

Statement by **Thomas S. Blanton**, National Security Archive, George Washington University
March 2, 2005

Hearing on “Emerging Threats: Overclassification and Pseudo-classification”

2154 Rayburn House Office Building
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations
Committee on Government Reform



Rising Tide of Secrecy

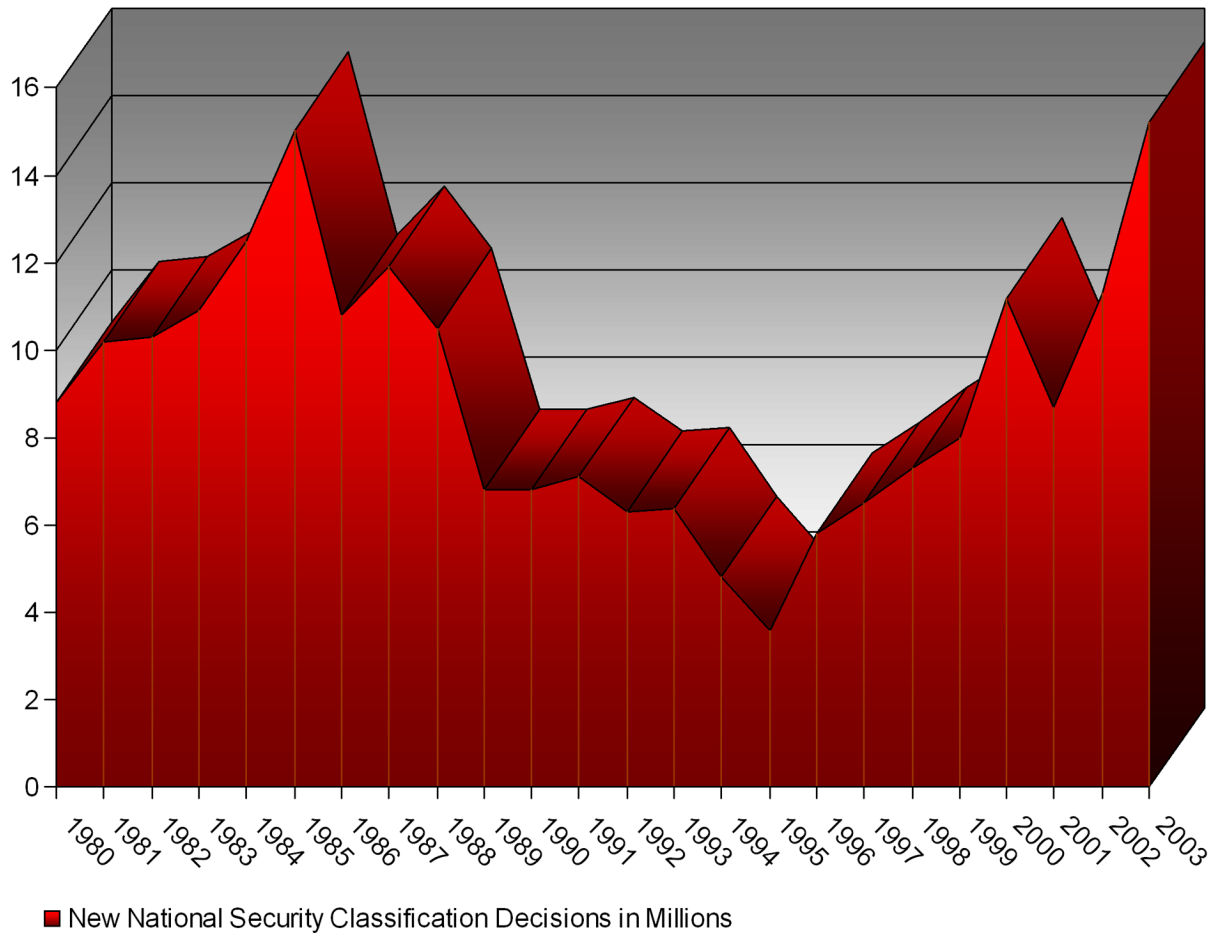


Chart by Jamie Noguchi, National Security Archive
Data from Information Security Oversight Office at the National Archives

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 U.S. House of Representatives 

Year	New National Security Classification Decisions in Millions
1980	8.8
1981	10.2
1982	10.3
1983	10.9
1984	12.5
1985	15
1986	10.8
1987	11.9
1988	10.5
1989	6.8
1990	6.8
1991	7.1
1992	6.3
1993	6.4
1994	4.8
1995	3.6
1996	5.8
1997	6.5
1998	7.3
1999	8
2000	11.2
2001	8.7
2002	11.3
2003	15.2

Year	Pages Declassified in Millions
1980	24.6
1981	28.7
1982	16.8
1983	8
1984	11.5
1985	8.5
1986	14.5
1987	9.2
1988	5.1
1989	7.2
1990	12.3
1991	14.1
1992	9.5
1993	6.8
1994	11.5
1995	69
1996	196.1
1997	204.1
1998	193.2
1999	126.8
2000	75
2001	100.1
2002	44.4
2003	43.1

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How Much Overclassification?

