



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
MANUAL OF SECURITY  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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## **Chapter 28 - Communications Security**

### **2801 Communications Security Measures**

Communications Security (COMSEC) is the system of security measures used to protect classified information or material utilizing cryptographic keying material and equipment. COMSEC measures are taken to deny unauthorized personnel information derived from telecommunications of the U.S. Government concerning national security and to ensure the authenticity of such telecommunications. COMSEC includes cryptography, transmissions security, and physical security of communications security material and information

### **2802 COMSEC Requirements**

Classified national security information (NSI) shall not be discussed over, or otherwise transmitted or processed by, any form of telecommunications unless approved measures are taken to protect the information. Federal telecommunications security policies are developed and issued under the purview of the National Security Council (NSC). Implementing instructions are issued by the National Security Agency (NSA). The general policy concerning the acquisition and use of telecommunications equipment, facilities, and services in the Department of Commerce are contained in the Information Technology Handbook (Chapter 8, Telecommunications Policy). This chapter is intended to implement the NSA security requirements governing communications security equipment and operations.

### **2803 COMSEC Roles and Responsibilities**

**A. Heads of Operating Units.** The head of each operating unit is responsible for providing an appropriate level of security for offices in their organizations that house or support communications security operations or handle information processed and protected by COMSEC systems.

**B. Communications Security Officer.** The Department's COMSEC Officer serves as the principal representative of the Office of Security to implement the policies and procedures required to protect and utilize cryptographic keying material and equipment in the Department. The COMSEC Officer provides guidance to operating units to ensure that COMSEC regulations and security measures are planned and implemented throughout the Department. The COMSEC Officer also provides guidance to COMSEC and alternate custodians in carrying out their duties and responsibilities to include records, reports, and required



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training.

**C. Security Contact.** The operating unit's security contact is responsible for monitoring compliance with COMSEC regulations and procedures within his or her respective organization. The security contact shall ensure that security violations or infractions that involve COMSEC materials are reported in accordance with current NSA directives, and copies are submitted through the servicing security officer to the Office of Security.

**D. COMSEC Custodian.** Designated COMSEC custodians are responsible for the receipt, custody, issuance, safeguarding, accounting, and, when necessary, destruction of COMSEC material for offices and/or operating units under their areas of responsibility. The COMSEC custodian is also responsible for maintaining up-to-date records and submitting required accounting reports. Appointment to the position shall be identified in writing and forwarded through the servicing security officer to the Department's COMSEC Manager in the Office of Security. COMSEC custodians are also responsible for administering the initial briefing and debriefing to individual users. The COMSEC custodian shall maintain copies of all briefings and debriefings. COMSEC custodians shall undergo required COMSEC training within six months of appointment.

**E. Alternate COMSEC Custodian.** In the absence of a COMSEC custodian, a designated alternate COMSEC custodian shall perform all the duties noted above for offices and/or operating units under their areas of responsibility. Appointments to this position shall be identified in writing and forwarded through the servicing security officer to the Department's COMSEC Manager in the Office of Security. Alternate COMSEC custodians shall undergo required COMSEC training within six months of appointment.

**F. Individual User.** Each individual user is responsible for ensuring appropriate COMSEC equipment is used when communicating classified information over telecommunication lines. In addition, each user must verify the security clearance and need-to-know of the recipient of the information. Personnel are prohibited from discussing classified information on a secure phone when the telephone is not placed in the secure mode. Prior to COMSEC access, each user shall receive a COMSEC briefing and training on how to properly use and protect COMSEC equipment from unauthorized use. When COMSEC access is no longer required, the employee shall be debriefed.

## 2804 COMSEC Inspections

The Department's COMSEC Manager shall provide oversight to operating units and shall conduct annual facility inspections. Inspections ensure that each designated custodian, alternate, and user complies with NSA regulations in the proper monitoring, controlling, and safeguarding of COMSEC material and equipment.



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### **2805 Reporting COMSEC Security Violations**

Specific guidance for reporting COMSEC security violations is contained in NSA Manual 90-2, COMSEC Material Control Manual. All violation reports termed "insecurities" by NSA shall be reviewed by the servicing security officer prior to forwarding to the Department's COMSEC Manager in the Office of Security in Washington, D.C.