

Office of Inspector General U.S. Government Accountability Office Report Highlights

September 2013

SECURITY CLEARANCES

Actions Needed to Strengthen Controls over Top Secret Security Clearance Requirements

Objective

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) evaluated the extent to which the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has established effective policies and procedures (controls) to review and validate top secret security clearance requirements.

What OIG Found

While GAO has established a policy to review and validate security clearances, it does not provide detailed procedures for designating positions as sensitive (i.e., to require a security clearance). Our work showed that the Director, Office of Security (OS) grants and renews top secret security clearances solely based on security clearance requests from unit heads. OIG found that decisions by the Director, OS to grant or renew top secret clearances in fiscal year 2012 were, for the most part, made without justification to support employees' needs for access to top secret information. Without these controls, GAO has no reasonable assurance that only employees who need access to top secret information are granted top secret clearances.

What OIG Recommends

OIG recommends that the Comptroller General direct the Chief Administrative Officer to oversee the establishment and implementation of detailed procedures that define consistent criteria and processes to ensure that the agency's position designation and position sensitivity policies are carried out. OIG also recommends that GAO establish procedures to ensure that decisions to grant top secret security clearances are grounded in written justifications. Such documentation should include sufficient support to demonstrate each employee's need for access to top secret information. GAO agreed with OIG's recommendations.

