



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20503

DEPUTY DIRECTOR
FOR MANAGEMENT

July 27, 2009

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Chairman
Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Chair:

Thank you for your letter of June 26, 2009, and your continued support and interest in security clearance reform. In response to the list of questions submitted with your letter, I am enclosing a recently updated background paper that outlines and describes the reform effort.

As you are aware, OMB has been coordinating an interagency review of the security clearance reform initiative with the new leadership teams at affected Federal agencies. Since my confirmation, I have had the opportunity to meet with members of the Joint Reform Team and communicated my desire to conclude our work as expeditiously as possible. Based on recent progress, I expect the review to be completed soon.

The objectives in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act are a significant priority for me at OMB, and I look forward to a continued partnership with you as we advance our shared goal of modernizing, aligning, and improving the security clearance process.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Zients
Deputy Director for Management

Enclosure

Identical Letter Sent to The Honorable Sue W. Myrick

Attachment

Reforming the Security Clearance Process Updated July 2009

BACKGROUND

The Security Clearance Performance Accountability Council (PAC), established by Executive Order 13467, is an executive-level governance structure responsible to the President for achieving reform goals, ensuring alignment, measuring agency performance, holding agencies accountable for implementation, and establishing information technology requirements. The PAC is chaired by the Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, and includes the Suitability Executive Agent (Director of the Office of Personnel Management) and the Security Executive Agent (Director of National Intelligence) in its membership, among others.¹

The Joint Security and Suitability Reform Team (Joint Reform Team) is composed of representatives from the Department of Defense (DOD), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The Joint Reform Team assists the PAC with overseeing the initiatives of the Reform Effort, and in coordinating implementation efforts across the Executive Branch to achieve the goals of reform. Examples of areas being coordinated by the Joint Reform Team include adoption of electronic adjudication capabilities; use of electronic and digital signatures; and implementation of an electronic case management system.

PURPOSE & OVERVIEW

The strategic purpose of the reform effort is to improve timeliness; ensure quality; and achieve a clearance process that is effective, efficient, and sustainable over the long run.

We will achieve this purpose by accomplishing the following goals:

- To establish modernized and comprehensive credentialing, security clearance, and suitability processes that employ updated and consistent standards and methods;
- To the extent consistent with law, to ensure that investigative standards for security clearance and suitability investigations support and build on each other without requiring duplicative steps;
- To enable innovations with enterprise information technology capabilities that ensure the most effective and efficient performance across the Federal Government;

¹ PAC membership also includes representatives from the following agencies: Department of State, Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Energy, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of the Treasury.

- To update Government information record systems and, as necessary, applicable laws and regulations, to ensure that information maintained by executive departments and agencies and required for investigation and adjudication is available and can be shared rapidly across the Government, while still protecting privacy interests;
- To ensure that a reformed and aligned investigative system maximizes the potential for common ground in the adjudication of those programs whose security and suitability determinations are simultaneous; and
- To ensure that all resulting decisions are in the national interest, protect national security, and provide the Federal Government with an effective workforce.

MEASURING PERFORMANCE

One of the first initiatives of the PAC was to create a subcommittee responsible for monitoring investigation and adjudication timeliness. The Performance Measurement and Management Subcommittee (co-chaired by OPM and ODNI leadership) currently collects an extensive set of metrics to gauge progress on initial clearances, reinvestigations, and suitability determinations. We also continue to identify additional areas to measure agency progress in all phases of the end-to-end process, including *initiation*, *investigation*, and *adjudication*. Additionally, the Joint Reform Team continues to work with agencies to refine individual implementation plans for the transformed process across the Executive Branch. Each agency provided the Joint Reform Team with individual implementation milestones, against which progress will be measured quarterly. In June 2009, the Joint Reform Team briefed stakeholders on the consolidated initial implementation plan that was briefed to the PAC in April. The PAC will monitor and oversee progress of agency performance towards meeting goals outlined in these implementation plans.

