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by L. Salvetti, National Security Council
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NATIONAL SECURITY DECISION
DIRECTIVE NUMBER 19

January 12, 1982

Protection of Classified National Security Council
and Intelligence Information

Unauthorized disclosure of classified information under the jurisdiction of the National Security Council and of classified intelligence reports is a problem of major proportions within the U.S. Government. The Constitution of the United States provides for the protection of individual rights and liberties, including freedom of speech and freedom of the press, but it also requires that government functions be discharged efficiently and effectively, especially where the national security is involved. As President of the United States, I am responsible for honoring both Constitutional requirements, and I intend to do so in a balanced and careful manner. I do not believe, however, that the Constitution entitles government employees, entrusted with confidential information critical to the functioning and effectiveness of the Government, to disclose such information with impunity. Yet this is precisely the situation we have. It must not be allowed to continue.

To this end, I hereby establish and direct implementation of the following policies.

Contacts with the Media

All contacts with any element of the news media in which classified National Security Council matters or classified intelligence information are discussed will require the advance approval of a senior official. An administrative memorandum will be prepared as soon as possible after the contact, recording the subjects discussed and all information provided to the media representatives.

Access

The unauthorized disclosure of classified National Security Council information, documents, and deliberations requires further control to limit access and to ensure an accurate record of those who have had access. The number of officials with access to documents relating to NSC matters will be kept to the minimum essential to the orderly conduct of the government's business.

Investigations

The government's lack of success in identifying the sources of unauthorized disclosure of classified National Security Council information and documents of classified intelligence information must be remedied and appropriate disciplinary measures taken. Henceforth, in the event of unauthorized disclosure of such information, government employees who have had access to that information will be subject to investigation, to include the use of all legal methods.

Applicability and Implementation

The provisions of this directive shall be effective immediately and shall apply to all employees of, and elements within, agencies participating in the National Security Council system, including the Executive Office of the President. The Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs is directed to establish the detailed procedures to implement policies.

Ronald Reagan