OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE

NATIONAL COUNTERINTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY CENTER

Advancing Counterintelligence and Security Excellence

2015 Annual Report on Security Clearance Determinations

Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Intelligence Authorization Act (IAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010[1] requires the President to submit an annual *Report on Security Clearance Determinations* to Congress. The IAA directs this report to include the number of United States Government (USG) employees who held a security clearance at each level as of October 1 of the preceding year and the number of USG employees who were approved for a security clearance at each level during the preceding fiscal year. Similar data pertaining to USG contractors is also required. Also, for each element of the Intelligence Community (IC), in-depth security clearance timeliness determination metrics are required. In response to these IAA requirements, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) has prepared this *2015 Report on Security Clearance Determinations* consistent with the security clearance data requirements as outlined by the categories listed below.

Security Clearance Data Required by the FY 2010 IAA

Security Clearance Volume Levels for USG Employees and USG Contractors	Security Clearance Determination Processing Metrics for the Seven IC Agencies
The number of individuals, categorized by government employees and contractors who held and who were approved for a security clearance as of 1 October 2015; sorted by security clearance level.	i. The time in days to process the shortest and longest security clearance determination made among 80% of security clearance determinations, and the time in days for the shortest and longest security clearance determination made among 90% of determinations. ii. The number of security clearance investigations as of October 1 of the preceding fiscal year open for: o 4 months or less; o 4 – 8 months; o 8 – 12 months; and o more than 1 year. iii. Percentage of reviews during the preceding fiscal year that resulted in a denial or revocation of a security clearance. iv. Percentage of investigations during the preceding fiscal year that resulted in incomplete information. v. Percentage of investigations during the preceding fiscal year that did not result in enough information to make a decision on potentially adverse information. vi. The number of completed or pending security clearance determinations for government employees and contractors during the preceding fiscal year that have taken longer than one year to complete; the agencies that investigated and adjudicated such determinations; and the cause of significant delays in such determinations.

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[1] Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2010, Sec. 367, Security Clearances: Reports; Reciprocity (PL 111-259).

This 2015 annual security clearance determinations report provides the current state of government security clearances. The report is divided into two sections, Security Clearance Volume for the Entire Federal Government and Security Clearance Performance for Each Element of the IC. The first section reports total volume of individuals eligible for access to classified information and is further broken down by the number of individuals who have been briefed and are currently "in access" as well as those eligible but currently "not in access." In FY 2015, there were decreases in both these categories. There was also a reduction in new clearances approved. The majority of decreases resulted from Department of Defense's (DoD's) successful implementation of data quality initiatives (DQIs) that have positively impacted areas of data quality and data integrity. However, some agencies indicated that decreases in their overall population were the result of efforts across the USG to review and validate whether an employee or contractor still requires access to classified information in accordance with an executive correspondence (DNI Executive Correspondence, *"Strategy to Reduce the Periodic Reinvestigation Backlog Using a Risk-Based Approach,"* signed by the DNI on September 26, 2014).

The second section reports a variety of data associated with clearance performance for the IC. Processing times for the longest cases have decreased in some agencies, although separate reporting indicates <u>average</u> processing times have increased. In addition, there are generally more cases pending over 4 months than in the previous fiscal year. The IC cited an increased demand for investigative resources to address the periodic reinvestigation backlog and delays with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) investigative products as major contributors to the challenges they faced in FY 2015. Although the IC agencies reflected in this report have delegated authority to conduct investigations, they often augment their capabilities by utilizing services and products provided by OPM Federal Investigative Services. Therefore, they were also negatively impacted by external events including the loss of a major USG contract investigative service provider and processing delays associated with temporary shutdown of the Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) system.

METHODOLOGY

In order to report security clearance volume levels, the National Counterintelligence and Security Center's (NCSC) Special Security Directorate (SSD) compiled and processed data from the three primary security clearance record repositories: ODNI's Scattered Castles (SC); DoD's Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS); and OPM's Central Verification System (CVS). To fulfill specific reporting requirements of the FY 2010 IAA, the SSD issued a special data call to the seven IC agencies with delegated authority to conduct investigations or adjudications.

SSD worked with the three clearance repository owners to minimize double-counting of duplicate records in those repositories. This was necessary because adjudicative facilities are increasingly recording their determinations in multiple repositories for reciprocity purposes. Therefore, duplicate entries may be created when different agencies grant eligibility for access to the same individual. Queries between SC and JPAS, which account for approximately 93 percent of all clearance entries, were structured to eliminate duplication where possible.

During FY 2015, SSD led an interagency effort to review all personnel security records in SC for accuracy and currency. As a result, the records in the newly deployed "SC Version 2" feature enhanced data integrity in all IC agencies and the DoD. This enables more accurate metrics reporting.

