**STATEMENT OF
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**U.S. OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT, FEDERAL INVESTIGATIVE
SERVICES**

before the

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

on

SECURITY CLEARANCE REFORM: SUSTAINING PROGRESS FOR THE FUTURE

June 21, 2012

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Johnson, and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of Director Berry, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding

the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) role in security clearance reform and our

efforts in achieving and sustaining the tremendous progress made in the security clearance and

investigation process. I am also pleased to have the opportunity to thank Chairman Akaka and

this Subcommittee for their leadership in correcting a decades old problem through investigative

consolidation, legislative performance goals, and supporting security clearance reform efforts. I

am also pleased to have the opportunity to extend OPM's gratitude and best wishes to Chairman

Akaka and thank him for his many years of service to our country.

From the beginning, OPM has been deeply committed to overhauling the security clearance

process, and working closely with our partners – the Office of Management and Budget (OMB),

the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), and the Department of Defense (DOD) – to implement reforms that improved timeliness, efficiency, and quality of the security clearance and investigation process. Today, OPM's background investigation program's performance is strong, as demonstrated by years of providing timely and quality products to our customer agencies. We have no backlogs, are meeting timeliness mandates, and have increased automation. OPM looks forward to continuing our partnerships and improving on our successes as we shift towards executing our executive agent responsibilities.

OPM's Efforts and Accomplishments to Provide Timely, High-Quality Investigations and Implementing Security Clearance Reform as a Member of the Suitability and Security Clearance Performance Accountability Council (PAC):

Investigation Timeliness: OPM's background investigation program has unfailingly met timeliness and quality expectations for our customers − while consistently meeting the challenges of an ever-growing investigative workload (since FY 2005, our workloads have increased significantly – 26 percent increase in top secret investigations, 21 percent for secret/confidential investigations, and 144 percent in top secret reinvestigations). During this same period, we also eliminated an inherited backlog. Yet, we met and exceeded the government-wide timeliness goals mandated in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, and have sustained this level of performance to date.

Type of Investigation	FY 2005	FY 2012 to date (June 1, 2012)	Percent Improved since 2005
All Initial Security Investigations	145 days	36 days	75%
Top Secret / Q	308 days	72 days	77%

Secret/Confidential / L	115 days	31 days	73%
Reinvestigations for Top Secret / Q	419 days	93 days	78%

By improving investigation timeliness and eliminating backlogs, OPM has enabled agencies to put people to work more quickly, thereby saving the Federal government billions of dollars.

Investigation Quality: The quality of our investigation program remains a top priority – as demonstrated by years of meeting PAC quality metrics and supported by continued reform enhancements. We ensure the quality of our investigation products by actively pursuing feedback from our customer agencies and maintaining a robust internal quality control process. In addition, we have incorporated reform initiatives into our process, such as aligning our existing investigative products with the proposed tiered investigation model. This simplified approach has streamlined processes and promotes reciprocity throughout the Federal government. We enhanced the quality of our investigative products by implementing an updated electronic Standard Form 86, which collects more information up front from the applicant and targets issue information for expansion, and implemented enhanced subject interview techniques. Additionally, we have partnered with ODNI to create an inter-agency Quality Assessment Working Group to establish Federal quality measures and standards for evaluating investigative products. These key reform enhancements promote quality by using investigative resources more effectively and efficiently and providing agencies with relevant adjudicative information to make critical security clearance decisions.

Reform Initiatives: OPM continues to work closely with members of the PAC to reform the

security clearance and investigation process. The following highlights some of the initiatives

that have been successfully implemented over the past couple years and the areas benefited from

these initiatives.

1) _Reciprocity_. Today, reciprocity is fully enabled with relevant security clearance,

   suitability, and identity data shared across the Federal government. By implementing an

   automated position designation tool and expanding the data stored in the Central

   Verification System (CVS), agencies can more accurately determine the proper level of

   investigation to be conducted. By building a pass through to DOD's Joint Personnel

   Adjudication System, CVS is the standard for clearance validation for most of the Federal

   government.

2) _Electronic Application_. OPM's Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing

   (e-QIP) is the gold standard for electronic application throughout the Federal

   government. Statistics show the system improves the quality of agency submissions and

   speeds the initiation of the investigation process. Currently, OPM receives over 99

   percent of all security investigation requests through e-QIP, with many agencies, such as

   DOD and OPM, at 100 percent. In addition, we continue to work with other investigation

   service providers to implement e-QIP in their organizations. Specifically, we enabled e-

   QIP pass-through use for other agencies with delegated investigative authorities and

   provided the source code to allow the intelligence community to replicate e-QIP on their

   classified systems.

