
CHAPTER 5

UNRECOVERED NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND CLASSIFIED COMPONENTS

A. General Information

This chapter provides guidance for determining if historical records containing DOE NSI, pertaining to unrecovered nuclear weapons and classified components are to be declassified or have their classification retained beyond 25 years in accordance with the provisions of E.O. 12958. ***Documents containing RD and FRD are not addressed by this document and retain present classification.***

Nuclear weapons and their classified components, in the custody of the DOE and DoD in many locations, are subjected to environments and/or activities which can result in a lost or missing weapon or classified component. Most such incidents have occurred during an aircraft crash or other mishap. Loss of weapons or components can also occur during logistical movement by aircraft, railcar, seagoing vessel, or highway vehicle as a result of accident, or theft. Losses can also occur in a laboratory or a manufacturing facility. (Chapter 6 provides classification guidance on equipment and techniques used to search for, locate, identify, evaluate, and recover lost weapons or components. Documents regarding DoD capabilities to perform the same mission, or DOE support to the DoD, shall be coordinated with the DoD.)

B. Broad Guidance

Information which could assist in the unauthorized locating or recovery of a nuclear weapon or classified component must be protected until the item is recovered. An item which was considered unrecoverable at time of loss, may at a later date become recoverable due to advances in technology.

Therefore, information concerning the lost item and the circumstances of the loss must be protected to prevent the unauthorized recovery of the item, compromise of classified design information, and access to special nuclear material.

Much of the information about nuclear weapons accidents/incidents involves RD or FRD. This includes: weapon design characteristics, safety measures, activation systems, components configuration and composition, and design and operational considerations. Of particular concern are storage locations and the weapon materials that may have been dispersed into the external environment (along with measurements of radioactivity directly following the accident).

Historical records, 25 years or older, containing DOE/NNSA information on unrecovered nuclear weapons and classified components not covered by the specific guidance below are unclassified. This does not include records containing information classified by statute such as RD and FRD (AEA of 1954, as amended). These records shall be handled, protected, classified, downgraded, and declassified in accordance with the provisions of the AEA and regulations issued under that Act. Reviewers who are not authorized by DOE/NNSA to classify or declassify such documents should not attempt final determinations. Refer to appendix A for information on identifying and handling documents containing potential RD/FRD. In all cases where there is a question concerning the sensitivity of the information, it should be referred to the DOE HQ classification office for a classification determination.

C. Topics

5.0 UNRECOVERED NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND NUCLEAR COMPONENTS

5.1 Information regarding the location of an unrecovered nuclear weapon or classified component

5.1.1 Officially released

U

NOTE: Examples of "officially released" information are identified in appendix B. Refer to DOE HQ Classification Office for any future updated definition.

5.1.2 Otherwise

NOTE 1: Declassify when the unrecovered component is declassified or the information is officially released.

NOTE 2: Refer to weapons, and safeguards and security guidance. Submit to DOE HQ classification office for resolution if referenced guidance is inadequate.

Retain
Classification
(potential for
RD/FRD)
[25X2; EV]

5.2 Information about the existence or details of a particular operation which reveals an unrecovered nuclear weapon or component

5.2.1 Officially released

U

NOTE: Examples of "officially released" information are identified in appendix B. Refer to DOE HQ classification office for any future updated definition.

5.2.2 Otherwise

NOTE 1: Declassify when the unrecovered component is declassified or the information is officially released.

NOTE 2: Refer to weapons, and safeguards and security guidance. Submit to DOE HQ Classification Office for resolution if referenced guidance is inadequate.

Retain
Classification
(potential for
RD/FRD)
[25X2; EV]