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WAR DEPARTMENT  
The Adjutant General's Office  
Washington 25, D.C.

AG 386.1 (29 Aug 45)OB-S-B-M

EM/lq 2B-939 Pentagon

30 August 1945

SUBJECT: Destruction of Classified Communications Matter in  
Emergencies on Land, Sea, and in the Air.

TO: Commanding Generals,  
Army Air Forces  
Army Ground Forces  
Army Service Forces  
Commander-in-Chief;  
U.S. Army Forces, Pacific  
Commanding Generals,  
Theaters of Operations  
Defense Commands  
Alaskan Department  
Military District of Washington  
First thru Ninth Service Commands  
Independent Commands under the War Department

1. Letter this office, AG 386.1 (13 Apr 43)OB-S-B-M, 15 April 1943,  
subject: Destruction of Classified Matter in Emergencies on Land, Sea,  
and in the Air, is hereby rescinded.

2. The Joint Communications Board has adopted the policy outlined  
in the inclosure hereto in connection with effecting the destruction of  
classified communications matter in areas where there is a possibility  
of loss to the enemy or other unauthorized persons. This policy of the  
Joint Communications Board is adopted hereby for intra-Army use.

3. It is desired that all concerned within your command be informed  
of the above.

By order of the Secretary of War:



EDWARD F. WITSELL  
Major General  
Acting The Adjutant General

1 Incl: Outline of JCB policy

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DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED COMMUNICATIONS MATTER  
IN EMERGENCIES ON LAND, SEA AND IN THE AIR

Section I

General

1. Purpose

It shall be the direct responsibility of any person charged by proper authority with the transportation, storage, or supervision of classified communications matter to keep such matter out of the hands of the enemy or other unauthorized persons. The extent to which safeguards are established, and the measures to be adopted to facilitate destruction of classified communications matter in order that such matter will not come into possession of the enemy, will be the responsibility of the commanding officer. It will depend upon the circumstances, i.e., proximity to the enemy and the judgment of the persons charged with or responsible for the safeguarding of such matter as to its relative liability to capture or loss. The specific steps taken to insure effective destruction of this matter under emergency conditions will depend in each instance upon the conditions obtaining in the particular area and the likelihood of capture or loss. In all cases, however, personnel charged with or responsible for the destruction of such matter will be constantly alerted to the necessity for vigilance in this respect.

For the guidance of such persons, the procedures outlined herein set forth general means of destruction applicable to the various classified communications documents and equipment subject to capture or abandonment.

2. Priority of Destruction

a. Classified Communications Documents Attention should be concentrated on TOP SECRET, SECRET and Registered Communications documents. In general, when destruction of such items is assured, remaining classified documents will be destroyed in order of decreasing importance. Destruction of all copies of one document is more important than destruction of portions of several documents.

b. Communications Equipment

(1) TOP SECRET, SECRET and CONFIDENTIAL communications equipment will be destroyed beyond recognition. This destruction may be limited to those portions of such equipment which show TOP SECRET, SECRET or CONFIDENTIAL principles or design. Other components will be destroyed to an extent that would prevent future use or reclamation.

(2) RESTRICTED communications equipment will be destroyed beyond possibility of repair or reclamation of parts.

In all cases, the destruction of communications documents or devices not yet in force (future or reserve on board editions), in order of their relative security classification, are considered of greatest importance and shall be destroyed ahead of effective documents and devices of comparable classification.

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ENCLOSURE #1

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d. The following is precedence of destruction of classified communications documents and equipment:

- (1) Top Secret communications documents and files
- (2) General purpose cryptographic systems, recognition key lists and memoranda.
  - (a) Cipher machines, key lists, associated documents
  - (b) Recognition key lists and memoranda
  - (c) Strip alphabets and key lists
  - (d) Reciphering and recoding tables
- (3) Secret communications documents and files
- (4) Special purpose operational systems
  - (a) Signal ciphers
  - (b) Contact codes and ciphers
  - (c) Authenticator systems
- (5) Call sign ciphers and key lists
- (6) Other classified communications documents and equipments

e. Classified communications matter which is of highest priority on the destruction list should be marked in a clearly distinctive manner to insure expeditious destruction. This should be done locally in pursuance of the destruction plan.

3. Destruction Plan

The commanding officer of each station, ship, and air squadron or air base (and commanding officer of a plane on independent duty) is responsible for establishing whatever destruction plan is required to meet his particular situation. Such plan should include allocation of responsibility to specific officers and other personnel.

a. Because of possibility of enemy action by day or night, such allocation of responsibility at stations should be by duty rather than by name. Alternates should be designated in every case.

b. Training periods should be designated for instruction of personnel in execution of destruction duties. The commanding officer may require reports stating such training procedure has been observed.