“Massive” – Erwin Griswold, Former Solicitor General of the United States (who prosecuted the Pentagon Papers case in 1971), quoted in the *Washington Post*, February 15, 1989.

“50-50” – Carol A. Haave, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Counterintelligence and Security, August 24, 2004 hearing of this Subcommittee.

“Even beyond 50%” – J. William Leonard, Director of the Information Security Oversight Office, National Archives and Records Administration, August 24, 2004 hearing of this Subcommittee.

60% -- Information Security Classification Appeals Panel rulings for declassification against agency claims of secrecy, according to J. William Leonard testimony, August 24, 2004 (“60-some-odd percent of the time the panel will override an agency's determination in whole or in part”).

75% -- Thomas H. Kean, Chair of the 9/11 Commission and former Governor of New Jersey, quoted in Cox News Service, July 21, 2004 (“Three-quarters of what I read that was classified shouldn't have been”).

90% -- Rodney B. McDaniel, executive secretary of the National Security Council under President Reagan, quoted in Moynihan Commission report (1997), p. 36, saying only 10% of classification was for “legitimate protection of secrets.”

“Laughable if it wasn't so insulting” – Senator Trent Lott (R-Mississippi), on the CIA's redaction of the Senate Intelligence Committee report on Iraq weapons of mass destruction, quoted in Cox News Service, July 21, 2004.

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Rise and Fall of Declassification

