

Job Aid: Mergers, Acquisitions, Reorganizations, and Spin-offs/Splits (MARS)

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Part 1: MARS Basics

MARS Transaction Types



Merger/consolidation: A merger occurs when two separate entities combine forces to create a new business entity.



Acquisition: An acquisition refers to the takeover of one entity by another. The acquired entity may become a subsidiary or liquidation.

- Subsidiary - Entity A acquires Entity B, which becomes a subsidiary of Entity A. Commonly referred to as a stock purchase.
- Liquidation - Entity A acquires Entity B and Entity B is dissolved. Commonly referred to as an asset purchase. Not all asset purchases result in liquidation; there are times when only partial assets of a company are required.



Reorganization/restructure: The act of reorganizing the legal, operational, ownership, or other structures of a business entity. For example:

- LLC converts to a corporation or vice versa.
- Wholly-owned subsidiary becomes a branch office.



Spin-off: In a spin-off, a business area of an entity becomes an independent entity with assets, employees, intellectual property, technology, or existing products that are taken from the original entity.



Split: A single entity splits into two or more new entities.

Red Flags



More than one changed condition reported at the same time or in connection with the same change.

Change Conditions Affecting the Facility Clearance include:


- Ownership
- Address
- Legal Structure
- Key Management Personnel (KMP)
- Operating Name
- Foreign Ownership, Control, or Influence (FOCI)



Report of a CAGE code change. Legitimate CAGE code changes are very rare.

Failure to report a changed condition may have an adverse impact on the FCL and could lead to invalidation, revocation, or administrative termination.

MARS Categories

Levels/criticality	Priority	Description	Risk
 MARS Level 1	HIGH	Any MARS transaction in which an uncleared entity will ultimately have control of or influence over existing classified contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncleared entity controlling classified contracts Uncleared entity accessing classified Work stoppage/interruption
MARS Level 2	Medium	Any MARS transaction that involves novation of existing classified contracts to a different entity; FCL action(s) or changed condition(s) need to be processed with consideration to novation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing contractual link between the entity classified contracts are issued to and the entity working on the contracts Contract holder dissolving prior to novation completion <p><i>Note: If the transaction is filed in CFIUS, it becomes an immediate MARS Level 1.</i></p>
MARS Level 3	Low	A MARS transaction that results in a reportable changed condition with no new FCL required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assuming MARS is properly categorized, risk is low and results from the inherent risk from any changed condition

Part 2: Roles and Responsibilities

Cleared Entity's Role

- With numerous stakeholders having varying interests, coordinate meetings to ensure everyone is speaking the same language. Stakeholders include:
 - Legal representatives of buyer and seller
 - Senior Management Officials (SMOs) of all involved companies of buyer and seller
 - FSO (should always be involved for security purposes)
 - Corporate Administrative Contracting Officer / Administrative Contracting Officer (CACO/ACO)
 - Defense Security Service
- Provide information/documentation/timelines on the upcoming change
- Provide POCs representing all involved entities to whom DSS may reach out
- Key information FSOs and SMOs provide DSS on a MARS transaction:
 - How ownership will change and legal documents related to the change
 - When the change did/will occur and whether it will occur in phases
 - The legal name and any fictitious or doing business as (dba) name(s)
 - Whether the legal entity DSS originally cleared will survive
 - If novation of contracts to the new business that will be responsible for performance of the classified contracts is necessary, then identify the novation plan/timeline; who will work on the classified contract(s); and supporting contract documents

Key Tips



If an anticipated MARS transaction will result in a new entity needing to be cleared, inform DSS for streamlined processing as soon as possible to minimize the risk of an uncleared entity acquiring control of a classified contract(s).



Due to long novation timelines, a contractual relationship between the entity awarded the contract and the new entity doing the work must be established in the interim. [FAR 42.12](#) outlines novation and change-of-name-agreement processes. Note that novation is a contractual decision and is the responsibility of the contracting officer at the Government Contracting Activity (GCA).



MARS Transactions Involving FOCI

- Committee for Foreign Investments in the United States (CFIUS) timelines are aggressive and must be strictly followed. If a MARS is filed in CFIUS, the FCL becomes an immediate high priority. If a MARS transaction results in a substantive change to FOCI, DSS takes steps to mitigate risk. However, if unmitigated FOCI exists or an entity does not provide information necessary to evaluate the transaction in a timely manner, invalidation procedures may ensue.

Part 3: Key Documents in MARS Transactions

SMOs and FSOs must ensure the MARS transaction documents are available for DSS review.

Examples are:

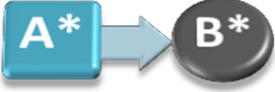
- Purchase Agreement/Merger Plan/MOU
- Commitment Letter (FOCI)
- Documentation for Trade Name, DBA, or Fictitious Name (certified by the Secretary of State)
- Novation Agreement (see [FAR 42.12](#) for template)
- Authenticated copy of instrument effecting asset transfer (Documentation submitted to or received from Secretary of State—Bill of Sale/Certificate of Merger/Contract Deed/Court Decree, etc.)
- Certified copy of each resolution of each corporate party's stockholder meeting necessary to approve transfer of assets
- List of Classified Contracts affected
- New business entity business documents (see [FCL Orientation Handbook](#) pages 8 and 9)




NOTE: Not all of these documents will apply.




