



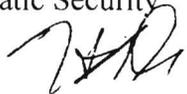
United States Department of State  
and the Broadcasting Board of Governors

*Office of Inspector General*

AUG 29 2011

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: M – Patrick F. Kennedy, Under Secretary for Management  
DS – Eric J. Boswell, Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security

FROM: OIG – Harold W. Geisel, Deputy Inspector General 

SUBJECT: Memorandum Report – Automated Security Clearance Verification, ISP-I-11-63

**Executive Summary**

The absence of an automated security clearance verification system to facilitate timely visitor access to official U.S. domestic and overseas facilities worldwide causes frustration among mission staff and visitors alike and results in significant losses in productivity. The variety of visitors to official U.S. domestic and overseas facilities, including Department of State (Department) temporary duty employees, contractors, and other U.S. government agency officials, coupled with the Department's existing manual and multipart clearance verification system, puts the burden of clearance verification on already overstretched regional security officers and their staff. While this misplaced burden is especially difficult for diplomatic posts with a high volume of visitors, all posts are affected. The Department is aware of and working to address this complicated issue, but several actions are required to overcome existing inefficiencies.

**Purpose and Scope**

The Office of Inspector General noted problems with the Department's clearance verification processes during two recent inspections, highlighting the worldwide implications of the issue. The purpose of this report is to identify possible solutions for improving the current clearance validation process, including reviewing ongoing initiatives and existing network applications that could provide a platform for an automated approach to security clearance verification.

**Summary of Findings**

Although the Department's security clearance verification system is generally effective, the current manual processes do not fully take advantage of available technologies. Multiple clearance processes, used to accommodate a variety of employees, and broad human involvement make the system inefficient. The Department has known about this problem for

some time and discussed the possibility of automating the clearance verification process before the deployment of the eCountry Clearance (eCC) application; however, stakeholder agreement could not be reached on this topic. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

In an attempt to consolidate and automate several processes, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) has hired a full-time project manager and is developing a new comprehensive application called the Security and Suitability Management System (S2MS), which will completely or partially replace several of the Department's current security-related applications, including the Case Management System, the Visitor Security Clearance Tracking System, the Visitor Access Request System, and the Report Management System.

One small but critical element of this forward-leaning initiative is automated security clearance verification. To realize a system that would deliver such benefits, DS first needed to find a way to link multiple national clearance databases, such as the Department of Defense-owned Joint Personnel Adjudications System and the Office of Personnel Management-owned Clearance Verification System, to a computer application resident on Department systems. DS's preferred solution is the eCC application. With certain modifications, the eCC application can provide valid security clearance verification through interfaces with myriad clearance databases that will eventually be linked to the S2MS. Once these modifications and interfaces are complete, the Department can realize automated security clearance verification for the vast majority of visitors to official U.S. domestic and overseas facilities. Access requests for contractors, however, will require additional steps by DS's Industrial Security Division prior to their approval in the eCC application.

Because of its comprehensive connectivity, this new approach should provide the capability to service nearly all visitor requests, regardless of employer or employment status (Department, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, contractors, etc.), and will significantly reduce the need for direct human involvement in the security clearance verification process. The security clearance-related field in eCC will be autopopulated by any one of a number of linked U.S. Government databases, providing posts with immediate clearance verification along with all other required visitor access data. (b) (5)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Connecting to S2MS should be achievable, however, when the Federal Bureau of Investigation updates its current systems in 2014. Until all agencies can be interfaced with S2MS, DS will maintain an abbreviated manual clearance verification system for the Federal Bureau of Investigation and any other unique organizations. A formal agreement among all participating agencies with regard to intragovernment connectivity will ensure the integrity of Department systems and is included in DS's future plans.

The Under Secretary for Management has already provided funding for S2MS and the DS-led project is under way with an anticipated completion date of November 2012. Discussions between DS and the Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing and Innovation are ongoing to flesh out modifications required for the eCC application. As part of the eCC process,

near-term changes will force travelers to provide valid security clearance verification through the DS certification unit before country clearance is approved, relieving regional security officers and their staff of the time-consuming process of verifying employee clearances. The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation has agreed to fund the initial changes. The long-term modifications in eCC will include linking the application to S2MS (when it is available), making security clearance verification seamless for the majority of visitors. DS is expected to provide funding for the long-term modifications to eCC. Although eCC is already authorized to store personally identifiable information (in accordance with the E-Government Act of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-347, section 208), privacy provisions and security controls will need to be included in any modification to ensure the protection of employee social security numbers and dates of birth.

DS's decision to invest in the S2MS project was intuitive and bold. By all indications, this new approach is in concert with White House guidance to streamline government systems while eliminating duplicative processes. The Department expects staff reductions as a result of removing the need for direct human involvement in security clearance validation. The Department, and potentially all of government, stands to benefit from this well-thought-out solution.

## Formal Recommendations

**Recommendation 1:** The Bureau of Diplomatic Security should secure memoranda of agreement with all non-Department government agencies expected to link to the Security and Suitability Management System. (Action: DS)

**Recommendation 2:** The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should require that planned modifications in the eCountry Clearance application include security controls that provide adequate protection of employee personally identifiable information. (Action: M/PRI, in coordination with DS)

**Recommendation 3:** The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should complete the planned short-term modifications in the eCountry Clearance application by December 2011. (Action: M/PRI, in coordination with DS)

**Recommendation 4:** The Office of Management Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation, in coordination with the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, should complete the planned long-term modifications in eCountry Clearance, including an interface to the Security and Suitability Management System, by August 2012. (Action: M/PRI, in coordination with DS)

I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this matter further, or your staff may contact (b) (6)

Enclosures:

Compliance Information and Instruction Sheet