

# POTENTIAL RISK INDICATORS: FOREIGN CONSIDERATIONS

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# INTRODUCTION

## FOREIGN CONSIDERATIONS

There are a variety of reasons why foreign associations and interests exist. Whether for personal reasons or resulting from professional engagements, foreign connections can pose a security risk if not managed appropriately. Foreign contacts and interests rise to a national security concern when they result in divided or conditional U.S. allegiance. Foreign adversaries seek to exploit vulnerabilities within DOD institutions through infiltration, coercion, or recruitment of personnel. Cleared individuals have a responsibility to report any foreign associations to ensure the integrity and continued security of their respective organizations as well as the collective national security.

Such reporting is essential for identifying potential exploitable vulnerabilities by foreign actors and safeguarding sensitive information and operations. Timely reporting enables security personnel to assess and mitigate any risks posed by these foreign associations, thereby upholding national security interests and fostering a culture of vigilance. Foreign involvement, such as possessing or seeking foreign citizenship, while not inherently harmful, is a security concern when an individual expresses foreign preference over U.S. interests or attempts to conceal such involvement.





## WHAT IS A POTENTIAL RISK INDICATOR

Individuals at risk of becoming insider threats, and those who ultimately cause significant harm, often exhibit warning signs or indicators. PRIs include a wide range of individual predispositions, stressors, choices, actions, and behaviors. Some indicators suggest an increase of a vulnerability to insider threat; others may be signs of an imminent and serious threat.



## INDICATORS

Here are some indicators associated with foreign considerations:

Example Indicators	Comments
	<p data-bbox="324 562 738 604">Dual Citizenship (Past or Present)</p> <p data-bbox="779 457 1481 552">Individuals holding citizenship or residency in a foreign country may have divided loyalties or be susceptible to influence or coercion from foreign governments.</p> <p data-bbox="779 615 1481 709"><b>Has the foreign citizenship (past or present) been reported? In what country was the citizenship or residency? Is the country of citizenship/residency hostile towards the U.S.?</b></p>
	<p data-bbox="324 867 613 909">Foreign Travel Patterns</p> <p data-bbox="779 762 1481 856">Frequent travel to countries known for espionage activities, terrorism, or hostile relations with the U.S. can raise concerns about potential contacts or activities abroad.</p> <p data-bbox="779 919 1481 1014"><b>Is there frequent foreign travel to the same country or region? Was this travel reported in advance? Was this travel for official or unofficial purposes?</b></p>
	<p data-bbox="324 1182 483 1224">Familial Ties</p> <p data-bbox="779 1056 1481 1161">Relatives residing in or having connections to foreign countries may pose security risks, particularly if they have affiliations with hostile governments, extremist groups, or criminal organizations.</p> <p data-bbox="779 1224 1481 1339"><b>What is the nature of the familial connections (i.e., immediate relatives, distant relatives)? How often is there communication with foreign relatives? Do these relatives engage in any activities that would be harmful for U.S. national security?</b></p>
	<p data-bbox="324 1581 621 1623">Other Foreign Contacts</p> <p data-bbox="779 1413 1481 1591">Foreign contacts are not inherently good or bad. In the globalized world we live in, it is common for personal or professional relationships to develop. However, foreign contacts can be utilized for nefarious purposes, such as espionage and other actions that are harmful to national security. It is important for cleared individuals to remain vigilant and report all contacts in accordance with policy.</p> <p data-bbox="779 1654 1481 1770"><b>How did this foreign contact develop? Is there anything suspicious surrounding the nature of the contact and its origin? How often is the cleared person in contact with the foreign national? Was this contact reported?</b></p>

Example Indicators	Comments
	Financial Considerations
	Foreign Education or Employment
	Social Media and Online Activity
	Contact with FIE
	Additional Considerations

Unexplained wealth, financial transactions with foreign entities, or undisclosed offshore accounts may indicate involvement in illicit activities or allow for susceptibility towards bribery or coercion by foreign actors. Possessing foreign assets is not inherently harmful to national security. Many individuals and entities engage in legitimate international investments and businesses as part of global economic activities.

