

CHAPTER X

Treatment of Secret and Confidential Documents.

208. Government employees are prohibited by law from communicating any information to which access is obtained in the course of their official duties to any one without an authority. Any dereliction of duty in this respect is an offence under the Indian Official Secrets Act, 1923. Only Ministers, Secretaries or any officer specially authorised by them may give information to the press. Clause (d) of sub section (1) of section 5 of the said Act applies equally to indiscreet conversation, correspondence or communication within or without the office, in connection with official secrets. It can not be over-emphasised that any infringement of these orders shall be dealt with severely.

209. In the treatment of Secret and Confidential papers, the essential points are that they should pass through as few hands as possible in the office, that they should be dealt with only by selected and responsible officials and that special arrangements should be made for their typing and despatch and safe custody after disposal.

The following instructions should be particularly observed :—

(1) The personnel, who deal with 'Secret' or 'Confidential' papers should be thoroughly reliable from security point of view; and should, as far as possible, be provided with adequate physical security which includes their complete segregation from the rest of the office. Other officials should not have access to the secret and confidential file and papers.

(2) In all branches, the Superintendents/ or the Assistants concerned should themselves deal with confidential cases. They should not be sent to Record Keepers A for putting up papers but the Assistants should themselves do this.

(3) *Confidential Register.*—For the purpose of registering and making separate files of confidential correspondence, a separate register will be maintained in each Branch in the prescribed form (Appendix 'A' to this Chapter). The pages of the Register should be numbered and a full or half page should be allotted to each case accordingly, as it is likely to consist of few or several papers. The register is also prefaced with a rough abstract or index of its contents, and this should invariably be posted up directly when a fresh case is entered. The register runs on from year to year untill it is filled up, a proper break being observed at the end of each year.

(4) Orders to be taken before registering confidential papers in doubtful cases. When a Superintendent/Head of the Branch thinks that a paper marked 'Confidential' is not a sufficiently confidential character to merit special treatment, he should ask for orders before bringing it on the register. If it is decided to register the papers in the office diary, the official who is to deal with it, should himself make

the entry in the diary, nothing as the subject merely the word 'confidential'. For purposes of diary marking a slip should be sent to the diarist to mark off the number to the officer addressed. With a view to preventing a large accumulation of confidential papers in the several branches of the office, orders should be taken at the end of each year as to whether some of the papers may not be placed with the recorded case to which they relate.

(5) *Paging of papers placed in sealed covers by officer.*—If a case is so confidential that an officer send it into office in a sealed cover not to be opened in office, that officer should himself see to the arrangement and numbering of the pages of the papers. He should also note the last diary number on the cover.

(6) *Typing of confidential letters.*—When a confidential or secret letter is to be issued, it is incumbent on the Superintendent Head of Branch or the Assistant concerned, unless directed by an officer to copy it himself, to have it typed and despatched under his personal supervision. The typing of such communications should be got done by the Steno-typist attached to the Superintendents/Head of the Branch and if no such official is available, the typing should be got done by the typist earmarked for this purpose in the Issue Branch. The Superintendent or the Assistant, in every case examine the work himself, only the work to be typed (i.e. without the main file) should be given to the Stenotypists as the case may be, and, if it is not finished by the time the office closes, it should be taken back and locked up for the night. The Steno-typist-typist should be cautioned against talking about the work in hand and his name should invariably be noted on the manuscript or on the typed copy of the draft. If the manuscript is to be destroyed. When confidential letters, which have issued, are printed, and the original papers are to be destroyed, care should be taken to note on the file the name of the typist, who originally typed the letter.

7. *Despatching of Confidential and Secret Correspondence.*—When a despatch number is asked for from the Despatch Section, the only information to be given to that Section is the word 'Confidential' (for preparation of envelopes see para 215).

