

Crossfire Over Proposal on Government Secrets

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The Defense Department is opposing a National Security Council recommendation that all classified government information be made public after being kept secret for a maximum of 30 years.

Criticizing an NSC draft revision of government security regulations, the Pen-

tagon has appealed for a "savings clause" that would permit agency heads to designate material affecting foreign relations that they believe must remain secret indefinitely in the interest of "national security."

But the Defense Department also questions some sections of the NSC draft as unduly restrictive and has

suggested changes that might have the effect of reducing the number of classified documents in government archives.

The Pentagon suggestions are contained in a memorandum to the National Security Council from J. Fred Buzhardt, general counsel of the defense department.

The Washington Post has

obtained a copy of that memorandum, one of several that will be considered by the National Security Council before submitting the draft for presidential approval.

Meanwhile, members of Congress and other experts on security classification attacked the NSC draft for cutting back on public access to government information rather than expanding it.

Representative John E. Moss (Dem-Calif.), the author of the Freedom of Information Act, said that "no more stringent regulations are needed. They are the antithesis of a free society."

Commenting on details of the NSC draft, Moss was especially critical of the suggestion that the President seek legislation similar to the British Official Secrets Act, which would severely punish anyone who receives classified information, as well as those who disclose it.

Such legislation, Moss said, "would be an outrageous imposition upon the American people. I will fight it, and I would hope that every enlightened American will fight it."

Buzhardt observed in the memo that the Pentagon found so many problems with the NSC draft that it should "be substantially reworked before submission to the President."

*Washington Post Service*