

United States Court of Appeals For the First Circuit

ORDER OF COURT

Entered: February 9, 2021

In response to recent disclosures of wide-spread breaches of both private sector and government computer systems, the Court has adopted new security procedures to protect any highly sensitive document (HSD) filed with the Court that, if improperly disclosed, could cause harm to the United States, the Federal Judiciary, litigants, or others.

HSDs are documents containing information that is likely to be of interest to the intelligence service of a foreign government and the use or disclosure of such information by a hostile foreign government would likely cause significant harm to the United States or its interests. Examples of HSDs include unclassified sealed documents involving national security, foreign sovereign interests, criminal activity related to cybersecurity or terrorism, investigation of public officials, and extremely sensitive commercial information likely to be of interest to foreign powers.

The following types of sealed documents, if they do not fall into one of the categories above, typically will not qualify as HSDs: (1) presentence reports and related documents; (2) pleadings related to cooperation in criminal cases; (3) Social Security records; (4) administrative immigration records; and (5) most sealed documents in civil cases.

The designation of a document as highly sensitive is typically made by the district court or originating agency. Documents that have previously been designated by the district court or an agency as highly sensitive will ordinarily be treated in the same manner by this court. See 1st Cir. R. 11.0(c)(1).

If a document qualifies as an HSD as that term is described above, a filer is required to file a motion to treat that document as an HSD. The movant must serve the motion and the proposed HSD on all other parties by mail with proof of service under Fed. R. App. P. 25(d)(1). The motion and each proposed HSD should be conspicuously marked as a “HIGHLY SENSITIVE DOCUMENT” and placed inside an envelope marked “HIGHLY SENSITIVE.” The motion to treat a document as an HSD should be filed contemporaneously with the filing of a motion to seal the document and should be filed in paper format only under the procedures and requirements of 1st Cir. R. 11.0(c). The motion must set forth in detail why the proposed document constitutes a highly sensitive document under the criteria set out in this order, including the specific grounds for asserting that the document contains information that is likely to be of interest to the intelligence service of a foreign government and the use or disclosure of such information by a hostile foreign government would likely cause significant harm to the United States or its interests. Conclusory assertions will not be deemed a sufficient basis for filing a motion to treat a sealed document as an HSD. If a filer believes that a previously filed document in an ongoing case before

the court qualifies as an HSD, a motion to treat the sealed document as an HSD may be filed. There is no need to file such a motion in a closed case.

/s/ Jeffrey R. Howard
Jeffrey R. Howard
Chief Judge