<u>Student Guide</u>

Short: Downgrading and Declassification

Objective	Determine the declassification instructions for a derivatively classified document derived from multiple sources.
Estimated completion time	15 minutes

Introduction

When originally classifying a document, an Original Classification Authority (OCA) assigns an overall classification level based on the highest level of information it contains. In addition, the OCA specifies downgrading and declassification instructions (e.g. dates, events, and exemptions) to protect information as long as necessary, at its designated classification level.

> *Note: This Short addresses only downgrading and declassification **dates**. It does not cover events and exemptions.*

Executive Order 13526 provides the guidance for identifying downgrading and declassification instructions. Its goal is to balance the demands of national security with the need to inform the American people of the Government's activities. The result is that classified information is to be protected no longer than what is necessary to protect national security. .

Volume 1 of DoD Manual 5200.01 provides specific guidance on downgrading and declassification. As a derivative classifier of information, you are responsible for protecting classified information by ensuring that the appropriate classification, downgrading, and declassification instructions are carried forward from one or more source documents to a derived document.

Downgrading and Declassification

Downgrading refers to lowering the classification level of a document. Top Secret documents can be downgraded to Secret or Confidential, while Secret documents can be downgraded to Confidential. A document may not have any downgrading instructions, but if it does, they will be noted in the Classification Authority Block on the first page of the document.

Declassification refers to the authorized change of a document's classified status that results in an unclassified document; however, it is critical to remember that just because

a document has been declassified, does not mean the information can automatically be released to the public. For example, a declassified document may still contain controlled unclassified information, or CUI, which is not publically releasable. A document's declassification instructions appear in the Classification Authority Block. Documents containing national security information will always have declassification instructions, for example, date, event, or exemption associated with it.

Deriving Classified Information

When working with a single source document, your determination of what classified information to carry over to your derived document is straightforward. You simply carry over the exact same classification and downgrading and declassification instructions that are on the source document. When working with multiple source documents, however, things get a bit more complicated.

Multiple source documents mean multiple classification levels, multiple declassification instructions, and perhaps multiple downgrading instructions.

So -- how do you determine what information to carry over to your derived document? To answer this question, you will follow a two-part process. First, you will determine the classification of the derived document. Then you will determine the downgrading and declassification instructions that apply to it. Let's take a closer look at how this process works.

To perform each step, you need to find the answers to a series of questions. The first step is straightforward.

Step 1: Determining the Classification Level of the Derived Document

What is the highest classification used in your derived document?

** Answering this question will give you the classification that applies to your derived document.

The second part of the process involves answering a series of questions about the source document.

Step 2: Determining the Downgrading and Declassification Instructions for the Derived Document

Which source document carries the earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification instructions?

What happens to the source document on that date?

> *Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?*

>> *If you answer no to the third question, you will repeat the process using the next earliest date on the matrix.*

>> *If you answer yes to the third question, you will answer another question -- what will the derived classification change to on that date?*

>> ** This gives you a downgrading or declassification instruction for your derived document. . But the process isn't over. You need to look again at the dates on your source documents and repeat the process for the next earliest one. You will do this until you have addressed all of the dates in the instructions on your source documents.

Matrix Tool for Derived Documents

One way to determine what downgrading and declassification instructions carry over to a derived document is to use a matrix tool. Here is an example of a matrix for three source documents.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1				
2				
3				

Derived Document				

As you can see, the matrix tool has one line for each source document. On a given line, you will enter the classification level, any downgrading instructions, and the declassification instructions indicated on the source document. Once populated, the matrix tool is useful for tracking how the downgrading and declassification instructions of your source documents apply to your derived document.

You can enter the downgrading and declassification instructions that apply to your derived document on the row under the matrix.

Demonstration of the Process

Now that you have some background regarding the process and the use of the matrix tool, it is time to see how they work together to determine derived document information.