However, possessing foreign assets can pose a security risk depending on the location of the asset and proximity to foreign intelligence entities (FIE) and other bad actors. Like with any other aspect of foreign considerations, possessing foreign assets requires careful oversight, transparency, and proper risk assessment.

Attendance at foreign universities, employment with foreign companies, or participation in exchange programs may provide opportunities for FIE to recruit or exploit individuals for espionage purposes.

Extensive engagement with foreign contacts or groups on social media platforms, online forums, or communication apps may indicate potential ties to FIE or extremist ideologies. Online activity can be especially dangerous as it is a ripe breeding ground for recruitment opportunities due to the anonymity it affords the user.

Contact with FIE poses significant dangers to national security due to the potential for espionage, compromise of sensitive information, and manipulation of individuals for illicit purposes. When individuals communicate with FIE, they may inadvertently or intentionally disclose classified or proprietary information and thereby compromise national defense strategies, military capabilities, diplomatic negotiations, or intelligence collection methods.

FIE may exploit such contacts to recruit spies, infiltrate Government agencies, influence decision making processes to the detriment of national interest, etc. These activities can undermine national security and jeopardize the safety of personnel and assets.

- Service in a foreign military or government
- Foreign business or political interest
- Cohabiting with a foreign national
- Voting in a foreign election

While foreign connections and associations can present potential risks to national security, it is essential to recognize they are not inherently indicative of malicious intent or disloyalty. Many individuals maintain legitimate connections to foreign countries and contacts for a plethora of personal or professional reasons. Moreover, fostering international cooperation and cultural exchange is often beneficial for diplomacy, trade, and overall global understanding. Therefore, while vigilance is necessary to detect and address security threats posed by foreign associations, it is important to avoid presumptive judgements. Like with any effective insider threat program, implementing comprehensive risk assessment protocols that consider contextual factors and behavior patterns ensures a balanced approach to mitigating risks while also protecting personal privacy and civil liberties.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Security Executive Agent Directive 3 (SEAD 3)<sup>1</sup> explains reporting requirements for personnel with access to classified information or those who hold a sensitive position. The obligation to report or avoid various personal behaviors or activities falls on the covered individual. Failure to comply with these requirements could have severe administrative repercussions, including the revocation of national security eligibility.

## REPORTABLE ACTIVITIES FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

For a comprehensive list of reportable activities commensurate with clearance type, please reference SEAD 3 (<https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/Regulations/SEAD-3-Reporting-U.pdf>). According to Appendix A (Required Data Elements for Reporting) of SEAD 3, cleared individuals are required to report:

1. Foreign Travel
2. Unofficial contact with a known or suspected FIE
3. Continuing association with a known foreign national(s) or foreign national roommate(s)
4. Involvement in foreign business
5. Foreign bank account
6. Ownership of foreign property
7. Foreign citizenship
8. Application for a foreign passport or identity card for travel
9. Possession of a foreign passport or identity card for travel
10. Use of a foreign passport or identity card for travel
11. Voting in a foreign election

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<sup>1</sup> Office of the Director of National Intelligence. (2017, June 12). *Reporting Requirements for Personnel with Access to Classified Information or Who Hold a Sensitive Position*.

<https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/Regulations/SEAD-3-Reporting-U.pdf>

12. Adoption of non-U.S. citizen children
13. Attempted elicitation, exploitation, blackmail, coercion, or enticement to obtain classified information or other information specifically prohibited by law from disclosure
14. Media contacts
15. Arrests
16. Financial Issues and Anomalies
17. Cohabitant(s)
18. Marriage
19. Alcohol and drug related treatment

Additionally, all DOD personnel are subject to DoDD 5240.06<sup>2</sup>, Counterintelligence Awareness and Reporting. Reference Enclosure 4 (<https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodd/524006e.pdf>) of the directive for a comprehensive list of requirements and reportable activities.

