

LIMDIS: Using NGA Limited Distribution Data & Products

What is “Limited Distribution”?

Products with this caveat and marking are UNCLASSIFIED imagery, maps, and data for which release or disclosure is limited to DoD and DoD contractors (including any sub-contractors), and, for national intelligence purposes, to the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), non-DoD members of the Intelligence Community (IC), the National Security Council (NSC), and, with permission from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), to other Federal Government Departments and Agencies. For authorized recipients, disclosure is defined as showing or discussing the product short of relinquishing physical control of it. Release is defined as providing or relinquishing control of the product in hard or softcopy. Disclosure or release of LIMDIS products to unauthorized individuals or organizations is not permissible. [NOTE: LIMDIS materials are not available or distributed to the public. Therefore, appropriate safeguards must be taken to prevent “disclosure” of LIMDIS materials to a member of the public. In the context of how the word “disclosure” is commonly understood, it can be viewed as a potential “release” and compromise NGA’s ability to protect the product.]

When must the LIMDIS caveat be used? What does the caveat look like?

All LIMDIS materials must be marked with the complete LIMDIS caveat (not simply “UNCLASSIFIED//LIMITED DISTRIBUTION”). **The caveat cannot be modified in any way.** The LIMDIS caveat reads as follows:

LIMITED DISTRIBUTION
 Distribution authorized to DoD, IAW 10 U.S.C. §§ 130 & 455. Release authorized to U.S. DoD contractors, IAW 48 C.F.R. § 252.245-7000. Refer other requests to: Headquarters, NGA, ATTN: Release Officer, Mail Stop D-120, 4600 Sangamore Rd., Bethesda, MD 20816-5003. Destroy IAW DoDD 5030.59. Removal of this caveat is prohibited.

What makes NGA data and products Limited Distribution?

Sensitive, valuable information created for a select audience. LIMDIS data and products contain NGA’s information edge. If these materials were classified, their ability to be used and shared would be diminished. To balance their protection and use, 10 USC § 455 allows UNCLASSIFIED NGA products to be withheld from the public:

- If they contain materials from an international agreement that restricts their use for specified government purposes. (Many governments provide materials that are only for DoD use).
- If the materials in the product would reveal sensitive collection sources and methods, or capabilities used to produce these products.
- If disclosing the materials would: jeopardize or interfere with ongoing military or intelligence operations; reveal military operational or contingency plans; or reveal, jeopardize, or compromise military or intelligence capabilities.

Products that meet any one or more of these criteria are categorized as LIMDIS by NGA.

When are LIMDIS data and products used?

During DoD or IC activities, such as military training, operations, or testing and evaluation.

With whom can I share LIMDIS data and products?

All active US Military and DoD personnel may see or receive LIMDIS materials at any time for official use. Personnel from US Government organizations, with which NGA has an existing written agreement or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that permits use of LIMDIS materials or delineates proper use, may see or receive LIMDIS materials. On a case-by-case basis, such as through international agreements, certain foreign governments may receive LIMDIS materials.

Who cannot see or receive LIMDIS data and products?

LIMDIS materials must be withheld from the public. Unless otherwise authorized by NGA, LIMDIS materials must also be withheld from non-DoD Federal employees, non-DoD contractors, State and Local Government officials, and foreign nationals.

When can LIMDIS data and products be released outside DoD?

In support of national security objectives and conditioned upon the recipients’ acceptance of release restrictions and similar terms and conditions defined in an LOA, MOA, MOU, or other agreement, NGA may provide LIMDIS data and products to non-DoD members of the Intelligence Community, and other US Government organizations. Similarly, on a case-by-case basis, and with a formal agreement to provide for protection of LIMDIS materials, NGA may provide foreign governments with LIMDIS data and products. (NGA’s Disclosure and Release Team can answer related questions.)

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What if I use NGA LIMDIS data and products to create my own product?

Your new product is probably LIMDIS too. If you make a product from LIMDIS material it must continue to be protected and marked with the full NGA Limited Distribution note, unless a NGA Disclosure and Release Officer determines otherwise. For example, if you produce a dataset or product derived in part from NGA LIMDIS data it warrants equivalent protection. Only if your derived product used the unrestricted portions of data from the original LIMDIS product will your derived product be unclassified and unrestricted. The NGA Disclosure and Release Team will help you determine whether your derived product is LIMDIS, and provide you with an appropriate disclaimer.

How can I store LIMDIS data?

In softcopy on a classified or unclassified system or in hardcopy, such that it is accessible only by DoD personnel and other approved LIMDIS users. LIMDIS data cannot be used or stored on publicly accessible systems, such as the World Wide Web, or on other systems accessible by unauthorized individuals, unless those systems have been safeguarded using DoD-approved authentication and encryption technology. The current preferred method is Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) certification.

How should LIMDIS data be destroyed/disposed of?

LIMDIS materials that are no longer needed must be destroyed by a method that prevents reconstruction to the original condition. Paper products should be destroyed by a method such as pulping, burning, or cross-cutting. Electronic media may be sent to the National Security Agency (NSA) for destruction or can be destroyed locally in a manner that prevents reconstruction of the media and abides by any environmental regulations.

What other Unclassified Products have Restrictions?

Products based on commercial imagery may be restricted from further dissemination due to licensing arrangements with the vendor. These products are marked with appropriate copyright and licensing information. Other products or technologies procured by NGA for reference, such as proprietary software, may also carry copyright restrictions.

Use of LIMDIS Data by DoD Contractors

If a contractor requires use of NGA LIMDIS data or products during the course of any contract (such as during the development of a communication, vehicle or weapons system), DoD commands and activities may share LIMDIS data with the contractors IF: (1) the Contracting Officer (CO) responsible for their DoD contract has made a determination that such access is required for contract performance, and (2) the contract contains the requisite contract clause regarding provision of government-furnished information (Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations Supplement (DFARS), 48 CFR § 252.245-7000).

- Contractors authorized for access to LIMDIS data must go through their government CO to obtain the materials. NGA personnel and organizations, and personnel from other organizations who have been granted access to LIMDIS materials, cannot provide LIMDIS data directly to contractors, unless they have received prior, specific approval by the appropriate Contracting Officer.
- Contractors cannot duplicate, copy or otherwise reproduce LIMDIS data for purposes other than those necessary for the performance of the contract.
- Contractors cannot use LIMDIS data to create their own products or derivative products.
- Contractors cannot use LIMDIS data to demonstrate their products or capabilities to non-DoD users, nor can they use the data as a marketing tool or for any other non-DoD purpose.
- Contractors may not retain LIMDIS data once a contract is completed. As directed by the CO, all LIMDIS data must be returned to the respective DoD command or activity, or destroyed as discussed above.

NGA LIMDIS data and products restricted by the DFARS clause (referenced above) can only be released or further disseminated under the authority of D/NGA. Contracting officers and contract technical representatives do not have the authority to permit contractors or other government personnel to use NGA data or products outside the scope of the contract. That responsibility resides with the NGA Disclosure and Release Team.

Information for NGA Employees

Release or display of NGA LIMDIS data or products in a forum other than DoD, IC, or DoD contractors must be cleared in advance by the NGA Disclosure and Release Team. Authorized holders of LIMDIS data may not provide any material or assistance to a contractor without the knowledge and approval of the CO responsible for that contract.

Who to contact for assistance?

The question of sharing or disseminating data outside DoD is most often determined on a case-by-case basis. All questions regarding the release or sharing of LIMDIS material should be cleared through NGA's D&R Team (OIPDR). (301) 227-2886/2902/7945/7946.