Part 4: MARS Scenarios

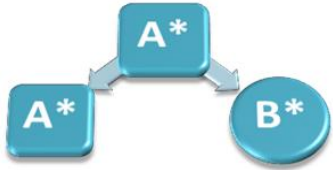
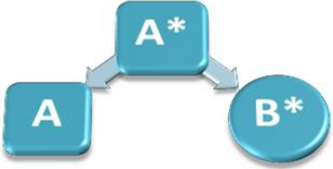
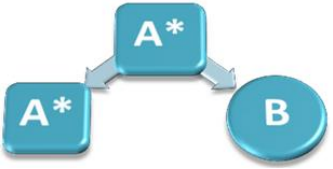
Asterisk (*) denotes a cleared entity.		Gray indicates the entity does not survive the MARS transaction.	
MERGER	Description	Priority	Action
	<p>Entity C will have classified contracts.</p> <p>Entity A and Entity B may or may not be cleared.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity C must be processed for an FCL. In this scenario, Entity A and/or Entity B is cleared and has classified contracts that will require novation to Entity C.</p>

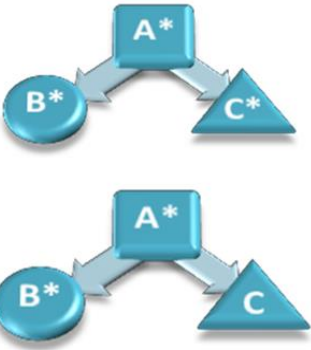

ACQUISITION Liquidation	Description	Priority	Action
<p>Scenario 1</p>	<p>Entity A is cleared and acquires Entity B, which is not cleared.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Entity A reports changed condition(s) resulting from acquisition, if applicable (e.g. KMP change, address change, SF-328 change, etc.)</p>
<p>Scenario 2</p>	<p>Entity A (the acquired Entity) is not cleared. Entity B (the acquired Entity that is ultimately dissolved) is cleared.</p> <p><i>Legally speaking, companies involved in scenario 2 often think they have acquired the FCL as an asset.</i></p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p><i>This scenario is possibly the most critical MARS type.</i></p> <p>Entity B should provide DSS with their formal or informal acquisition plan as early and often as possible.</p> <p>Entity A will need to be cleared prior to the dissolution of Entity B.</p> <p>If this cannot be accomplished or Entity A does not meet FCL process deadlines, the FCL for Entity B may be affected</p>

ACQUISITION Liquidation	Description	Priority	Action
 <p>Scenario 3</p>	<p>Both Entity A (the acquiring entity) and Entity B (the acquired entity that is ultimately dissolved) are cleared at the appropriate level.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity A reports changed condition(s) resulting from acquisition, if applicable (e.g. KMP change, address change, SF-328 change, etc.)</p> <p>Entity B should report the impending legal structure change and FCL termination as early as practicable.</p> <p>If classified contracts issued to Entity B will be novated to Entity A, both FCLs must remain active until novation is complete.</p> <p>Both entities should keep DSS updated on the novation process.</p>

ACQUISITION Subsidiary	Description	Priority	Action
 <p>Scenario 1</p>	<p>Entity A is cleared and acquires an uncleared entity, Entity B.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Entity A reports changed condition(s) resulting from acquisition, if applicable (e.g. KMP change, address change, SF-328 change, etc.)</p>
 <p>Scenario 2</p>	<p>Entity A is not cleared and acquires Entity B, which is cleared and has classified contracts.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity B reports the legal structure change and any other resulting changed conditions.</p> <p>Entity A is processed for an FCL or exclusion (standard priority) per the ISR's evaluation of control and influence.</p>
 <p>Scenario 3</p>	<p>Entity A is cleared and acquires Entity B, which is also cleared.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Entity A reports changed condition(s) resulting from acquisition, if applicable. (e.g. KMP change, address change, SF-328 change, etc.)</p>

Reorganization / Restructure	Description	Priority	Action
 <p>Scenario 1</p>	<p>An LLC converts to a corporation or a corporation converts to an LLC.</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>In a true conversion, the entity must provide the Certificate of Conversion from the Secretary of State.</p> <p>The entity would then need to provide DSS with all documentation applicable to the new structure (see the FCL Orientation Handbook for documentation and timelines).</p>
 <p>Scenario 2</p>	<p>Companies state that they have converted when they have actually created a new entity.</p>	<p>HIGH</p>	<p>If there is no conversion documentation and both entities are registered with the appropriate Secretary of State, a new entity has been formed.</p> <p>If the goal is to have the new entity work on classified contracts, the new entity will need to be sponsored for an FCL.</p> <p>The contracts will then have to be novated to the new entity, which must be completed prior to termination of the existing FCL.</p>
 <p>Scenario 3</p>	<p>A wholly owned subsidiary becomes a branch office. This is similar to Acquisition Liquidation Scenario 3.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity A reports changed condition(s) resulting from acquisition, if applicable (e.g. KMP change, address change, SF-328 change, etc.)</p> <p>Entity B should report the impending legal structure change and FCL termination as early as practicable.</p> <p>If classified contracts issued to Entity B will be novated to Entity A, both FCLs must remain active until novation is complete.</p> <p>Both entities should keep DSS updated on the novation process.</p>