As an example, we will use the following information from three source documents.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Top Secret	20171012		20260531
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document				

Step 1: Determining the Classification Level of the Derived Document

1. What is the highest classification used in your derived document?

Review all of the source document classifications. The highest classification will become the classification of the derived document.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	**Top Secret**	20171012		20260531
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret			

In this example, the highest classification is Top Secret. To record that, in the Derived Document row under the matrix, enter Top Secret in the Classification column.

Step 2: Determining the Downgrading and Declassification Instructions for the Derived Document

The next step is to determine the downgrade and declassify instructions that carry over to the derived document. This process involves answering the three questions (and potentially a fourth), which must be completed for each and every source document date. There are five dates in this example, so you will go through the questions five times.

1. **Date 1: Which source document carries the earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?**

Review all of the source document downgrading and declassification dates. The earliest date will be your starting point.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Top Secret	**20171012**		20260531
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret			

In our example, Source Document 1 carries the earliest date -- October 12, 2017 (20171012).

2. **Date 1: What happens to the source document on that date?**

In the matrix, apply the downgrading/declassification change to the source document's classification. When applying the change, cross out the source document's classification and enter the new classification.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ **Secret**	**20171012**		20260531
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret			

In this example, Source Document 1 will be downgraded to Secret on October 12, 2017. Cross out Top Secret and enter Secret.

3. Date 1: Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?

Reassess the source document classification levels to determine if the highest classification will change on the date in question. If it will, then the classification level of the derived document will change as well.

In our example, the answer to the question is yes since the highest classification of all three source documents taken together will change from Top Secret to Secret on October 12, 2017.

Classification
~~Top Secret~~ **Secret**
Confidential
Secret

3a. Date 1: If yes, what will the derived classification change to on that date?

Because the highest classification of the source documents will change from Top Secret to Secret on October 12, 2017, the classification of your derived document will also be downgraded from Top Secret to Secret on that date.

Now, you can note that fact in the Derived Document row under the matrix:

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ Secret	~~20171012~~		20260531
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	**20171012**		

After you have noted the classification change as it applies to the derived document, cross out the date and continue on to the next earliest date.

Because there are more dates in the matrix to account for, let's go through the process again, moving on to the next earliest date.

1. **Date 2: Which source document carries the next earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?**

Review all of the source document downgrading and declassification dates that are not crossed out. The earliest non-crossed out date will be the next point of focus.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ Secret	~~20171012~~		**20260531**
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012		

Again, Source Document 1 carries the earliest date in the example -- May 31, 2026 (20260531).

2. **Date 2: What happens to the source document on that date?**

Apply the downgrading/declassification change to the source document's classification just as you did before. Remember that when applying the change, cross out the source document's classification and enter the new classification.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ **Unclassified**	~~20171012~~		**20260531**
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012		

In this example, Source Document 1 will be declassified May 31, 2026. Cross out Secret in the matrix and enter Unclassified.

3. Date 2: Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?

Reassess the source document classification levels to determine if the highest classification will change on the date in question. If it will, then the classification level of the derived document will also change.

For the date in our example, the answer to the question is no since the highest classification of all three source documents remains Secret, despite the declassification of Source Document 1.

Classification
~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ **Unclassified**
Confidential
Secret

3b. Date 2: If no, look at the next earliest date.

Since the highest classification of the source documents remains Secret, the date has no effect on the derived document's classification. Cross out the date and continue on to the next earliest date. Do not place any information in the Derived Document row beneath the matrix.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		**~~20260531~~**
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012		

Let's move on to the next earliest date.

1. **Date 3: Which source document carries the next earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?**

Review the remaining source document downgrade and declassification dates, focusing on the earliest one.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	Confidential			20280618
3	Secret		**20270905**	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012		

The next earliest date in the example belongs to Source Document 3 -- September 5, 2027 (20270905).