SECURITY CLEARANCE VOLUME FOR THE ENTIRE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The FY 2010 IAA requires the number of individuals who held, and who were approved to hold, a security clearance as of October 1, 2015, to be calculated and categorized by personnel type – government employees, contractors, or other[2] – and by security clearance level.

Table 1 provides the number of individuals in these categories for both FY 2014 and FY 2015. As in last year's report, we show the total number of individuals "in access" (**Table 1.1**), those eligible, but currently "not in access" (**Table 1.2**), and the total number of individuals eligible to hold a security clearance (**Table 1.3**).

Table 1.1, *Eligible (In access)*, refers to individuals who were investigated and adjudicated favorably and also were briefed into access to classified information. As of October 1, 2015, there were 62,074 fewer individuals in access than on October 1, 2014 (a 2.1 percent decrease).

Table 1.2, *Eligible (Not in access)*, reflects that there were 203,449 fewer individuals in this category as compared to October 1, 2014 (a 12.8 percent decrease). Individuals, such as those supporting the military, may be determined eligible due to the sensitivity of their positions and the potential need for immediate access to classified information, but may not have actual access to classified information until the need arises.

Table 1.3, *Total Eligibility*, shows a decrease of 265,523 individuals (5.9 percent) found eligible to hold a clearance, to include those in access, since October 2014. Total Eligibility refers to individuals who were investigated and adjudicated favorably and had

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[2] The "government" category includes all government employees and military personnel. Contractors include all industry employees, independent contractors and consultants. The "other" category includes the number of cleared government and contractor personnel reported in CVS, which does not have an employee type field, and the number of individuals in JPAS and SC for which the employee type category field was not completed.

access to classified information as well as those who were favorably adjudicated but did not have access to classified information.

Table 1

Number of Security Clearances

Table 1.1

Eligible (In access)

Employee Type	As of 10/1/14:		As of 10/1/15:	
	Conf/Secret	Top Secret	Conf/Secret	Top Secret
Government	1,104,943	626,996	1,070,205	622,549
Contractor	442,486	436,573	433,359	428,069
Other	142,442	174,036	141,160	170,060
Sub-Total:	1,689,871	1,237,605	1,644,724	1,220,678
Total:	2,927,476		2,865,402	

Table 1.2

Eligible (Not in access)

Employee Type	As of 10/1/14:		As of 10/1/15:	
	Conf/Secret	Top Secret	Conf/Secret	Top Secret
Government	1,307,183	144,155	1,191,382	124,287
Contractor	40,699	20,127	44,868	17,690
Other	69,933	5,003	4,596	828
Sub-Total:	1,417,815	169,285	1,240,846	142,805
Total:	1,587,100		1,383,651	

Table 1.3

Total Eligibility

Employee Type	As of 10/1/14:		As of 10/1/15:	
	Conf/Secret	Top Secret	Conf/Secret	Top Secret
Government	2,412,126	771,151	2,261,587	746,836
Contractor	483,185	456,700	478,227	445,759
Other	212,375	179,039	145,756	170,888
Sub-Total:	3,107,686	1,406,890	2,885,570	1,363,483
Total:	4,514,576		4,249,053	

The Defense Manpower Data Center, with the concurrence of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, has implemented several data quality initiatives (DQI) which resulted in reductions to the eligible population across the DoD; particularly in the "not in access" category. DQIs were developed to improve the data quality within JPAS and ensure that personnel security policies are consistently enforced in JPAS through the implementation of scripts and data analysis. In FY 2015, the most significant were the JPAS/Service personnel center synchronization and the U.S. Citizenship DQIs.

- DQI 597 administratively debriefs access in JPAS for subjects whose eligibility does not support the current access. This includes subjects who have separated from the military or who are deceased, and/or records for which there is no owning or servicing security management office (SMO). This DQI occurs on a monthly basis and mainly impacted the reduction of the eligible "in access" population.

- JPAS/Service Synchronization DQI – JPAS teams worked with the military services to separate all of the subjects that had person categories that were open in JPAS but where there was no corresponding record at the personnel center. After in-depth analysis, the personnel center and JPAS teams found issues with the interface and have worked to rectify all issues and ensure the systems stay in-synch.

- U.S. Citizenship DQI – DoD regulations require that anyone holding a security clearance be a U.S. citizen. In working with the service and civilian personnel centers for over six months, JPAS administratively debriefed subjects whose personnel center reflected them as non-U.S. citizen, null, or N/A, and whose record contained an active DoD eligibility. Once the subject's citizenship value was updated in their personnel center and JPAS as required by DoD regulations, their eligibility was restored if appropriate. During the effort, several thousand records were not restored because eligibility was no longer needed, which resulted in a net reduction.