Authority for emergency destruction -- Where time does not permit communication with the commanding officer, every individual concerned must act on his own initiative. The importance of beginning the destruction

plan sufficiently early cannot be overemphasized. The consequences of the destruction of any item are of small importance when compared with the consequences of its possible capture.

Reports on destruction Accurate information concerning extent of emergency destruction is considered as second in importance only to the destruction of the matter itself and shall be reported to higher authority as soon as practicable. Such reports will indicate clearly the extent of destruction for items not completely destroyed.

4. General Policy Destruction by burning is preferred to any other type. Tests indicate destruction of radio equipment by burning is more complete than destruction by explosives.

## Section II

### Destruction of Classified Communications Matter at Land Installations

#### A. Post, Camp or Station

1. Responsibility Security officers, custodians of classified communications matter and other personnel to whom responsibility has been allocated by the commanding officer pursuant to par. 3 of Section I are responsible for putting into force the destruction plan established by the commanding officer, and for training personnel in its execution.
2. Destruction Plan The commanding officer, in establishing the plan pursuant to Section I, par. 3, will be guided by the following considerations:
  - a. Plan must be practicable and simple. Avoid use of incinerators in open spaces where personnel might be exposed to enemy fire. For example, in extreme cases, it may be necessary, in order to avoid drawing enemy fire at night, to accomplish the most complete destruction possible by whatever means are at hand.
  - b. Top Secret, Secret and Confidential communications documents should be sorted for easy access. A list should be kept of exact locations where such documents are held on the station.
  - c. Duplicate keys and other means of access may under proper security arrangements be kept in selected positions. Duplicate lists should be prepared showing the locations of classified communications documents, persons responsible for various duties in the destruction scheme, and the recommended place and method of destruction. These duplicates are for use in absence of custodial personnel, and will be destroyed along with classified communications material.
3. Suggested Methods
  - a. Use of Inflammable Liquids and Compounds, Thermite Bombs and Other Incendiaries

B. Field Conditions

1. The requisite characteristics for a device for destroying classified communications mater in the field are: Light weight for easy transportation, speed in destruction under field emergency conditions. The British "Destroyable Correspondence Carrier" combines these features in a metal tube lined with combustible materials. It weighs 42 pounds and has a capacity of 16 pounds of classified communications matter. Ignited either electrically or mechanically, combustion is complete in four or five minutes, at which time a shotgun shell explodes and breaks up the ashes. An adaptation of this device would serve for use by field commanders. Communications mechanical cipher devices should be smashed beyond recognition and, where required by specific instructions, completely destroyed by thermite bombs of the type now supplied for this purpose.
2. In circumstances where other means of destruction are not available, resort to the general instructions set forth herein, making use of gunfire, rocks, etc.

C. Routine Instructions

The volume of classified communications matter which requires destruction in event of emergencies should be kept at the minimum. It is important that all routine destruction be completed promptly, following existing instructions

1. It is the duty of the responsible officer to check periodically on routine destruction of obsolete classified communications matter and message files. All personnel should be cautioned against tendency of permitting papers to accumulate in files.

Section III

Destruction of Classified Communications Matter in Aircraft

1. If plane is forced down at sea, all classified communications matter should be sunk by most practicable method. If weighted pouches are not provided, musette bags or other containers may be used. A weight usually can be found in the plane, and holes can be cut easily through the bag with a pocket knife. If plane is forced down in enemy or neutral territory all classified communications matter should be destroyed by burning. The magnesium in Very pistol cartridges provides a good incendiary medium for burning documents on the ground.
2. If time permits, members of the crew should destroy other communications equipment beyond possibility of repair or reclamation of parts.

Section IV

Destruction of Classified Communications Matter in Ships at Sea

1. Responsibility Security officer, custodians of classified communications matter and other personnel to whom responsibility has been allocated by the commanding officer pursuant to par. 3 of Section I are responsible for putting into force the destruction plan established by the commanding officer, and for training personnel in its execution.

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2. Destruction Plan The commanding officer, in establishing the plan pursuant to Section I, par. 3, will be guided by the considerations of Section II insofar as they are applicable to ships at sea.
  - a. In deep water, mechanical cipher devices may be thrown overboard, and documents jettisoned in weighted, perforated bags.
  - b. In shallow water, combustible classified communications matter should be destroyed by burning. Mechanical cipher devices should be smashed beyond recognition or repair and wiring punched out before being jettisoned. Small component parts should be scattered over a wide area. Only when it is impossible to burn combustible classified communications matter should resort be made to jettisoning it in shallow water.
  - c. For purpose of this document, shallow water shall be construed to be water of such depth, that, with due regard to its location, it will be feasible for the enemy or other unauthorized persons to conduct salvage operations. Deep water shall be construed to be water of such depth, with due regard to location, as to preclude the possibility that the enemy or other unauthorized persons will conduct salvage operations.