2. **Date 3: What happens to the source document on that date?**

Apply the downgrading/declassification change to the source document's classification. Cross out the source document's classification and enter the new classification.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	Confidential			20280618
3	~~Secret~~ **Confidential**		**20270905**	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012		

In this example, Source Document 3 will downgrade to Confidential on September 5, 2027. Cross out Secret in the matrix and enter Confidential.

3. **Date 3: Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?**

Reassess the source document classification levels to determine if the highest classification will change on the date in question. If it will, then the classification level of the derived document classification will change as well.

For the date in question, the answer is "Yes" since the highest classification of all three source documents changes from Secret to Confidential.

Classification
~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified
Confidential
~~Secret~~ **Confidential**

3a. **Date 3: If yes, what will the derived classification change to on that date?**

With the change of the highest classification of the source documents from Secret to Confidential on September 5, 2027, the classification of your derived document will also be downgraded to Confidential on that date.

Note the date in the appropriate column of the Derived Document row:

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	Confidential			20280618
3	~~Secret~~ Confidential		**~~20270905~~**	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	**20270905**	

After you have noted the classification change as it applies to the derived document, cross out the date and continue on to the next earliest date.

Let's take a look at the next earliest date.

1. **Date 4: Which source document carries the next earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?**

Review all of the source document downgrading and declassification dates that are not crossed out. The earliest non-crossed out date will be the next point of focus.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	Confidential			**20280618**
3	~~Secret~~ Confidential		~~20270905~~	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	

In the example, Source Document 2 again carries the earliest date -- June 18, 2028 (20280618).

2. **Date 4: What happens to the source document on that date?**

Once again, apply the downgrading/declassification change to the source document's classification. Remember that when applying the change, cross out the source document's classification and enter the new classification.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	~~**Confidential**~~ **Unclassified**			**20280618**
3	~~Secret~~ Confidential		~~20270905~~	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	

In this example, Source Document 2 will be declassified June 18, 2028. Cross out Confidential and enter Unclassified.

3. **Date 4: Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?**

Reassess the source document classification levels to determine if the highest classification will change on the date in question. If it will, then the classification level of the derived document classification will change as well.

For the date in question in our example, the answer to the question is "No" since the highest classification of all three source documents remains Confidential despite the declassification of Source Document 2.

Classification
~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified
~~Confidential~~ **Unclassified**
~~Secret~~ Confidential

3b. Date 4: If no, look at the next earliest date.

Because the highest classification of the source documents remains Secret despite the declassification of Source Document 1, the date has no effect on the derived document's classification. Cross out the date and continue on to the next earliest date. Do not place any information in the Derived Document row beneath the matrix.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	~~Confidential~~ Unclassified			**~~20280618~~**
3	~~Secret~~ Confidential		~~20270905~~	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	

There is only one date left. Let's take a look at it.

1. **Date 5: Which source document carries the earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?**

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	~~Confidential~~ Unclassified			~~20280618~~
3	~~Secret~~ Confidential		~~20270905~~	**20320419**

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	

In the example, the only date left belongs to Source Document 3 -- April 19, 2032 (20320419).

2. **Date 5: What happens to the source document on that date?**

As with the other dates, apply the downgrading/declassification change to the source document's classification. Remember that when applying the change, cross out the source document's classification and enter the new classification.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	~~Confidential~~ Unclassified			~~20280618~~
3	**~~Secret~~ ~~Confidential~~ Unclassified**		~~20270905~~	**20320419**

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	

In this example, Source Document 3 will be declassified April 19, 2032. Cross out Confidential and enter Unclassified.

3. **Date 5: Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?**

In our example, the answer to the question is "Yes" since the highest classification of all three source documents becomes Unclassified with the declassification of Source Document 3.

Classification
~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified
~~Confidential~~ Unclassified
~~Secret~~ **~~Confidential~~** **Unclassified**

3a. Date 5: If yes, what will the derived classification change to on that date?

