during the Eisenhower administration and in 1972 President Nixon issued E.O. 11652 which contained a similar declassification review requirement with two major differences: the initial review was to take place when records reached 30 years of age, and the time interval for re-review was left to Department Heads. E.O. 12065, recognizing that agencies were not geared up to switch from the old 30-year period to the new 20-year requirement overnight, allowed agencies 10 years to close the gap. Hence, by 1 December 1988 all permanent records dated 1 December 1968 and before are to receive an initial review.

CURRENT STATUS:

Our best estimate indicates that we still have approximately 22,000 cubic feet of permanent records that must be reviewed by 1 December 1988 if we are to comply with E.O. 12065. [redacted] Because of the sensitive nature of our records, we must use mostly senior analysts with long years of experience. They are highly trained in their jobs and utilize procedures designed to maximize their production. In spite of this devotion of resources, we are able to review on an average only 800 cubic feet per year. Thus, by 1 December 1988, unless we more than triple our staff, we will accomplish less than 30 percent of our objective. Also, in December 1988, as we continue to attack the remaining 70 plus percent, we will have to begin the second review of all material once reviewed and on which the decision was made to continue classification. Since our experience shows that we continue classification on over 85 percent of the records reviewed, we will have to re-review

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most of the material we review by December 1988. At that time, we will be faced with the first review of records beginning to mature in December 1988. It is an impossible job.

CURRENT PROBLEMS:

CIA's program for systematic review of classified material entails the following:

1. Dollar Costs: We will spend \$21 million by 1988 under our current program and still not comply with E.O. 12065.

2. Human Resource Costs: , mostly valuable, scarce senior analysts, spend full time reviewing classified documents under our current setup; over 88 people would be required if we are to comply with E.O. 12065. These people could and should be used to collect and produce intelligence.

3. Results of Review: On the average, two percent of the material reviewed is declassified. The declassified material that does eventually reach the public will be of little interest.

4. Security Risks: Given our workload and time pressures, there is always the danger of human error resulting in the release of compromising information. Also, the release of the declassified material adds to the total picture our adversaries have access to. When added to material released under FOIA, books, and leaks, this total picture is awesome and frightful.

5. Chilling Effect on Intelligence Relationships: Because of past Congressional investigations, FOIA releases, books by former employees, and leaks, many agents and foreign intelligence contacts who would have cooperated in the past now perceive that we are unable to keep their relationship secret. With systematic review for declassification added to the list, we guarantee these folks that if their names haven't come up for review previously, they will come up when documents containing their names or identifying data become 20 years old.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that E.O. 12065 be modified to eliminate Section 3-4 or, alternatively, to exempt CIA from its provisions. The General Accounting Office has concluded after a lengthy investigation that this program should be abolished Government wide. If so, then it is submitted that even more so should it be abolished with respect to CIA.

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