In addition, there were reductions attributable to the USG effort to reduce the periodic reinvestigation backlog, in accordance with executive correspondence. On September 26, 2014, the DNI signed *"Strategy to Reduce the Periodic Reinvestigation Backlog Using a Risk-Based Approach."* During the quarterly collection reports associated with this memorandum, some agencies indicated that decreases in their overall population were the result of efforts across the USG to review and validate whether an employee or contractor still requires access to classified information.

Table 2, *Number of Security Clearance Approvals,* presents the number of individuals approved for a security clearance during the fiscal year by clearance level. Variations in data collection fields in the repositories limit the ability to collect precise data. For instance, a query of the security clearance determination *approvals* recorded in some repositories cannot distinguish between initial clearance and periodic reinvestigation approvals. Therefore, the number of approvals does not represent the number of new clearances granted, but rather a combination of approvals for initial clearances and for reinvestigations of existing clearances. Within this category, however, there has been a 4 percent reduction in the number of security clearances approved as compared to FY 2014.

Table 2

Number of Security Clearance Approvals

Employee Type	In FY 2014:		In FY 2015:	
	Conf/Secret	Top Secret	Conf/Secret	Top Secret
Government	324,122	142,987	315,859	118,033
Contractor	68,637	107,999	77,432	106,266
Other	15,579	6,113	14,971	6,118
Sub-Total:	408,338	257,099	408,262	230,417
Total:	665,437		638,679	

SECURITY CLEARANCE PERFORMANCE FOR EACH ELEMENT OF THE IC

To collect information responsive to FY 2010 IAA requirements set forth in items "i" through "vi" below, the ODNI issued a special data call to fifteen elements of the IC. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),[3] Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), National Security Agency (NSA), and the Department of State (State) all provided data for this report. The other IC elements reported that collecting this information would be a manual, resource-intensive process that is not currently viable. The IC elements primarily cited technology restrictions.

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[3] CIA also processes security clearances for ODNI employees and contractors.

i. **The time in days to process the shortest and longest security clearance determination made among 80% of security clearance determinations, and the time in days for the shortest and longest security clearance determination made among 90% of determinations**

Table 3, *Processing Timeliness,* provides the total number of days required to process the shortest and longest security clearance cases—from initiation to adjudicative decision—for the fastest 80 percent of cases and for the fastest 90 percent of cases.

Table 3

Processing Timeliness

Agency	80th Percentile				90th Percentile			
	TS		Secret/Confidential		TS		Secret/Confidential	
	Longest	Shortest	Longest	Shortest	Longest	Shortest	Longest	Shortest
CIA	199	1	138	1	311	1	197	1
DIA	281	1	DNP	DNP	349	1	DNP	DNP
FBI	201	1	160	24	268	1	189	24
NGA	315	28	DNP	DNP	395	28	DNP	DNP
NRO	265	26	142	52	325	26	162	52
NSA	107	9	DNP	DNP	134	9	DNP	DNP
State	203	2	115	1	267	2	153	1

DNP = Does Not Perform

ii. **The number of pending security clearance investigations for such level as of October 1, 2015 that have remained pending for: 4 months or less; between 4 months and 8 months; between 8 months and one year; and for more than one year**

Table 4, *Age Pending*, provides the number of pending security clearance investigations by length of time and by agency.

Table 4
Age Pending

Agency	Top Secret Initial Security Clearance Investigations			
	0 to 4 Months	4 to 8 Months	8 to 12 Months	Over 12 Months
CIA	719	96	13	0
DIA	8	0	0	0
FBI	1,573	1,143	344	70
NGA	55	35	41	21
NRO	292	7	0	0
NSA	535	361	131	264
State	Unable to provide at this time			

The IC reported that the continued focus on periodic reinvestigations and potential insider threat cases during FY 2015 caused resources to be reprioritized. The total number of initial cases pending for more than four months has increased from 1,322 in FY 2014 to 2,526 in FY 2015[4].

iii. **The percentage of reviews during the preceding fiscal year that resulted in a denial or revocation of a security clearance**

Table 5, *Denials and Revocations*, reflects the percentage of denials (resulting from adjudications of initial cases) and revocations (resulting from adjudications of periodic reinvestigations).

Table 5
Denials and Revocations

Agency	FY 2015	
	Denials	Revocations
CIA	8.5%	0.5%
DIA	0.0%	0.5%
FBI	0.1%	2.0%
NGA	7.0%	0.6%
NRO	4.7%	1.0%
NSA	6.1%	2.3%
State	0.1%	0.1%

The difference in the percentage of denials and revocations among agencies can be attributed to different processes employed by those agencies. For example, FBI and State may discontinue security processing due to automatic disqualifiers found during a suitability review before the case reaches the security clearance adjudication phase.

[4] Excluding data from State, who could only provide data for pending cases, not specifically pending investigations.