Because the highest classification of the source documents will change from Confidential to Unclassified on April 19, 2032, the derived document will also be declassified on that date.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	~~Top Secret~~ ~~Secret~~ Unclassified	~~20171012~~		~~20260531~~
2	~~Confidential~~ Unclassified			~~20280618~~
3	~~Secret~~ ~~Confidential~~ Unclassified		~~20270905~~	**~~20320419~~**

Derived Document	Top Secret	20171012	20270905	**20320419**

There you have it. We have now determined the downgrading and declassification dates that apply to the derived document using the process and the matrix tool.

You can capture the answers to your questions in a table like the one below. It summarizes all of the steps we just worked through and records the answers to each question.

Step 1:

What is the highest classification used in your derived document?

Top Secret

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?
20171012	Downgrade to Secret	Yes	Downgrade to Secret
20260531	Declassify	No	
20270905	Downgrade to Confidential	Yes	Downgrade to Confidential
20280618	Declassify	No	
20320419	Declassify	Yes	Declassify

In the next section, you will have the opportunity to apply this process in conjunction with a matrix tool.

Guided Practice Activity

Now that you have seen a demonstration of the process, see if you can work through a matrix on your own.

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20280618
2	Confidential			20260531
3	Top Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document				

Use the table below to record your answers to the questions for each step of the process.

Step 1:

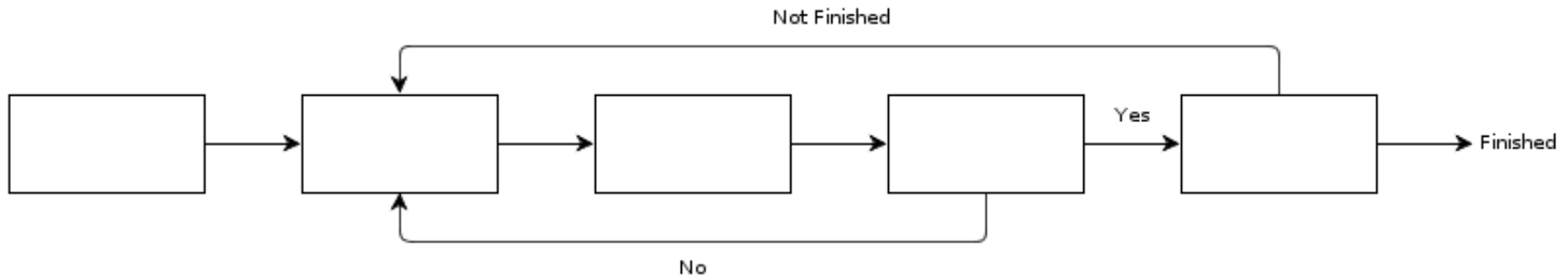| What is the highest classification used in your derived document? |
|---|
| |

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?

Identifying the Steps of the Process for Determining Derived Document Information

Now that you have learned and applied the process used to determine derived document information, see if you can place the steps you follow in the correct order.

Write the letter of each step in the process flow diagram below.

Process Flow Diagram:

Steps:

A. What happens to the source document on that date?

B. What will the derived classification change to on that date?

C. Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?

D. What is the highest classification?

E. Which source document carries the earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?

Independent Practice Activities

It is now time to see if you can determine the correct classification information to carry over to a derived document on your own. There are three activities for you to complete.

Matrix 1

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20240629
2	Top Secret		20240719	20291007
3	Confidential			20310423

Derived Document				

Matrix 2

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20291213
2	Top Secret			20280127
3	Confidential			20300829

Derived Document				

Matrix 3

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20270430
2	Top Secret		20170324	20250505
3	Secret		20190516	20301122

Derived Document				

Summary

As a derivative classifier of information, you are responsible for protecting classified information by identifying the appropriate classification, downgrading, and declassification information for the derived documents you create. Using a matrix tool will help you work through the instructions from multiple source documents to determine the correct downgrading and declassification instructions your derivative document.