Prospectively, the Performance Measurement and Management Subcommittee is also developing plans to collect metrics to measure the *quality* of adjudication decisions. The Subcommittee, in conjunction with the Joint Reform Team, is also identifying metrics to measure the quality of the end-to-end personnel security process. The proposed metrics incorporate measurement of the end-to-end processing time from the "applicant's perspective," evaluating this process from application submission to notification of the final decision.

In addition, the DNI in his role as the Security Executive Agent is working very closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence to implement the Rapid Assessment of Incomplete Security Evaluation (RAISE) tool. RAISE is an automated on-line tool that will gather specific information concerning personnel security investigations that are incomplete or deficient. This tool will be utilized by all DOD adjudicators to monitor the performance of the product produced by their investigative provider. The Joint Reform Team will monitor and subsequently report to the PAC the results generated by this tool.

In the same vein, the Performance Measurement and Management Subcommittee (PMMS) is currently completing the second pilot of a quality tool to be utilized by non-DOD adjudicative facilities to measure the quality of their personnel security investigations. Preliminary results of these tools will be available in December 2009.

The Subcommittee is developing further plans to collect reciprocity, inventory, and work-in-progress metrics. Also, in addition to regular reports to the PAC, the Subcommittee is working closely with the Joint Reform Team to develop a national report card to clearly report investigative and adjudicative performance by all agencies that will inform agency heads about their organizations' performance.

RECIPROCITY

The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) defines reciprocity as follows: (1) All security clearance background investigations and determinations completed by an authorized investigative agency or authorized adjudicative agency shall be accepted by all agencies, (2) All security clearance background investigations initiated by an authorized investigative agency shall be transferable to any other authorized investigative agency.

Reciprocity can be supported by information sharing across the Federal government and effective use of information technology. Access to investigative and clearance information minimizes duplicate, unnecessary investigations, and enables reciprocal recognition of existing favorable suitability determinations and security clearances, thereby saving time and money. To support information sharing throughout the Federal Government, OPM expanded its Clearance Verification System in September 2008 to include information related to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 (HSPD-12), suitability for government employment, fitness for excepted service and contractor employees and eligibility for access to classified information. Additional enhancements planned for September 2009 permit an expanded base of users from across the government to search OPM and DOD data from a single web-based entry point, further enabling reciprocity and reducing unnecessary requests for investigations. Forthcoming improvements will also include greater accessibility of suitability data and increased access to IC clearance records.

In March 2009, the Joint Reform Team finalized the Information Technology (IT) strategy, which outlines an approach that relies on utilizing existing systems and applications within the Federal Government, modifying and adapting the systems and applications to create a framework for future phased implementation. This approach will enable near term implementation, align IT modernization plans with the transformed process, and enable the use of components to reduce duplication and enhance reciprocity while focusing on quality, service, and cost.²

REFORM

The December 2008 report of the Joint Reform Team described the design for transforming the hiring and clearing process. The design seeks to improve the timeliness of the process, and achieve IRTPA goals by establishing the necessary foundational policy, providing for accountability in governance, and leveraging modern tools and technologies.

² The Joint Reform Team is available to provide an overview briefing to stakeholders on this IT strategy, upon request.

The Joint Reform Team is currently meeting with suitability and security stakeholders across the Executive Branch to assist in the development of individual agency initial implementation plans for the transformed process design. The Joint Reform Team continues to coordinate with agencies to ensure alignment amongst individual agency plans. A consolidated initial implementation plan was presented to the PAC in April 2009, and subsequently briefed to stakeholders in June 2009.

In addition, a review of the Standard Forms for suitability and clearance determinations is presently being completed. Although decisions, which have been affected by recent court decisions, may impact the timeline for final deployment of the reformed process, the leadership maintains the goal of making the reformed process substantially operational across the Federal Government by the end of Calendar Year (CY) 2010, as projected in the December 2008 report.