

Mar 22, 2023

Department of Defense
OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY R

Honorable Ronald Moultrie
Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence & Security
Statement for the Record
Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Hearing
March 29, 2023

Chairman Warner, Vice Chairman Rubio, and distinguished members of the Committee, it is a privilege to testify on behalf of the Department of Defense's intelligence and security professionals who work every day to address the threats facing our Nation.

As the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, I am committed to protecting and supporting our personnel while optimizing our systems, technologies, and processes. To deliver on this commitment, I oversee the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, DCSA, which is the primary implementer of personal vetting reforms in the Federal Government. Established in 2019, DCSA has been successful in making personnel vetting better, faster, and more cost effective. DCSA has eliminated the backlog of background investigations, improved timeliness, and implemented continuous vetting.

Raising public awareness about the vetting process for the millions of Americans, including those holding government security clearances, and foreign nationals employed by the Department, furthers this commitment.

DoD Role in the Trusted Workforce 2.0 Initiative

As the largest department in the federal government, the Department of Defense hosts the largest number of cleared personnel. Of the approximately 4.5 million Americans in national security positions, more than 3.6 million of them work as DoD military, civilian, and contractor personnel. As a result, our efforts to implement and support the Trusted Workforce 2.0 (TW 2.0) phased, iterative approach, occurs on a much larger scale than anywhere else in the federal government.

The Department is making great progress in implementing TW 2.0. As of October 2022, all DoD personnel have been enrolled into an intermediate phase, TW 1.5.

During the next two calendar years, DoD will continue driving TW 2.0 implementation through the Defense Trusted Workforce Implementation Group, which falls under my purview as the Principal Staff Assistant for Security. The Department is responsible for:

- Enrolling the DoD national and non-national security populations into the Continuous Vetting program;
- Implementing new investigative tiers and vetting scenarios;
- Managing and facilitating agency specific information sharing in alignment with TW 2.0; and
- Deploying an enterprise-wide information technology (IT) system, the National Background Investigation Services (NBIS).

Continuous Vetting, New Standards, and Enhanced Reciprocity/Mobility

Security, suitability, and credentialing adjudicative guidelines are the foundation of the entire personnel vetting process. Many of the supporting approaches, such as conducting background investigations, have been modernized to a great extent, but were developed decades ago. Our review of the Department's security, suitability, and the entire vetting process, drove us to explore transformational reform that factored in changes in mission complexity, societal norms, technological capabilities, and the threat landscape.

One of the major features of TW 2.0 is the Continuous Vetting program, which offers a better approach to protecting people, property, information, and mission by quickly identifying and managing potential risks. Continuous vetting under TW 2.0 ensures that we are using our time wisely and investing our resources judiciously.

In May 2022, the Director of National Intelligence, as the Security Executive Agent, and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, as the Suitability and Credentialing Executive Agent (Executive Agents), issued new federal Personnel Vetting Investigative Standards. This was an incredible lift and a team effort. Additionally, they will lead the effort to review adjudicative guidelines, in partnership with the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (OUSD(I&S)) and the rest of the security community.

The new investigative standards use a risk-based approach to investigations. This maximizes uniformity across all vetting domains and focuses on the efficient gathering of information needed to make informed trust determinations. Using this risk-based approach allows the Department to meet mission needs while considering unique, agency specific requirements.

By replacing the five-tier investigative framework with three tiers, we will simplify the investigative requirements for personnel vetting – including suitability, credentialing, and fitness – resulting in faster decisions and enhanced workforce mobility.

Currently, DCSA's continuous vetting apparatus actively detects adjudicatively relevant information in near-real-time rather than waiting for calendar-based periodic reinvestigations. The TW 2.0 continuous evaluation model delivers an equally comprehensive and efficient vetting process, reserving the most in-depth investigations for initial vetting or when a specific issue arises.

Early detection, through the use of advanced technology and new self-reporting policies, enables us to intervene in and mitigate situations before a potential problem escalates to the level of affecting an individual's eligibility to hold a clearance or poses a risk to our national security mission.

Overall, the new investigative standards, combined with automation and advanced technology for information management, enables DoD to modernize our approach to vetting, increase the speed of onboarding, and identify potential behaviors of concern faster. Through this approach, we are sustaining robust evaluation of our cleared workforce more effectively, conscientiously, and efficiently.

NBIS Progress Enabling TW 2.0

The National Background Investigation Services is the secure, end-to-end IT infrastructure that enables our security mission to conduct comprehensive personnel vetting – from subject initiation, background investigations, adjudication, and continuous vetting. The Department is delivering one of the most complex, comprehensive, and sensitive data repositories our federal government has ever seen – and we take this responsibility exceptionally seriously.

NBIS has world-class cybersecurity features and utilizes proven software development methods to facilitate operational success. NBIS will replace multiple, disparate legacy IT systems and provide better data integration, more expedient sharing of information, and increased flexibility to adapt to the needs of an evolving security enterprise.

DoD, through the oversight of OUSD(I&S), delegated the responsibility of NBIS design and development to DCSA. DCSA has established a detailed implementation schedule for NBIS and will begin to deliver initial NBIS capabilities by the end of calendar year 2023.

I want to especially thank the Office of Personnel Management and our Performance Accountability Council partners across the government for their collaboration on this effort.

Overall, NBIS is intended to speed up delivery, improve functionality, and support business process engineering – all synchronized with evolving policy – while simultaneously increasing our timeliness and avoiding investigative backlogs.

CONCLUSION

DoD remains committed to providing secure, efficient, and effective vetting systems. We will ensure any organization – be they government agencies or members of our Nation's industrial base – have confidence in their trusted workforce. Our goal is to not only have the world's best-in-class workforce, but also to verify that each and every member of that workforce is worthy of the special trust granted to them on behalf of our Nation.

I want to thank every member of the committee for their continued support and I look forward to answering their questions.