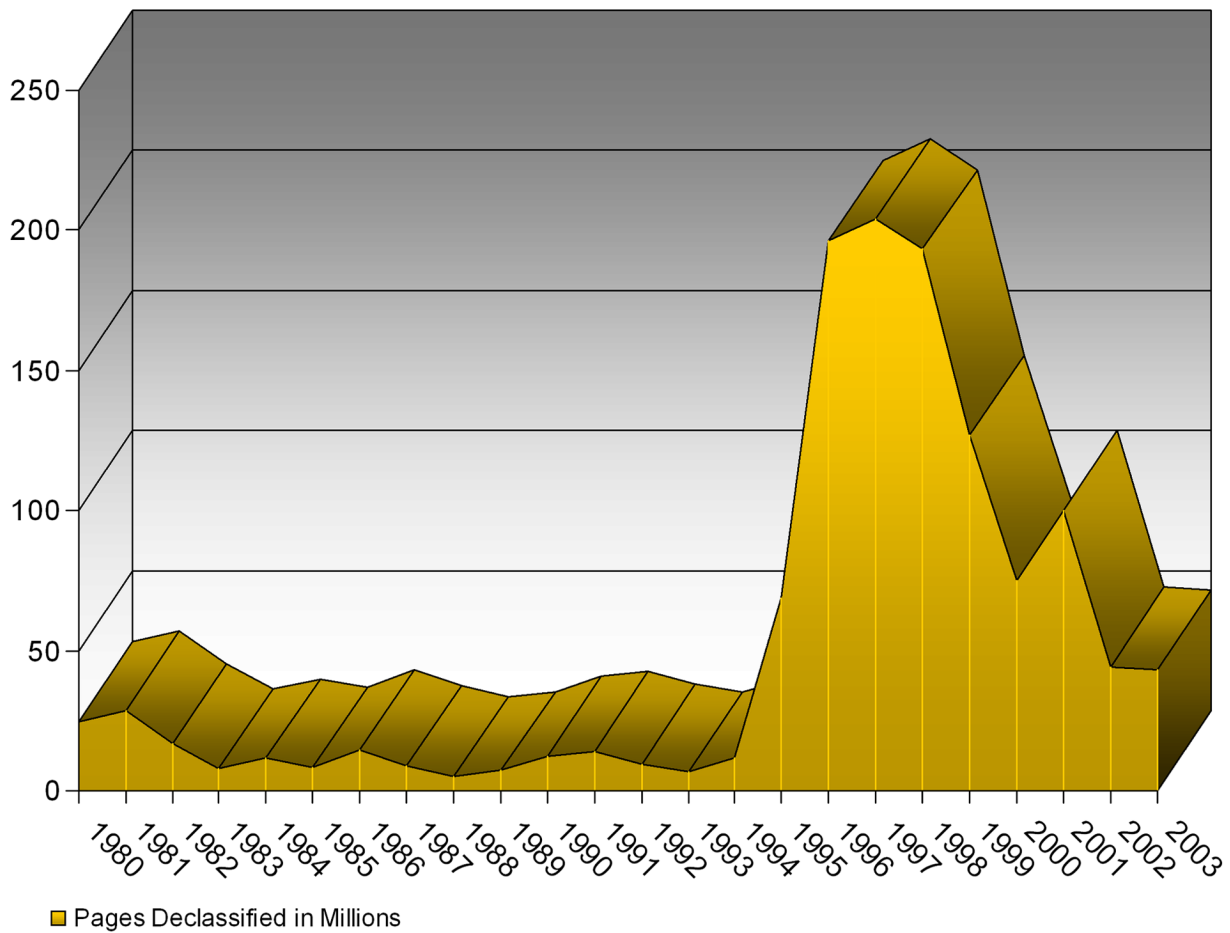


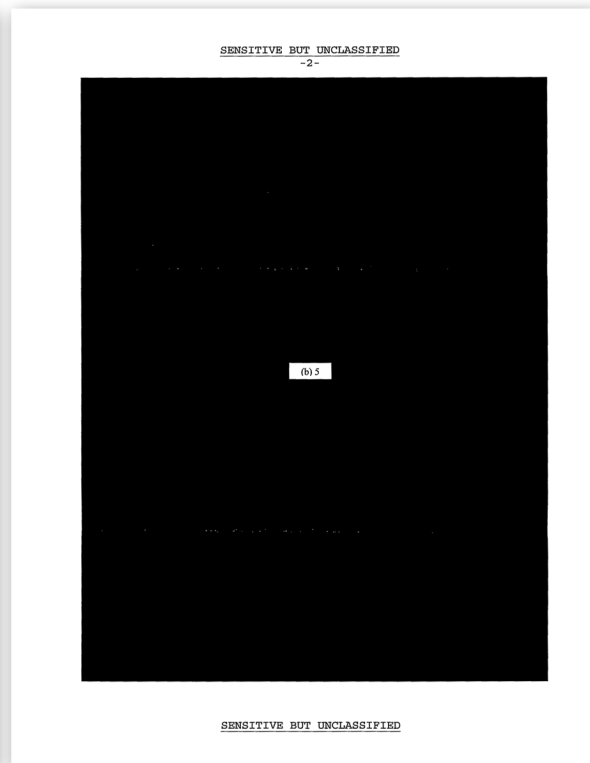
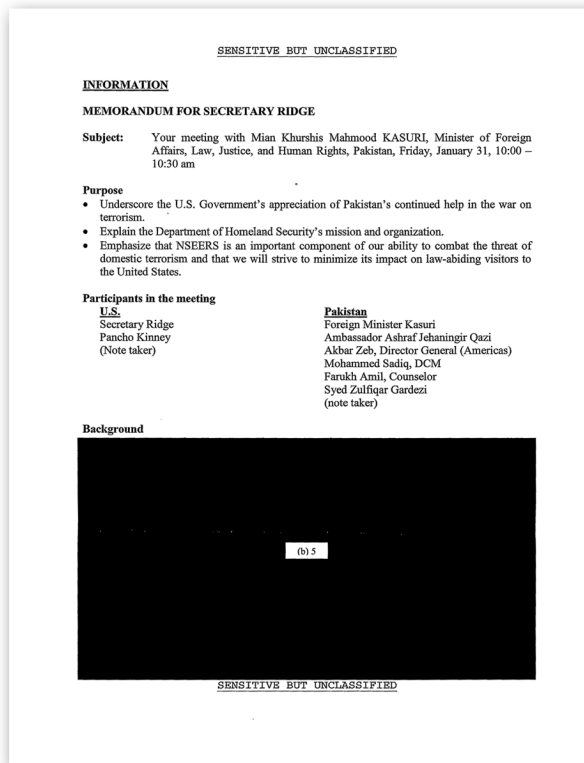
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The New Pseudo-classification



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Pseudo-classification and FOIA

TSA 9-29-04 FOIA Release

Log Entry Date: 06/22/2001
Log Entry Time: 14:44
Shift: 2ND Shift (Day)
Entry Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Watch Officer: [redacted] b2
ICF# Referenced: [redacted] b2
Info Circular Referenced: [redacted] b2
Entry: IMMINENT THREAT: NATIONAL MEDIA REPORTING THREAT ALERT AND MILITARY REACTION IN MIDDLE EAST. ADDITIONALLY, CNN REPORTS ON WORLDWIDE CAUTION IN PROCESS AT STATE. BEGIN DRAFTING IC 2001- [redacted] b2

Report of the Joint Inquiry Into the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001

generate government terrorist advisories and warnings, including:

- An FAA Circular on June 22, 2001, referring to a possible hijacking plot by Islamic terrorists to secure the release of fourteen persons incarcerated in the United States in connection with the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers.

