



(U) From the SID Mailbag: When To Mark Things 'COMINT'

FROM: SIGINT Communications
Unknown
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Question:

(U//FOUO) I've been working here a few years, but I'm still confused about when to use the "COMINT" caveat when classifying things. Just about everything I read around here seems to have the COMINT label, though many times I don't see a connection. According to the NSA/CSS Classification Manual dated 23 Nov 04, COMINT is defined as:

"(U) Communications Intelligence (COMINT) - Technical and intelligence information derived from foreign communications by other than the intended recipients."

(U) However, take, for example, some excerpts from past DIRgrams (which I assume are properly classified):

"(TS//SI//REL) The closing ceremonies at the Summer Olympics marked the end of a period of extensive NSA engagement that began almost as soon as Athens was selected as the venue. By all accounts, Team NSA earned a gold medal! SID, SCS, IAD, FAD, and ITIS worked hard to leverage existing partnerships and strengthen others, resulting in a safe, secure games." (from [REDACTED])

"(S//SI//REL) I have decided to elevate our representation in Rome to an NSA senior-level (DISES) position. This change will send a clear signal to the U.S. and Italian intelligence communities about the importance we attach to our growing cryptologic relationship with our counterparts in Italy. It will better enable NSA to respond to customer and NSA HQ requirements, and will enhance NSA's third-party relationship with the Italian Intelligence and Military Security Service (SISMI) and the Italian Military's Joint Intelligence Center (JIC)." (from [REDACTED])

(U//FOUO) In these cases, nothing seems to be derived from foreign communication. So it seems like there is more to the definition of COMINT than I know about. Any further details would be greatly appreciated!

Answer:

(U//FOUO) As you've correctly researched, the "SI" marking in portion-marking, and the overall classification marking of "COMINT" are used widely to cover a variety of SIGINT equities that **support the production of Communications Intelligence (COMINT), and are not strictly reserved for the foreign communications that result from those efforts.** Section 2 of the [Signals Intelligence Security Regulations \(SISR\)](#) document provides the general categories and levels of information that require TS//SI or S//SI protection.

(TS//SI) In the examples you cite, both are classified with "SI" to protect SIGINT methods and partnerships, consistent with the guidance in the SISR. The first is classified with "SI" due to the implication that we have an SCS location in Athens. All of our SCS locations are protected with "SI" to safeguard our SIGINT activities from the hosting nation. If discovered, we could lose these vital access points. The second is classified with "SI" because it reveals the fact of our cryptologic partnership with Italy, constituting another sensitive SIGINT asset that we want to protect. The mere fact of each of our Third Party relationships is protected at a minimum of S//SI, while the most sensitive and secret are TS//SI, as you'll see in the SISR.

(U) We hope that the SISR will serve as a good resource for other uses of SI that you encounter. If you would like to attain greater expertise in this area, you are also encouraged to take advantage of the classification courses offered by NCS, at varied levels to meet your needs.

Please visit the course guide for more information on classification courses.

(U//FOUO)

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