ODNI Report: Intelligence Community Reduces Security Clearance Processing Time

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Despite some unique challenges, processing times compare with improvements across government.

Washington, D.C. – The Intelligence Community (IC) continues to reduce its security clearance processing times on par with the improvements seen across all government agencies, according to a new report released today by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) on security clearance determinations.

The Congressionally mandated Report on Security Clearance Determinations said that significant progress has been made in recent years to improve the timeliness of the investigative and adjudication processes, despite some unique challenges and additional vetting in some cases where individuals have much sought after skills.

According to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) Title III 2010 Annual Report released in February 2011, the average government security clearance took just 53 days to process in 2010, exceeding the IRTPA standard of 60 days required for 90 percent of all applications. In 2006, the average processing time for initial security clearances was 165 days.

The new annual report is required under the 2010 Intelligence Authorization Act (IAA) and beginning in the 2011 Fiscal Year, it includes several new reporting and timeliness metrics, and collection efforts, which are different than the previous IRTPA goals. Among the reporting requirements is the first-ever government-wide inventory of security clearances held by federal employees, contractors and consultants. As of Oct. 1, 2010, more than 2.8 million federal employees and 1.4 million contractors and consultants held security clearances.

The report also notes that some of the data requested by the IAA had not been previously tracked. For instance, the number of clearances approved in Fiscal Year 2009 could not be determined by employee type without a manual review of hundreds of thousands of records. Efforts are underway to establish collection methodology for forthcoming reports and to use that information to improve on security clearance reforms in the future.

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) leads intelligence integration across the 17 federal organizations that comprise the Intelligence Community. Under Executive Order 13467, the President designated the DNI as the Security Executive Agent responsible for a number of security clearance reform, alignment, reciprocity, and governance initiatives.

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