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9-11 Commission Report Chapter 8 p. 256

blow up sites in New York City. The reporting noted that operatives might opt to hijack an aircraft or storm a U.S. embassy. This report led to a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) information circular to airlines noting the potential for “an airline hijacking to free terrorists incarcerated in the United States.” Other reporting mentioned that Abu Zubaydah was planning an attack, possibly against Israel, and expected to carry out several more if things went well. On May 24 alone, counterterrorism officials grappled with reports alleging plots in Yemen and Italy, as well as a report about a cell in Canada that an anonymous caller had claimed might be planning an attack against the United States.¹⁰

9-11 Commission Report Chapter 8 Notes p. 533

see intelligence report, threat report, May 16, 2001; NSC memo, CSO agenda, May 17, 2001.

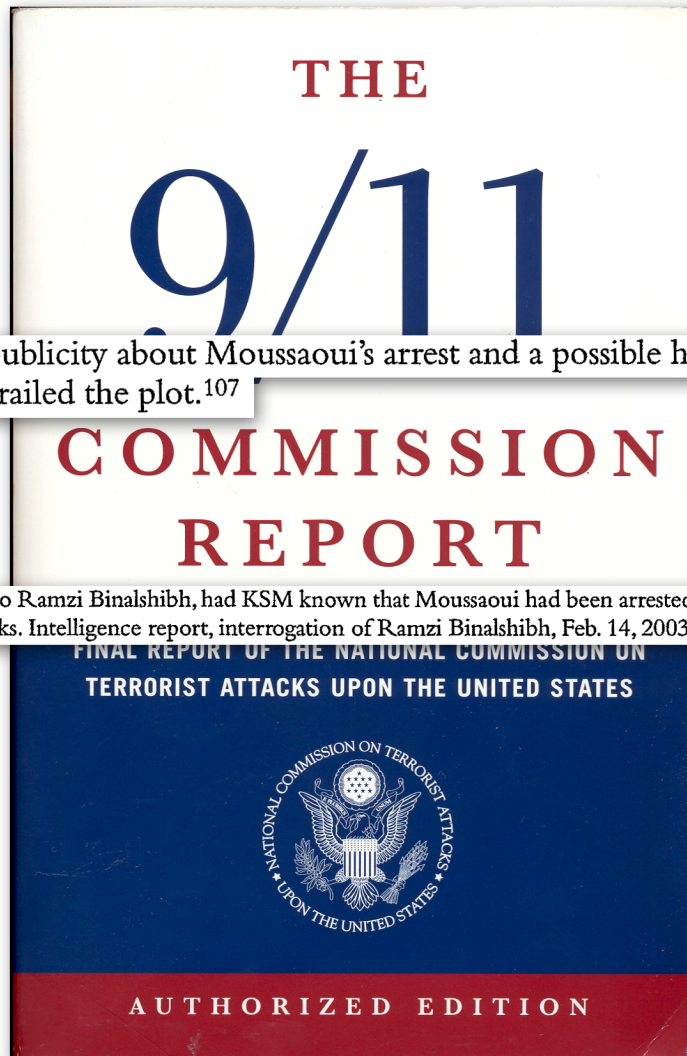
10. See CIA, SEIB, “Terrorist Groups Said Cooperating on US Hostage Plot,” May 23, 2001; FAA information circular, “Possible Terrorist Threat Against American Citizens,” IC-2001-08, June 22, 2001 (this IC expired on August 22, 2001); CIA, SEIB, “Bin Ladin Network’s Plans Advancing,” May 26, 2001; NSC email, Clarke to Rice and Hadley, “A day in the life of Terrorism Intelligence,” May 24, 2001.

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Openness Equals Security



However, publicity about Moussaoui’s arrest and a possible hijacking threat might have derailed the plot.¹⁰⁷

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107. According to Ramzi Binalshibh, had KSM known that Moussaoui had been arrested, he would have cancelled the 9/11 attacks. Intelligence report, interrogation of Ramzi Binalshibh, Feb. 14, 2003.

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