

**NATO UNCLASSIFIED**  
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6 February 2009

**DOCUMENT**  
C-M(2009)0021 (INV)  
**Silence Procedure ends:**  
**2 Mar 2009 18:00**

## **POLICY ON THE RETENTION AND DISPOSITION OF NATO INFORMATION**

### **Note by the Secretary General**

1. At the Riga Summit, Heads of State and Government agreed to support efforts to achieve information superiority. In implementation of this agreement, the Council has approved a NATO Information Management Policy (C-M(2007)0118) and a related Primary Directive on Information Management (C-M(2008)0113 INV). Both documents require that NATO information of permanent value be identified and preserved and that information with temporary value be destroyed at the end of its retention period.
2. Attached to this document is a Policy on the Retention and Disposition of NATO Information as endorsed by the NATO Archives Committee (AC/324) on 9 January 2009. The Policy supports the principles of accountability, transparency and preservation of the Organization's corporate memory.
3. A comprehensive, coordinated and systematic approach to retention and disposition is one of the key objectives of a coherent programme of Information Management. Such an approach supports NATO's missions, the effective use of resources, information sharing and the public understanding of the Alliance's goals and achievements.
4. The proposed Policy on Retention and Disposition of NATO Information has been developed based on national and international best practices and defines objectives, terms, roles and responsibilities and processes. Once approved by Council the policy, supported by directives developed by the NATO Archivist, will apply in all NATO civil and military bodies to information either created, received, managed or maintained by NATO. In support of the policy, NATO civil and military bodies shall develop, in coordination with the NATO Archivist, retention and disposition schedules as part of their Information Management Plans.

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-1-



5. The Council is invited to:
- approve the Policy on the Retention and Disposition of NATO Information;
  - mandate its implementation by all NATO civil and military bodies, under the co-ordination of the NATO Archivist;
  - authorize the public disclosure of this policy.
6. Unless I hear to the contrary by **18:00 hours on Monday, 2 March 2009**, I will take it that the Council has agreed to the actions in paragraph 5 above.

(Signed)Jaap de Hoop Scheffer

## **Policy on the Retention and Disposition of NATO Information**

### **Introduction**

1. This document establishes the policy on the retention and disposition of NATO information as called for in the NATO Information Management Policy (NIMP).<sup>1</sup>
2. The Policy is supported by implementing directive(s) and by retention and disposition schedules that identify the retention periods and the permanent or temporary value of particular types of NATO Information.
3. This Policy is published by the North Atlantic Council and is authorised for public disclosure along with its supporting directives and schedules.

### **Scope and Application**

4. This Policy applies in all NATO civil and military bodies to information, as defined in the NIMP, that they either create, receive, manage or maintain.
5. This Policy also applies to metadata associated with that information.

### **Principle and Objectives**

6. The key objectives of the coordinated and systematic disposition of NATO information through the related processes of appraisal, retention and archiving or destruction are to:
  - a) support NATO's missions, the effective use of resources, information sharing and public understanding of the Alliance's goals and achievements;
  - b) assign either permanent or temporary value to all information;
  - c) assign retention periods based on identified needs and obligations; and
  - d) to transfer to the NATO Archives or to destroy information at the end of the retention periods and according to its assigned value.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently C-M(2007)0118.

## **Policy**

7. It is the policy of NATO to:
  - a) identify the value of all NATO information and accomplish its disposition through the systematic and coordinated application of the related processes of appraisal, retention, and archiving or destruction;
  - b) retain and dispose of information as required for the conduct of current missions; and
  - c) document the Organization's history by preserving in perpetuity in the NATO Archives authentic NATO Information with permanent value.
  
8. Authentic NATO information meets at least one of the following criteria. Such information:
  - a) bears an original, hand-written signature or digital equivalent;
  - b) is created, received, maintained or managed by the office of primary interest for the mission or task;
  - c) is maintained or managed by the official information custodian of a NATO civil or military body; or
  - d) is an officially produced translation.

## **Disposition**

9. The NIMP and the Primary Directive on Information Management (PDIM), define Disposition within the NATO context as a distinct stage in the information life-cycle that comprises the related processes of Appraisal, Retention, and Archiving or Destruction. These processes are further defined below.
  
10. To support the Disposition stage, and as called for in the PDIM, NATO shall create and maintain metadata elements that facilitate the processes related to disposition.
  
11. NATO shall document the actions (transfer to the NATO Archives or destroy) taken in the Disposition stage by maintaining metadata that enables audit and accountability for the information.

## **Appraisal**

12. Appraisal is the examination of information to determine its value. As defined in the NIMP, NATO Information has permanent value if it is required to document NATO's evolution and missions, consultation and decision making processes.

