

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 2, 2009

Dear Ms. McDermott:

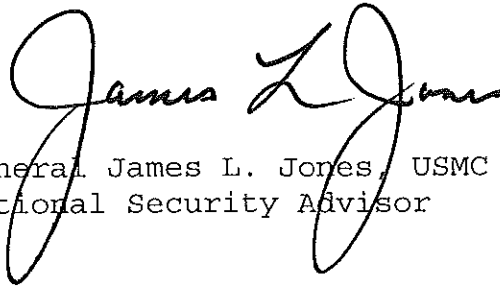
Thank you for the letter of August 1 from you and your colleagues regarding the Administration's ongoing effort to revise Executive Order 12958, as amended (the Order), in accordance with the principles enunciated in the President's May 27, 2009 Memorandum. We greatly appreciate the wide range of thoughtful public comments we have received via the Public Interest Declassification Board (the Board). These comments have been carefully considered by the interagency group drafting recommended revisions to the Order. We also have benefitted from conversations that the Chair of the interagency group had with Steven Aftergood, Meredith Fuchs, and Mike German.

As you note, we have made extraordinary efforts to obtain public input in drafting a revised Order. However, we also believe it is essential to preserve the confidentiality of the President's deliberative process regarding these complex issues that stem from the President's constitutional authority to protect the national security. For that reason, we cannot agree to make public a highly deliberative draft containing recommended changes in the Order.

I believe that we have an historic opportunity to refine the existing Order now and to begin planning a classification system of the future that promotes innovation and deals more effectively with the challenge of classified digital data. As

soon as we complete our revision of the existing Order, I plan to begin discussions with the Board about a more fundamental transformation of the security classification system. I invite you and your colleagues to share with the Board any ideas you may have on such a system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle initial.

General James L. Jones, USMC (Ret.)
National Security Advisor

Ms. Patrice McDermott
OpenThe Government.org
1742 Connecticut Avenue NW
Third Floor
Washington, D.C. 20009