8. *Duplication of Top Secret papers.*—The number of copies made should be carefully recorded and each copy serially numbered and identified by number in the distribution of despatch list. Spare copies should be strictly limited and held in the custody of the official incharge of the section dealing with the case. All drafts and rough notes and other routine papers of secret nature must invariably be destroyed as soon as the fair copies of the letters, notes etc. have been prepared.

(9) *Used Stencils of Secret and Confidential letters.*—Used Stencils of secret and confidential letters whose retention for further use is considered necessary, must be kept separate from the file, and in the personal custody of the Superintendent/Head of Branch concerned. He will be responsible for checking and weeding out his stock of use stencils regularly and at frequent intervals. All used stencils marked for weeding out should be destroyed by burning.

(10) *Short-hand Note Books:*—

- (i) Short-hand note books should be numbered and dated before issue. Stenographers should keep them under lock and key. The books should be burnt after six months in the presence of the Under Secretary general. The storekeeper should maintain a register showing

the receipt and issue of note books from time to time.

(ii) Stenographers and typists should use old carbon papers for typing confidential matter.

(iii) Confidential matter should be got burnt by the officials concerned in their presence, and not put in the waste paper baskets.

(11) *Disposal of waste papers*.—The greatest care should be taken both in officers' and section rooms in disposing of waste papers of all kinds including blotting papers. 'Top Secret' and 'Secret' papers must be destroyed by burning them in the presence of the officer responsible for dealing with them.

Rollled up papers burn quicker than small pieces and, therefore, when throwing papers into a waste paper basket, it should not be torn into pieces but rolled up.

(12) *Custody of Register and Confidential files*.—The register and all secret and confidential papers should be kept under lock and key. For this purpose, each Superintendent/Head of the Branch has an almirah or box, as circumstances may require. The key a duplicate key to be with the Under Secretary in case papers are required in the absence of the Superintendent/Head of the Branch) should be kept in the personal custody of the Superintendent/Head of the Branch who should allow no one but himself to have access to the confidential almirah or box in his charge. Superintendents/Heads of the Branches will ordinarily keep in their almirahs the disposed of confidential cases for three years. Confidential cases of older date will be made over to the Superintendent of Records to be kept confidentially with the same precautions as a Superintendent/Head of the branch is required to observe.

(13) *Removal of file from the office*.—Secret papers must, in no circumstances, be removed by any official from the Secretariat. Ordinary papers may, however, be removed by an official to his residence in accordance with the instructions as laid down in para /34.

(14) 'Confidential' 'Secret' or 'Top Secret' slip depending on the nature of secrecy of the case, should be fixed on every case as also its cover.

(15) *The officers on their own accord deligate Powers*.—To their PS/PAs for opening of confidential envelopes.

210. *Treatment of confidential demi-official letters*. When demi-official correspondence is so confidential that it cannot be sent into the office in a closed cover to be kept with its file, the officer or the Superintendent/Head of the Branch or Assistant under the orders of the officer retaining it, should send a slip to the recorder of the branch concerned to the effect that he has retained demi-official correspondence on such and such a subject in his own keeping. This slip should be kept with the official correspondence, so that the fact that there are demi-official papers in the case may not be overlooked. In 'A' cases, whether papers come to office in a closed cover or there is an officer's slip, a "keep with" note as follows should be printed and kept with each collection copy :—

Printed K.W.

A closed cover containing confidential papers exists in this case, and has been retained by..... An examination of the manuscript file will at once show whether the confidential papers are in a closed cover or with an officer. In 'B' cases, no special arrangement is necessary, as in these there is only one set of manuscript papers, and the closed cover or officer's slip, as the case may be, will be with it.

211. Passage of confidential and Secret cases from and to Officers :—

(1) In their passage from the office to officers and *vice versa*-confidential and secret papers should either be passed direct from hand to hand, or be submitted and returned under sealed cover.

(2) When a case is sent to a secretary in a closed cover, the date on which it is sent and the diary number of the case should be inserted on the cover or on the economy label.

(3) To ensure that such files are not tampered with, the officer who sends out the file or papers, should write his initials or Signature on the economy slip in such a way that part of the signature or initials is on the portion of the slip attached to the flap of the envelope and the rest on the remaining portion of the slip.

