



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

**STATEMENT OF
HON. JOHN BERRY
DIRECTOR
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before the

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE
FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

on

SECURITY CLEARANCE REFORM: SETTING A COURSE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

NOVEMBER 16, 2010

Chairman Akaka, Senator Voinovich, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) role in the Federal government's security clearance reform effort. OPM has been committed to overhauling the security clearance process from the onset, with the goal of improving timeliness, quality, and efficiency. Our current success is due in large part to our partnership with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), the Department of Defense (DoD), and our other customer agencies. By focusing on the entire process, from beginning-to-end, holding all stakeholders accountable, and advancing the use of information technology, we have developed a modernized approach to processing security clearances that will be substantially operational by the end of this calendar year. We look forward to sustaining the course of reform well into the future.

I. OPM's Role in the Security Clearance Process

OPM's Federal Investigative Services (FIS) provides background investigation products and services to agencies. These products and services are then utilized as a basis for making security clearance, suitability, or fitness determinations. Since absorbing DoD's background investigations program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2005, OPM has conducted over 90% of the background investigations required by the Federal government. Last year, we conducted over 2 million investigations, including 600,000 that were used to support initial security clearance determinations.

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Under the leadership of Associate Director Kathy Dillaman, FIS provides background investigations for over 100 Federal agencies, with approximately 10,000 submitting offices worldwide. Currently, FIS has more than 2,400 Federal employees and 6,700 contractors that form a nationwide network of field investigators and support staff as well as a cadre of Federal agents working abroad. To support the Government's high-volume investigative requirements, FIS manages a complex suite of automated systems that have demonstrated ample capacity to efficiently handle this demanding workload.

II. Current Status of the Security Clearance Process

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) was enacted in the wake of September 11, 2001, with a tremendous national backlog of pending security clearance determinations. IRTPA set aggressive mandates for improved timeliness and required 90% of initial security clearance determinations to be completed within an average of 60 days (40 days for the investigation phase and 20 days for the adjudication phase) by December 2009. Through program efficiencies and expanded use of technology, OPM was able to meet and sustain this goal well ahead of deadline. In FY 2010, OPM completed 623,454 initial security clearance investigations. Of these, 90 percent were completed in an average of 39 days. The following chart shows the progress that OPM has made to achieve the IRTPA mandates:

OPM PROGRESS FOR INITIAL CLEARANCE INVESTIGATIONS

	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	IRTPA Goal 12/2009
Total Completed	695,513	709,402	645,924	623,454	
Average time for 90%	115 days	64 days	41 days	39 days	40 days
Average Time for All	153 days	81 days	49 days	47 days	

Timeliness is in calendar days.

III. Reform Initiatives and Automation Modernization

The Security and Suitability Process Reform Strategic Framework issued in February 2010 identified the goals of reform as they relate to the defined seven phases of processing that include: validate need; eApplication; automated records checks, eAdjudicate; enhanced subject interview; expandable focused investigation; and continuous evaluation/periodic investigations. OPM is responsible for a number of the initiatives supporting these goals. OPM is also continuously modernizing and expanding EPIC, our suite of automated tools that include: (1) the Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP); (2) Personnel Investigations

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Processing System (PIPS); (3) OPM PIPS Imaging System (OPIS); (4) Central Verification System (CVS); (5) Fingerprint Transaction System (FTS); (6) Field Work System (FWS); (7) FIS Secure Portal, and (8) the Management Reporting System (Dashboard). EPIC provides investigative end-to-end automated support for background investigation, suitability, and security clearance processing. The program efficiencies gained from these efforts have contributed to improvements in processing times and overall cost savings.

Specific achievements include:

