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DRAFT

24 December 1953

TO: Chairman, CIA Career Service Board
FROM: Chairman, CIA Honor Awards Board
SUBJECT: Staff Study "Classification of National Security Medal"

1. Problem

To determine if CIA's responsibility for administering awards of the National Security Medal should be unclassified or should bear a classification of "Confidential" or higher.

2. Facts Bearing on the Problem

a. On 19 January 1953 President Truman in a letter to the Honorable Walter B. Smith, DCI, classified "Restricted - Security Information" (Attachment A) authorized him to make awards of the National Security Medal.

b. Executive Order 10501 "Safeguarding Official Information in the Interest of the United States", abolishes the security classification of "Restricted".

c. CIA Notice No. [REDACTED] of 27 November 1953 "Classification of Documents", makes it necessary to review material presently classified "Restricted - Security Information" for the purpose of downgrading or upgrading when such material is to be transmitted outside the Agency.

d. Prior to the effective date of the Executive Order, other Government departments have asked for information concerning the National Security Medal and it is expected that further requests will be received.

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3. Discussion

The President's letter of 19 January 1953 appears to impose the classification "Restricted - Security Information" on correspondence pertinent to CIA's responsibility for the National Security Medal. This responsibility, however, has become rather widely known to other elements of government through normal inquiry and the transmittal of recommendations for the National Security Medal. The fact of CIA's interest in and responsibility for the National Security Medal can be compared to the interest of the Departments of Defense, State, Army, Navy and Air Force in the Medal of Freedom, which is not classified. The National Security Medal, the senior award for distinguished achievement or outstanding contribution in the field of intelligence relating to national security is logically administered by the nation's top-ranking intelligence officer, who occupies the same position in respect to the National Security Medal as do the Secretaries of Defense, State, Army, Navy and Air Force in respect to the Medal of Freedom.

4. Conclusions

a. Declassification of the Director's authority to award the National Security Medal would be consistent with unclassified delegations of authority to award National Decorations granted other government officials.

b. Such action would have no effect on the classification of recommendations, supporting data, or citations, for the award of the National Security Medal, as these will continue to bear the classification required by the content of the material.

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5. Action Recommended

a. The CIA Classification Control Officer ask the White House Classification Control Officer to review the correspondence conveying authority to the Director to make awards of the National Security Medal for the purpose of downgrading it.

b. Future correspondence relating to the Director's authority for the National Security Medal be unclassified.

/s/

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