

# Pentagon's 'rules for lying'

## Draft document exposes the great lengths the government will go to keep its secrets

By John Wagner  
Washington Post

Washington, D.C.  
It's permissible to lie, as long as you do a good job of it.

That message is contained in a new Bush administration draft of security guidelines for contractors involved in highly classified projects.

Known as "special access" or "black" programs, the projects are so secret that they are not officially acknowledged to exist. They have included the development of intelligence-gathering devices, such as reconnaissance satellites, and advanced weaponry, such as the F-117A stealth fighter.

The government routinely goes to great lengths to keep the public in the dark about black projects, even authorizing contractors to actively deceive those who inquire about their work, a document obtained by The Washington Post suggests.

The document, produced by an inter-agency task force from the CIA, Energy, Defense and other departments, is stamped "For Official Use Only." It details a little-known technique of contractors using government-approved, fabricated "cover stories" to mislead the outside world about what they are up to.

"Cover stories may be established for unacknowledged programs in order to protect the integrity of the program from individuals who do not have a need to know," the document says. The document cautions that such fabrications "must be believable and cannot reveal any information regarding the true nature of the contract."

The practice amounts to "Soviet-style disinformation," which is inappropriate for a post-Cold War era, said Steven Aftergood, who directs a project on government secrecy for the Federation of American Scien-

tists.

The most troubling aspect of cover stories is that their use casts doubt on the veracity of any information coming out of the Pentagon, Aftergood said. "Once we know the Defense Department practices this kind of deception, it becomes harder to discern what's for real and what's not."

Lt. Cmdr. Kenneth Satterfield, a Defense Department spokesman, refused detailed comment, saying it was against department policy to discuss black programs. Furthermore, the draft document that discusses cover stories is "a work in progress" and "does not, at this time, represent the policy of the federal government," he said.

But he did acknowledge that "the security plans for some [existing] special-access programs include the use of cover stories."

The document, dated March 29, 1992, is a supplement to the National Industrial Security Program Manual, a coordinated attempt to streamline and standardize security guidelines that apply to private-industry contractors.

The guidelines are expected to be issued through an executive order within the next year.

Aftergood and other experts on government classification maintain that cover stories have existed for some time but have received very little attention from scholars or the press. "It's something people don't like to know," said Harold Relyea of the Congressional Research Service. Far more common than lying to the pub-

*I forgot to mention this article in my letter. you may have seen it in the Post. This is the government you have exposed in your work.*

lic is for contractors to offer no information at all on their projects, experts said.

"All I can offer you is a 'no comment,'" said Jeff Rhodes, a spokesman for Lockheed, when asked about black programs. His comments echoed those of other defense contractors, who directed all inquiries to the Pentagon.

The guidelines also provide a rare window into other less-controversial security measures contractors take while working on some of the government's most secret projects.

Contractors are instructed to install "nonattributable" telephones, presumably for use in discussing the special-access programs, that "are not readily identified in any manner with the facility, company [or] government agency" sponsoring their work. The installation costs of the phone, as well as monthly billings, should be paid in the name of an individual using either a home address or a post office box not affiliated with the company, the document says.

Phone numbers are to be unlisted and unpublished. They should have a different prefix than others in the facility, the guidelines say.

Then there are the instructions on

how to answer the phone. "When answering a nonattributable telephone, program personnel will state the proper salutation, e.g. 'Good morning' or 'Hello,'" the document says. Employees should be instructed "not use the company name or the telephone number when answering these telephones."

Contractors also should establish "nonattributable" mailing addresses for correspondence concerning special-access programs, the guidelines state. The address should be a post office box accessible to only a few individuals. Payments for the post office box must be made from "a nonattributable fund, so that the identity of the facility and company will not be associated with the box," the document says.

When packaging working papers related to the project, contractors are instructed not to have their "business name, address, logo, watermark or the identity of government organizations" appear on "the inner or outer containers." A "nonattributable" return address should be used.

About \$16.3 billion of the Defense Department's fiscal year 1993 acquisition budget involves special-access programs, according to an estimate by the Defense Budget Project, a nonpartisan research organization.