



## Henry Kyle Frese

- Former Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Employee
- Former Defense Contractor
- Top Secret/SCI Clearance/Access
- Disclosed classified NDI to journalists and foreign consultant
- Accessed and provided NDI outside his job scope
- Provided classified NDI via social media



# CDSE

Center for Development  
of Security Excellence

# CASE STUDY

## Unauthorized Disclosure

### WHAT HAPPENED

Henry Kyle Frese was sentenced to 30 months in prison on June 18, 2020, for the unauthorized disclosure of classified national defense information (NDI) to two journalists. Frese is a former counterterrorism analyst who worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) from February 2018 until his arrest on October 9, 2019.

In the spring and summer of 2018, a news outlet published eight articles authored by a journalist with whom Frese had a romantic relationship. The articles contained classified NDI at the Top Secret/Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI) level. The information included details of foreign countries' weapons systems capabilities and came from five intelligence reports that were outside the scope of Frese's job duties. Between mid-2018 and late September 2019, he orally disclosed TS NDI to a journalist on 12 separate occasions and Secret NDI orally on 4 separate occasions.

In April 2018, Frese received a Twitter direct message from one journalist asking him if he would be willing to speak to another journalist. During a Twitter exchange, one of the journalists indicated to Frese that a U.S. military official was unaware of the subject matter he provided. In or around April 2018, Frese engaged the second journalist via texts and telephone conversations.

On at least 30 separate occasions in 2018, Frese conducted searches on classified government systems for information regarding the classified topics he discussed with the journalists. He also conducted searches based on the journalists' specific requests for information on multiple occasions in 2018 and 2019. Between early 2018 and October 2019, he communicated with an employee of an overseas counterterrorism consulting group via social media. On at least two occasions, he transmitted classified NDI related to counterterrorism topics to the consultant using a social media site's direct messaging feature.

### INDICATORS

- Security and Compliance Incident: Accessed information outside his scope of job duties
- Security and Compliance Incident: Provided classified national defense information via social media
- Security and Compliance Incident: Failed to report suspicious requests from individuals relating to classified national defense information

## IMPACT

According to John C. Demers, the Assistant Attorney General for National Security, “Frese repeatedly passed classified information at the TS/SCI level to journalists, sometimes in response to their requests, all for personal gain. When this information was published, it was shared with all of the nation’s adversaries, creating a risk of exceptionally grave harm to the security of the United States.” He added, “Frese’s conviction and sentence demonstrates the Department of Defense’s commitment to the investigation and prosecution of such betrayals by clearance holders as part of the United States’ mandate to protect our citizens and defend national security.”

Despite non-disclosure security briefings, awareness training, and years of experience handling classified information, this case, like other unauthorized disclosure cases, demonstrates that individuals may be willing to disclose information even though they know the consequences of their actions. Despite their apologies and remorse after getting caught, the damage may already be done and the consequences of their disclosures may not be fully known until much later. Detecting these individuals and prosecuting them may serve as a deterrent to others. Organizations can incorporate these and other case studies as part of their security or insider threat training as well as cover the difference between unauthorized disclosure and the authorized process of whistleblowing.

## ADDITIONAL

Henry Kyle Frese disclosed classified national defense information to unauthorized personnel.

Consider the following questions:

- How can an Insider Threat program identify anomalous behavior?
- How is unauthorized disclosure different than whistleblowing?
- How do we balance the protection of First Amendment rights with safety and national security?
- Why is user activity monitoring a part of an effective Insider Threat program?

Resources for further exploration:

- [Insider Threat Potential Risk Indicators](#)
- [Insider Threat Unauthorized Disclosure Toolkit](#)
- [Insider Threat Privacy and Civil Liberties INT 260.16 eLearning Course](#)
- [Insider Threat Indicators in User Activity Monitoring](#)

## IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency/Department: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP Senior Official/ITP Manager