## SECTION 811 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Separate from individual reporting requirements for cleared personnel, federal law requires U.S. Government agencies and departments to report certain information to the FBI. Section 811 of the FY1995 Intelligence Authorization Act<sup>3</sup> sets forth the reporting guidelines and subsequent investigative actions. Per Section 811:

“(A) the Federal Bureau of Investigation is advised immediately of any information, regardless of its origin, which indicates that classified information is being, or may have been, disclosed in an unauthorized manner to a foreign power or an agent of a foreign power;

(B) following a report made pursuant to subparagraph (A), the Federal Bureau of Investigation is consulted with respect to all subsequent actions which may be undertaken by the department or agency concerned to determine the source of such loss or compromise; and

(C) where, after appropriate consultation with the department or agency concerned, the Federal Bureau of Investigation undertakes investigative activities to determine the source of the loss or compromise, the Federal Bureau of Investigation is given complete and timely access to the employees and records of the department or agency concerned for purposes of such investigative activities.”

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<sup>2</sup>Department of Defense. Counterintelligence Awareness and Reporting (CIAR). 2011, <http://esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodd/>

<sup>3</sup>Rep. Glickman, Dan. *Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1995*. Public Law 103-359. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/103rd-congress/house-bill/4299/text>

Read the scenarios below to determine the potential national security risks posed by John and Theresa.

## SCENARIO

John is a current DOD employee who possesses an active TS/SCI clearance and routinely has access to a wide array of classified data. John is recently divorced and uses online dating apps in hopes of finding a romantic partner. Several weeks ago, he matched with Miriam, a foreign national living in the U.S. on a temporary visa. Throughout the conversation, John revealed information to Miriam that he knew could potentially get him in trouble if discovered. However, he felt he needed to impress Miriam by exaggerating his importance and the secretive nature of his work. John and Miriam talked regularly and saw each other in person. By the end of the summer, the two were officially dating and had even taken a trip back to Miriam's home country to visit her family. Miriam had told her family about John and the "secret" job he had within the U.S. Government. Miriam's family appeared overly interested in John's work and grilled him about sensitive information they had obtained through Miriam. Miriam's father went as far as asking John to meet some family friends who would be interested in John's employment. John realized he was in over his head and regretted sharing the sensitive information with Miriam. John was especially nervous because he had not reported his relationship, conversations, or foreign travel to his security officer. John's anxiety elevated as he pondered what he should do next.

## QUESTION

- What should John do at this point?
- What are some questions that need to be asked to determine the potential damage John has done?
- What are some indicators John exhibited?

## SCENARIO

Theresa is a U.S. Army officer stationed overseas in Italy. Theresa has a Top Secret clearance; although, she does not regularly have the need to handle classified information for her current position. Theresa was captivated by the Italian culture and decided she wanted to purchase a house in the local area. She planned to live in it for the duration of her orders and then rent it to Italian citizens after she departed. Theresa also decided she wanted to become involved with the local municipality to stay up to date on actions that might affect her real estate endeavors. She attended meetings and befriended several Italians at the local council who subsequently became her close circle of friends in the area. Theresa stayed in close contact with this group of friends and communicated with them on a near daily basis.

## QUESTION

- Has Theresa done anything wrong?
- What actions should Theresa take to ensure she maintains her national security eligibility?
- What should Theresa do prior to making any foreign real estate investments?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CDSE has a plethora of resources available to help you delve further into the topic of foreign considerations as a potential risk indicator:

For an overview of how FIE target and recruit:

<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobajds/insider/foreign-intelligence-entity-targeting-recruitment-methodology.pdf>

For a look inside the mind of a spy, check out this webinar:

<https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Webinars-and-Conferences/Webinar-Archive/The-Psychology-of-Spies/>

Sharpen your investigative skills by playing “Who is the Risk?”

[https://securityawarness.dcsa.mil/cdse/multimedia/games/whoistherisk/story\\_html5.html](https://securityawarness.dcsa.mil/cdse/multimedia/games/whoistherisk/story_html5.html)

Browse our case study library to discover real world examples of insider threat actors:

<https://securityawarness.dcsa.mil/cdse/case-studies/index.php>