13. For the purposes of appraisal, this means that information, in any medium or form, has permanent value if it documents:

- a) significant consultations, decisions, policies, events, missions and activities;
- b) the structure and evolution of the Organization;
- c) the Organization's legal and financial status, obligations and accountability;
- d) the impact of the Organization's decisions on the rights, health and safety of NATO personnel and/or other persons;
- e) the Organization's impact on the physical environment; or
- f) informs public knowledge and understanding of the Organization's purposes, principles and achievements.

14. Permanent and Temporary values will be identified based on a macro-appraisal of the information produced by bodies, offices, committees and functions and applied to the corresponding individual information items.

## **Retention**

15. Retention is the management of information for an identified number of years to support the conduct of current missions. Retention is based on:

- a) mission requirements;
- b) legal and financial obligations;
- c) evidence and accountability; and
- d) general information needs.

### **Archiving or Destruction**

16. The final processes of Disposition are the systematic archiving or destruction of NATO Information based on its assigned value and the completion of its retention period.
17. At the end of its retention period:
- a) authentic NATO information with permanent value shall be preserved in perpetuity in the NATO Archives according to applicable international standards; and
  - b) all NATO information with temporary value shall be destroyed:
    - after concurrence from information owners that it is no longer needed to support current missions, and that all legal, financial, evidential and accountability requirements have been met; and
    - according to the Policy on the Management of Non-Classified NATO Information<sup>2</sup> if the information is unclassified; and
    - according to the NATO Security Policy<sup>3</sup> and its supporting Directives if the information is classified.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

18. It is the responsibility of:
- a) information managers and archivists in NATO civil and military bodies to coordinate with the NATO Archivist about establishing and maintaining retention and disposition schedules for their information;
  - b) information owners to define retention periods for their information;
  - c) information owners and information custodians to jointly implement the agreed retention and disposition schedules for their information; and
  - d) the NATO Archivist to develop, approve, review, monitor compliance and implement policies, directives and schedules on the retention and disposition of NATO information, and to report:
    - to the nations through the Archives Committee; and

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<sup>2</sup> Currently C-M(2002)60 (under review)

<sup>3</sup> Currently C-M(2002)49

- to NATO civil and military bodies through the NATO Information Management Authority.

### **Definitions**

Appraisal Within the context of NATO, the process of evaluation by which the NATO Archivist determines whether information has permanent or temporary value, based on the criteria identified in this Policy and elaborated in supporting directive(s) and schedules.

Authentic Information The information created, transmitted, received, maintained, managed and disposed of under approved policies, directives and procedures that protect against unauthorised addition, destruction, deletion, alteration, use or concealment.

Disposition The appraisal of information to determine its long-term value and the subsequent actions (archiving or destruction) when the information is no longer needed for the conduct of the current business. (Source: NIMP)

Information Any communications or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms. (Source: NIMP)

Information Custodian The nation or organisation which receives information and makes it visible and is responsible to the information owner for the agreed level of safe-keeping and availability of information. (Source: PDIM)

Information of Permanent Value All information that is required to document NATO's evolution and missions, consultation and decision making processes. (source: PDIM)

Information Owner The nation or organisation which creates and maintains content, defines access rules, negotiates and agrees to release constraints, establishes disposition instructions, and is the authority for the life-cycle of information. (Source: NIMP)

Life-cycle The life-cycle of information encompasses the stages of planning, collection, creation or generation of information; its organisation, retrieval, use, accessibility and transmission; its storage and protection; and, finally, its disposition. (Source: NIMP)

Metadata Structured information that describes, explains, locates and otherwise makes it easier to retrieve and use an information resource. The structure consists of 'elements,' each of which will contain 'values.' The values relate to the resource itself, there may be controls over what the actual values can be. (Source: PDIM)

Missions are NATO operations, projects, programmes, contracts and other related tasks. (Source: PDIM)

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ANNEX 1  
C-M(2009)0021 (INV)

NATO Archives The service mandated, under the authority of the NATO Archivist, to identify, preserve and provide access to NATO information of permanent value, produced or received by the Organization in the course of its activities or by its staff members in the performance of their duties, irrespective of date, form and storage medium. The NATO Archives is currently based at NATO HQ.

Office of Primary Interest The office to which the authority, responsibility and accountability to perform a particular task, function or mission on behalf of NATO has been specifically assigned by treaty, charter, mandate, policy, regulation or order.

Retention Period The length of time that information must be kept to meet mission, legal, financial, evidential and accountability requirements as well as other informational purposes.