SPIN-OFF	Description	Priority	Action
 <p>Scenario 1</p>	<p>Entity B spins-off from Entity A, which is cleared. Both entities will require FCLs and have classified contracts.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity B will need to be processed for a FCL This could be initiated by DSS, Entity A, or GCA. Contracts following Entity B will need to be novated. While novation occurs, Entity A may subcontract to Entity B.</p>
 <p>Scenario 2</p>	<p>Entity A, which is cleared, spins-off its classified efforts to Entity B. Entity A will no longer require an FCL.</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity B will need to be processed for a FCL. This could be initiated by DSS, Entity A, or GCA. Contracts following Entity B will need to be novated. While novation occurs, Entity A may subcontract to Entity B. Only after novation is confirmed, will the FCL for Entity A be terminated.</p>
 <p>Scenario 3</p>	<p>Entity B spins-off from Entity A, which is cleared. Entity A will maintain all classified work. Classified B will not support any classified contracts.</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>Report this transaction to DSS in a timely manner.</p>

Split	Description	Priority	Action
 <p>The diagram consists of two identical parts. In the top part, a blue square labeled 'A*' has two arrows pointing downwards to a blue circle labeled 'B*' on the left and a blue triangle labeled 'C*' on the right. In the bottom part, a blue square labeled 'A*' has two arrows pointing downwards to a blue circle labeled 'B*' on the left and a blue triangle labeled 'C' on the right.</p>	<p>Entity A splits into Entity B and C.</p> <p>One or both of these new companies will be working on the classified contract(s).</p>	<p>Medium</p>	<p>Entity A should provide DSS with their formal or informal MARS plan as early and often as possible.</p> <p>Entity B and/or C will need to be cleared. This may be initiated by DSS, Entity A, or GCA.</p> <p>Entity A should not be dissolved/terminated until Entity B/C is cleared and contract novation is complete.</p> <p> <i>*If a cleared entity reports this after the fact and Entity A has already been dissolved OR Entity B/C is already performing on the classified contracts, this becomes a MARS Level 1/high priority and the existing FCL may be affected.</i></p>

Part 5: Glossary

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
ACO	The Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) administers the performance of a contract.
CACO	The Corporate Administrative Contracting Officer (CACO) is assigned to a corporation that has more than one location with resident ACOs to perform contract administrative functions on a corporate-wide basis.
CFIUS	The Committee for Foreign Investments in the United States (CFIUS) is an interagency committee chaired by the Treasury Department that conducts reviews of proposed mergers or acquisitions of U.S. persons by foreign interests.
DBA	Doing Business As (DBA) refers to a name a company can legally use in doing business.
FCB	The Facility Clearance Branch (FCB) administers and oversees the approval or rejection process of a Sponsored Facility's FCL.
FCL	Issued by Defense Security Service (DSS), a Facility Security Clearance (FCL) allows a company to perform cleared government contract work on behalf of a Government Contracting Activity (GCA) or another contractor.
FOCI	An agency is considered under Foreign Ownership, Control, or Influence (FOCI) if a foreign entity has control, direct or indirect and whether or not exercised, over decisions that affect the management or operation of the organization.
FSO	A Facility Security Officer (FSO) is a U.S. citizen employee appointed by a contractor who supervises and directs security measures necessary for implementing the National Industrial Security Operating Manual (NISPOM) and other federal requirements for classified information.
ISFD	Industrial Security Facilities Database (ISFD) is maintained by Defense Security Service (DSS) and is a repository of information about Department of Defense (DoD) cleared contractor facilities.
KMP	Key Management Personnel (KMP) are company personnel who make key management decisions (generally personnel listed within corporate documents); includes but not limited to board of directors, officers, executive personnel, partners, regents, trustees, senior management officials, and other officials as

	determined by Defense Security Service (DSS).
MARS	Mergers, Acquisitions, Reorganizations, and Spin-offs/Splits (MARS) describes corporate finance, management, and strategy associated with the purchase and/or joining of companies.
Novation	Novation is an agreement in which a contracting party accepts a new party in place of the prior party (relieving the prior party of any further obligations).
Novation Agreement	A legal instrument (1) Executed by the- (i) Contractor (transferor); (ii) Successor in interest (transferee); and (iii) Government; and (2) By which among other things, the transferor guarantees performance of a contract, the transferee assumes all obligations under the contract, and the Government recognizes the transfer of the contract and related assets.
SMO	The Senior Management Official (SMO) is a contractor's senior most official at the facility.