- ***Expanding the CVS, maintained by OPM, to include information on security, suitability, and credentialing decisions made by civilian agencies across Government.*** Over 258,000 active security clearances are currently posted in CVS. This system, which is linked to DoD's Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS), provides over 3,500 users from Government agencies worldwide transparency into individuals' investigative history and current clearance status through a single search.
- ***Increasing the use of OPM's electronic forms for investigations processing (eApplication).*** Currently, over 98% of all submissions are received electronically. eApplication improved the timeliness of processing, reduced mail and handling costs, strengthened the protection of personal identifying information, and resulted in improved quality of information provided by the subject through automated validation processes.
- ***Programming and implementing the revised Standard Form for National Security positions, as cleared by OMB in March 2010.*** This revised form will include expanded questions to aid in the collection of more complete and accurate subject-provided data. This expanded form will serve as the foundation for revisions to the background investigations standards. These revisions will further focus on potentially disqualifying issue information. Implementation of the revised form is on track for December 2010.
- ***Increasing the use of digital fingerprint capturing equipment by Federal agencies.*** Annually, OPM processes over 1.2 million fingerprint charts through the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI). Due to the use of electronic capturing equipment, over 68% of all submissions are now sent electronically.
- ***Conversion from manual to automated record checks.*** This conversion has allowed OPM to use its investigative resources more effectively, reduce costs and processing time, and ease the handling burden on state and local law enforcement agencies across the country. Currently, it takes OPM an average of three days to complete these automated record checks, thereby making automated law enforcement checks one of the fastest components of our investigations.
- ***Identifying other types of automated record checks that will enhance the quality and content of our investigative products.*** We are currently working with several new record repositories to establish agreements so that OPM can integrate these record checks into our investigations products.

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- ***Expanding the use of electronic delivery of completed investigations through the eDelivery process.*** OPM implemented the eDelivery process in August 2008. Since that time, we electronically delivered close to 1.5 million completed investigations to participating agencies. Electronic delivery not only saves time and money, it also allows agencies to speedily identify those cases that may be electronically adjudicated.
- ***Aligning our FY 2011 investigation products with reform concepts.*** Executive Order 13467 required the alignment of suitability and security investigations, to the extent possible, by building on each successively higher level of investigation and adjudication. By eliminating some investigation products, OPM was able to align the remaining products with each level of risk and sensitivity.
- ***Offering a new investigation product in FY 2011 that provides for a validated suite of automated records checks that can be used as an annual assessment of individuals cleared at the Top Secret level.*** This new product provides agencies with a quick and cost effective method for assessing employees and supports a more robust continuous evaluation program.
- ***Upgrading our automated processing systems to an integrated suite of applications that allow for secure and dependable web-based interaction between investigation subjects, their employing agencies, and OPM.*** This new technology moved OPM to an event-driven architecture that allows for real-time processing throughout the investigative process.

IV. Promoting Reciprocity

OPM has taken additional steps over the past year to promote the reciprocity of investigations and adjudicative decisions throughout the Federal government. OPM expanded the data fields in CVS, aligned its investigations with reform concepts, and standardized the use of the enhanced subject interviews to resolve issues. In addition, OPM updated its position designation system, an automated tool designed to assist agencies with determining the proper level of investigation and screening required based on an assessment of risk and national security sensitivity.

Later this month, OPM is hosting its annual Security Professional Seminar which will focus on reciprocity. Workshops are being designed to inform and reemphasize the tools and policies that support reciprocity.

OPM monitors compliance with reciprocity by measuring the number of investigation requests that were returned to an agency because an investigation already exists that would satisfy the agency's request. OPM is working with the Performance Accountability Council (PAC) to develop additional metrics to measure compliance with reciprocity of investigations and adjudicative decisions.

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As part of the PAC, OPM co-chairs the Training Subcommittee tasked with establishing training standards for background investigators, and security and suitability adjudicators. OPM led the two interagency workgroups that developed, piloted, and finalized the national training standards for suitability adjudication and background investigation training. Establishing one training standard across the Federal government will significantly enhance reciprocity.

V. Focus on Quality

OPM implemented two new services that allow our customer agencies to provide feedback on our investigative products. OPM also provides a toll-free quality hotline to report quality concerns and a web based quality assessment tool that allows adjudicators to provide OPM feedback on completed investigations. OPM uses the feedback provided to improve our products and services, and refine investigative policy and standards.

VI. Sustaining Momentum

The considerable attention placed on reforming the security clearance process has dramatically improved the timeliness and quality of investigative products while significantly improving the Government's ability to "hire the best" and efficiently put federal and contractor employees to work. With the broader reform effort substantially operational by the end of this calendar year, it is critical that we maintain timeliness and quality standards while ensuring that Government agencies comply with training, investigative, adjudicative, and reciprocity standards. We will continue to work with the OMB, ODNI, DoD, and other Federal agencies to sustain the momentum.

In conclusion, OPM wishes to thank Senator Voinovich for his leadership on reforming the security clearance process and for his many years of service to our country. Please accept our best wishes in your retirement.

Mr. Chairman, thank-you again for the opportunity to discuss OPM's role in the security clearance reform process. I am happy to respond to any questions that you may have.