3) *Investigation Process*. OPM has fully aligned our current investigative products with all

   aspects of the reformed investigative model supported by current policies, and following

   a detailed cost assessment, are poised to implement the new Federal investigative

   standards. In addition to aligning our existing investigation products with the tiered

   model and enhanced investigation techniques, we have taken additional steps to

   streamline and improve the investigation process. For example, we have added

   additional agency checks, such as Social Security number and CVS records, and have

   migrated previously manual record checks for criminal history and birth verification to

   automated checks.

4) *Agency Adjudications*. OPM enhanced investigative delivery processes that have

   supported electronic adjudication methods and reduced agency adjudication

   timeliness. OPM revised our case seriousness coding and incorporated the use of

   machine-readable coding, known as XML tagging, into portions of the investigation

   product to aid the electronic adjudication process. OPM expanded the use of electronic

   delivery of completed investigations to our customer agencies, delivering over 3.2

   million investigations to 53 participating agencies. OPM also developed and

   implemented PAC-approved standardized suitability adjudicator training, thereby

   promoting the consistent application of adjudication standards across government and

   reciprocal acceptance of agency suitability decisions.

OPM's Workforce Planning and Other Strategies to Ensure an Effective Investigative Staff

OPM currently manages a balanced nation-wide Federal and contract workforce to provide a

flexible, responsive, and cost-effective investigative program. Our core Federal investigator

presence permits us to appropriately manage highly sensitive and inherently governmental investigative requirements while our contractor presence permits us to expand and contract operations as the workload numbers and locations dictate. OPM has expanded the pool of contractors who have the capability to conduct background investigations which has driven meaningful competition providing us the best possible price.

Our strategies to ensure an effective investigative staff includes targeted training enhancements, realigned quality structured organization, and automated tools and system support. OPM co-chaired the PAC Training Subcommittee to develop core competencies, skill standards, and training objectives for background investigators and security/suitability adjudicators that were approved by the PAC as the national training standards. The Suitability and Security Executive Agents will inform the Executive Branch agencies of the national standards.

At OPM, we transformed our National Training Center into a professional cadre of certified instructors and instructional system specialists who develop and provide core training and professional development to our investigative staff, contractors, and other agencies. OPM implemented an automated Learning Management System that provides online training capabilities. Finally, we are in the process of obtaining accreditation for our basic Background Investigator and Suitability Adjudicator training programs through the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation. Upon accreditation, we will have the first and only Federally accredited personnel security investigation training program in the country.

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Enhanced Investigatory Capabilities and Improvements to Information Technology

In addition to our certified training program, OPM is working on other initiatives that will enhance the content of our investigations. OPM is co-chairing a number of Executive Branch working groups aimed at implementing the new Federal investigative standards. This includes developing data standards for consistent formatting of investigative results and data sharing; developing quality expectations and measures for the revised standards; and identifying best-practices for enhanced investigative capabilities across the investigations enterprise. We are also exploring social media information for investigative leads and data mining benefits and standardizing investigative policy across the Executive Branch.

In addition, OPM will continue to work with Federal, State, and local record providers to streamline collection methods and identify information that will enhance the content of the investigation. We are also developing automated solutions that will aid our investigators in preparing for interviews and reporting the results. OPM will also continue our efforts to streamline processes through our Business Process Reengineering Effort where we will map future "to-be" processes to take full advantage of future information technology capabilities.

OPM is also engaged in the transformation of our EPIC[1] suite of automated tools. The goals of the EPIC transformation are to improve the timeliness and quality of the investigation process, enable standardization, support reform, and protect and secure investigation information.

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[1]   The EPIC acronym is derived from the names of four critical systems: E – "e-QIP"; P – "Personnel Investigations Processing System";, I – "Imaging"; and C – "CVS".

The EPIC transformation includes platform enhancements to update hardware and software, implement an event driven architecture, and use relational database functionality to increase system flexibility. As we progress through the modernization project, with the completion of each release, our capabilities and efficiencies are enhanced, contributing directly to improved investigative timeliness and cost savings. OPM is on track to complete the EPIC transformation by 2014, giving us the technical agility and flexibility needed to sustain timeliness and quality and to keep pace with changing investigative program demands.

The Way Forward

I am extremely proud of the progress OPM has made in reforming the investigations program. Through our joint partnership with OMB, ODNI, and DOD, we have successfully worked through and overcome many challenges, including: consolidating and aligning the background investigations program; balancing workforce requirements; eliminating significant workload backlogs; satisfying aggressive timeliness requirements; professionalizing training; monitoring performance; developing advanced automation; and reforming processes to enhance quality.

Across the Executive Branch, reform has enjoyed the leadership of the PAC, with specific support of the PAC subcommittees, the Joint Reform Team, and the Executive Branch working groups that have worked to establish and operationalize the Joint Security and Suitability Reform process. It is because of these important partnerships that I can speak with full confidence about the future of the investigations program and the security and suitability process.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.