These cases are cancelled by Human Resources before security clearance determinations are rendered and are not, therefore, categorized as security clearance denials. Other IC elements consider all relevant information in their security clearance adjudicative process. They render security clearance denials based upon the totality of the information contained in the case files, which results in a higher percentage of denials.

iv. The percentage of investigations during the preceding fiscal year that resulted in incomplete information

Agencies confirmed that their final reports of investigation contained all required/relevant information prior to adjudication.

v. The percentage of investigations during the preceding fiscal year that did not result in enough information to make a decision on potentially adverse information

The seven IC agencies listed on Table 5 reported that they had no cases to report against this category. Agencies worked to ensure that sufficient information was available to make a decision on any potentially adverse information.

vi. The number of completed or pending security clearance determinations for government employees and contractors during the preceding fiscal year that have taken longer than one year to complete; the agencies that investigated and adjudicated such determinations; and the cause of significant delays in such determinations

Table 6, *Delays More Than 1 Year,* shows the number of security clearance determinations for U.S. Government employees that required more than a year to complete.

Table 7, *Delays More Than 1 Year*, shows the number of security clearance determinations for contractors that required more than a year to complete.

Table 6
Delays More Than 1 Year

Agency	Government Cases	
	Over 1 Year	
	Pending	Completed
CIA	78	182
DIA	184	192
FBI	53	103
NGA	4	7
NRO	0	2
NSA	115	25
State	45	73

Table 7
Delays More Than 1 Year

Agency	Contractor Cases	
	Over 1 Year	
	Pending	Completed
CIA	203	313
DIA	Unable to provide at this time	
FBI	17	15
NGA	18	11
NRO	69	91
NSA	149	370
State	8	20

Some DoD IC agencies only have delegated investigative authority over their civilian employee population and therefore, can only report the overall timeliness for that population. These agencies only conduct adjudications of contractors who already have a Top Secret clearance for access to sensitive compartmented information.

Table 8, *Causes of Significant Delays*, contains detailed information for cases pending more than one year.

Table 8

Causes of Significant Delays

Agency	Volume			Delays															
	Government	Contractor	Total (Gov. + Cont.)	Multiple Issues	Administrative Matters	Other*	Significant Adjudicative Events												
ASP & ISP							Allegiance to U.S.	Foreign Influence	Foreign Preference	Sexual Behavior	Personal Conduct	Financial Considerations	Alcohol Consumption	Drug Involvement	Emotional / Mental	Criminal Conduct	Security Violations	Outside Activities	Misuse IT Systems
CIA	260	516	776	Unable to provide at this time															
DIA	376	0	376	0	376	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
FBI	156	32	188	75	34	3	1	30	1	0	27	9	2	2	2	1	0	0	1
NGA	11	29	40	30	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
NRO	2	160	162	0	0	69	0	20	0	0	3	26	15	12	1	16	0	0	0
NSA	140	519	659	515	22	11	0	67	0	0	6	20	5	3	2	8	0	0	0
State	118	28	146	97	0	25	0	19	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Other: Includes delays involving high risk cases, derogatory information, protected information, and polygraph or medical issues.

Some agencies cannot report detailed information, either for their entire population—due to the technical limitations of their current database of record—or for their contractor population for the reasons cited in the previous section. For agencies that can report detailed information, "multiple issues" was cited as the cause for significant delay in 717 or 45 percent of cases. As in FY 2014, among those multiple issues cited, "foreign influence" was reported as the most common single reason for delay and "financial considerations" was the second most common reason for delay overall. The IC also reported that the focus on reducing the backlog of periodic reinvestigations also contributed significantly to delays.

CONCLUSION

In FY 2015, the number of individuals eligible for a security clearance *declined* across both the "in access" and "not in access" populations. The majority of the decreases resulted from DoD's successful implementation of DQIs that have positively impacted areas of data quality and data integrity. The benefits include improved data synchronization and consistency with the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, DoD Personnel Center databases, and CVS. USG agencies continued to validate the need for clearances and access levels in order to accomplish the goal of reducing the periodic reinvestigation backlog, in accordance with *"Strategy to Reduce the Periodic Reinvestigation Backlog Using a Risk-Based Approach."* The IC continues to face resource challenges associated with competing requirements of reducing the periodic reinvestigation backlog and meeting IRTPA timeliness goals for initial security

clearance processing. In addition, IC agencies were also negatively impacted by external events including the loss of a major USG contract investigative service provider and processing delays associated with temporary shutdown of eQIP.

The IC continues to face timeliness challenges in clearing individuals with unique or critical skills—such as highly desirable language abilities—who often have significant foreign associations that may take additional time to investigate and adjudicate. The ODNI, in partnership with OMB, OPM, and DoD, continues to drive improvements in the timeliness, accuracy and consistency of investigative and adjudicative clearance processes government-wide.

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