

SECUR IT

Security Policy on the Use of Laptop Computers Abroad

Following the publication of the *SIGNET News* issue of 25 September 1995, the Corporate Security Division (ISC) is concerned that the information provided on using laptop or notebook computers for classified processing abroad may be misconstrued. Given the level of interest, and to eliminate any misunderstanding, ISC wishes to clarify the matter by clearly stating the Departmental security policy for the use of laptops abroad.

BACKGROUND

Although it is recognized that laptops do not radiate compromising emanations as much as standard PCs, their signals can easily be intercepted from the room next door. It is also important to note that, despite the end of the Cold War, several foreign governments are still very active in the area of electronic eavesdropping.

In addition, whether the information is in paper or digital form, the same physical security

procedures apply, that is the laptop and related storage media must be safeguarded commensurate with the classification level of the information they contain.

POLICY STATEMENT

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While on travel abroad, the processing of classified information must be done on TEMPEST equipment located within the sensitive area or security zone of the mission.
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In exceptional circumstances where this would prove not to be feasible, for operational reasons, the use of a laptop may be permitted (for up to SECRET) provided the following precautions are taken:

- a. when used, the laptop must not be plugged to a power outlet (i.e., it must be battery-operated) so as to reduce the level of electromagnetic emanations;
- b. the laptop and related storage media containing classified information shall not be left unattended unless stored in an approved container within the mission;
- c. the laptop modem shall not be used, even for the exchange of unclassified information;
- d. upon return to Canada, or even before if possible, the hard drive of the laptop must be sanitized to ensure all classified information has been erased and overwritten (see ISCA for sanitization procedures); and
- e. the carrier of the laptop must carry a diplomatic courier certificate and must never consign the laptop and related storage media to the cargo hold.

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