
2-11-2000

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IBPP Editor
bloomr@erau.edu

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Recommended Citation

Editor, IBPP (2000) "The Classifieds and Classified Information: Lee and Deutch Redux," *International Bulletin of Political Psychology*. Vol. 8 : Iss. 6 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://commons.erau.edu/ibpp/vol8/iss6/4>

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International Bulletin of Political Psychology

Title: The Classifieds and Classified Information: Lee and Deutch Redux

Author: Editor

Volume: 8

Issue: 6

Date: 2000-02-11

Keywords: Classification, Deutch, Espionage, Lee, Personnel Security

Abstract. This article describes positive and negative security implications of classifying information.

The recent security scandals in the United States (US) involving Wen Ho Lee and John Deutch relate to alleged violations of laws, policies, rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures for handling classified information. The common response to these allegations has been not to question the assumption that such violations have a security downside--let alone to ponder that the very process of classifying information may have a downside as well as an upside.

Classifying information is intended to protect the security of the formally constituted authority mandating such classification. The idea is that divulging certain types of information content, sources, and means (among other characteristics) can lead to a chipping away at and even an infiltration of that authority's protective mechanisms--at least if the divulging eventually reaches adversaries with the ability and motivation to adversely affect that authority.

So such divulging must be impeded and minimized--if not prevented--through classification. Here classification is a process that is intended to allow only certain people access to specific information. The process usually involves some combination of labeling and physically protecting the information in question as well as labeling and physically impeding or facilitating people's behavior as well.

However, the classifying process can work against security. It helps an adversary focus on what is valuable because that which is not classified is deemed by the classifier not to be security valuable. In essence, there's less information for an adversary to then attend to securing. Moreover, by providing security clearances and access to "cleared" individuals, a formally constituted authority is signaling to an adversary which people are worth monitoring and exploiting.

Paradoxically, some security violations of the type alleged to have been committed by Mr. Lee and Mr. Deutch may support security as well as detract from it. By taking the classified labels off of classified materials and by placing unlabeled but classified information on unclassified computer drives and tapes, one is making the information appear less valuable and less worthy of adversary interest. As well--given a social context wherein at least some information is overclassified or needlessly classified by virtually all formally constituted authorities--some of the Lee and Deutch violations would be ever less likely to be perceived helpful to adversaries than those adversaries' access to classified information garnered through breaking into a protected system. (This analysis is based on the assumption that neither Mr. Lee nor Mr. Deutch are espionage agents working against the US.

Newspaper classifieds are intended to call attention to satiating the needs of readers. Properly secured and managed classified information is much more likely to fulfill the same function than the information left unsecured by Mr. Lee and Mr. Deutch. Thus, the real scandal in these two cases may be the unfortunate psychology of classification as security-phillie. (See Bonner, R. Ex-official keeps Pentagon's clearance after loss of C. I. A.'s. *The New York Times*, p. 17; Diggs, S. (1997). The plural taboo. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 42, 459-479; Fiske, A.P., & Tetlock, P.E. (1997). Taboo trade-offs: Reactions to

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transactions that transgress the spheres of justice. *Political Psychology*, 18 255-297; Human fallacies and personnel security: John Deutch and Wen Ho Lee. (February 4, 2000). *IBPP*, 8(5); Rawlings, D., & Toogood, A. (1997). Using a "taboo response" measure to examine the relationship between divergent thinking and psychoticism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 22, 61-68.)(Keywords: Classification, Deutch, Espionage, Lee, Personnel Security.)