(4) Where confidential papers have to be sent to officers at their residences, they should invariably be sent in a sealed cover. The Peon taking the cover to the officer's residence should be instructed to obtain the signature of the officer to whom the papers are addressed, if he is present, and if not, he may obtain the signatures of any person of the household in token of having received them.

212. *Confidential reference to outside offices* :— When it is required to consult another outside Department, in connection with a confidential case, only the papers that are absolutely necessary for the purpose of the reference should be sent with the file, and a list of the papers so sent should be kept on the retained portion.

213. *Requisition for papers from Special Branch* : (1) Papers are not to be requisitioned from the Special Branch, except on a requisition signed by a Secretary. Papers which are confidential should never be returned to the Special Branch, except in a closed cover addressed to the *Deputy Inspector General*, Criminal Investigation Department.

(2) Under standing orders of the Criminal Investigation Department, Special Branch files sent to the Chief and Home Secretaries are required to be handed by them only and must not leave their personal custody, if any such files are sent inadvertently into the office in an open condition, they should be handed back personally to the secretary concerned.

214. Treatment of covers marked 'Secret' or Confidential Covers received which are marked with the word "Secret" or "Confidential" should be sent unopened to the officer to whom they are addressed. Covers marked with the word 'Secret' or 'Confidential' only, and without the name or designation of any officer on either the inner or outer cover, should be submitted unopened to the Chief Secretary.

(2) *Treatment of papers from Government of India Marked Top Secret* :—Papers received from the Government of India or other States and marked 'Top Secret' will be dealt with by the Secretary or Deputy Secretary or Under Secretary concerned and remain in his custody after disposal and on no account must such papers be allowed to be seen by an official lower in status than that of a Superintendent/Head of the Branch.

215. *Covers of Secret and Confidential correspondence* :—All Secret and 'Confidential' correspondence should be despatched in double sealed covers. In the case of 'Secret' and 'Top Secret' correspondence the inner cover should be sealed, marked 'Secret' or 'Top Secret' as the case may be, and superscribed with the name of the addressee, while the outer cover should only bear the official designation of the addressee and have no indication to show that the contents are of 'Secret' nature.

216. *Use of economy labels* :—Economy labels must not be used on the inner cover containing 'Top Secret' papers, but they may be used on outer covers of both 'Top Secret' and 'Secret' papers and the inner cover of 'Secret' papers. In sealing the economy labels, however, care should be taken to avoid the sealing or pasting of flaps and thereby defeating the purpose of using these labels.

217. *Safe custody and disposal of secret and confidential documents, etc., issued by the Army Headquarters* :—The instructions relating to the handling of Secret and Confidential documents of military importance are contained in a pamphlet recorded in A File No. 1/HM of 1955, which should be consulted, when needed.

218. *Printing of Secret and Confidential documents and treatment of copies of Secret printed letters, etc.,* (see paras 200.

219. *Custody of seals* (See Para 271).

APPENDIX A

(Paragraph 209 (3))

CONFIDENTIAL REGISTER

.....Branch

List of Contents

No. and Date of letter				Date of Receipt		File No.		
Branch No.	Day	Month	Year	Day	Month	From Whom	Subject	Remarks
							When submitted and to whom. Each time a case leaves the branch an entry should be made in this column showing to whom the file has been sent and the date on which sent. The previous entry at the same time should be neatly scored through. The number and date of any letter issued should also be noted.	Each paper to be given a separate number.
								No. of spare copies received from the press.
								Annual file Number

Register Trunk Calls made from Telephone No. Office

Residence

Serial No.	Number of telephone and name of the officer making the call	Date of call	Phone Number or person called and priority.	Duration of Call	Whether official or Private. If official brief substance of the subject discussed except in the case of Ministers.	Signature of officer in charge of the register	Amount of the bill (to be entered on receipt of a bill)	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9