Answer Key: Guided Practice Activity

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20280618
2	Confidential			20260531
3	Top Secret		20270905	20320419

Derived Document	Top Secret	20270905	20280618	20320419

The questions for each step of the process have been incorporated into the table below.
Step 1:

What is the highest classification used in your derived document?
Top Secret

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?
20260531	Declassify	No	
20270905	Downgrade to Confidential	Yes	Downgrade to Secret
20280618	Declassify	Yes	Downgrade to Confidential
20320419	Declassify	Yes	Declassify

Answer Key: Identifying the Steps of the Process for Determining Derived Document Information

Process Flow Diagram:
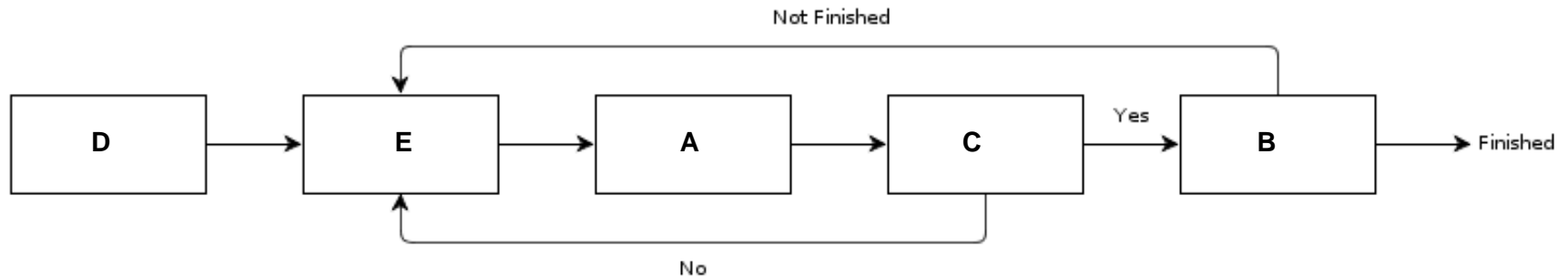
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                                    Not Finished
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│    D    │ ──▶ │    E    │ ──▶ │    A    │ ──▶ │    C    │ ────▶ │    B    │ ──▶ Finished
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                                   No
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Steps:

    A. What happens to the source document on that date?

    B. What will the derived classification change to on that date?

    C. Will the change to the source document affect the classification of the derived document?

    D. What is the highest classification?

    E. Which source document carries the earliest date of all the downgrading and declassification actions?

Answer Key: Independent Practice Activities

Matrix 1

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20240629
2	Top Secret		20240719	20291007
3	Confidential			20310423

Derived Document	Top Secret		20240719	20310423

Step 1:

What is the highest source document classification used in your derived document?
Top Secret

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?
20240629	Declassify	No	
20240719	Downgrade to Confidential	Yes	Downgrade to Confidential
20291007	Declassify	No	
20310423	Declassify	Yes	Declassify

Matrix 2

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20291213
2	Top Secret			20280127
3	Confidential			20300829

Derived Document	Top Secret	20280127	20291213	20300829

Step 1:

What is the highest classification used in your derived document?
Top Secret

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?
20280127	Declassify	Yes	Downgrade to Secret
20291213	Declassify	Yes	Downgrade to Confidential
20300829	Declassify	Yes	Declassify

Matrix 3

Source Doc	Highest Classification Derived	Downgrade to Secret	Downgrade to Confidential	Declassify
1	Secret			20270430
2	Top Secret		20170324	20250505
3	Secret		20190516	20301122

Derived Document	Top Secret	20170324	20270430	20301122

Step 1:

What is the highest classification used in your derived document?
Top Secret

Step 2:

1. What is the earliest date?	2. How does it affect the source document?	3. Does it affect the derived classification?	4. How does it affect the derived classification?
20170324	Downgrade to Confidential	Yes	Downgrade to Secret
20190516	Downgrade to Confidential	No	
20250505	Declassify	No	
20270430	Declassify	Yes	Downgrade to Confidential
20301122	Declassify	Yes	Declassify