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STATEMENT BY

**DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY,
HON JUSTIN P. OVERBAUGH**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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ON AN UPDATE ON DOD'S STRUGGLING BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM

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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**



Good morning, Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I was appointed Acting Director of the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) on November 19, 2025, with a clear mandate from the Under Secretary of War for Intelligence and Security, the Honorable Bradley Hansell: to ensure DCSA finally delivers the critical security capabilities our nation requires.

I understand this Committee has received testimony from previous leaders suggesting the Agency was largely on track. Respectfully, that assessment was too rosy. The truth is, DCSA has been in the midst of an identity crisis. After it was originally cobbled together from disparate programs, DCSA has never truly self-actualized or forged a unified Agency culture. I contend that this foundational issue has directly contributed to the significant challenges in delivering both Trusted Workforce (TW) 2.0 and the National Background Investigation Services (NBIS) program on time and on budget.

Previous Agency leadership, in a misguided effort to establish a brand, focused more on marketing than on delivering value and allowing that value to speak for itself. The Agency's original purpose became blurred, drifting toward an intelligence-focused identity rather than one embracing its vital security mission. Instead of focusing on executing its most important functions with excellence, the Agency attempted to accumulate more missions to the point that it failed to achieve its core purpose. Altogether, the lack of a viable vision, clear expectations, and leadership accountability from past Department oversight allowed DCSA to fail.

Under Secretary Hansell dismissed DCSA leadership because the transformation required here cannot be incremental; it must be complete and total. He had little confidence that the leadership he inherited would have been successful in leading the change from a sclerotic, compliance-based bureaucracy to the customer-centric, business-oriented entity the Department of War and the nation need DCSA to be. While the Under Secretary continues his search to select a new Director with the optimal mix of private sector, technology, and government experience, he directed me and the interim DCSA leadership team to steer DCSA toward a business model that mirrors Secretary Hegseth's approach of eliminating bureaucratic processes in favor of speed and innovation.

In my short time as Acting Director, I have found what I expected: a dedicated, talented, and innovative workforce unfortunately shackled by burdensome processes designed not to empower them, but to sustain layers of middle management. Our focus now is on unleashing their potential.

To that end, we are designing the Agency for purpose, moving it from a cumbersome bureaucracy to an agile organization that can serve as a model for the rest of the government. At DCSA, we will build a workforce of the future founded on a culture of meritocracy, efficiency, creativity, empowerment, and accountability that enables timely, risk-informed decisions.

DCSA's struggles to deliver NBIS and implement TW 2.0 are but symptoms of the deeper cultural problems I have outlined. These two efforts are not merely programs; they are the backbone of our national security personnel vetting enterprise. Their delivery is non-negotiable.



While the Government Accountability Office (GAO) rightly noted recent progress on the NBIS program's cost and schedule estimates, we must be honest that this progress is fragile. Without the cultural and structural reforms we are now implementing, technical gains alone will not secure success. Absent this transformation and a refocus on its core mission, DCSA would surely continue to fail to meet its targets for NBIS development and deployment.

Under Secretary Hansell and I share as a top priority the delivery and deployment of NBIS by Fiscal Year (FY) 2028. He and I are aided in this objective by the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment, the Honorable Mike Duffey, who has designated NBIS as an Acquisition Category I Special Interest Program, subjecting it to the highest level of scrutiny.

At DCSA we are overhauling our governance, acquisition strategy, and partnership with industry to ensure every decision serves the core mission. Through the Trusted Workforce Implementation Group (TWIG), we are ensuring that policy requirements matured through the Performance Accountability Council Program Management Office (PAC-PMO) are translated into real-world capabilities delivered by NBIS. These goals are to get people to work faster, eliminate waste, optimize risk management, and improve the experience for our government customers.

While the full transition to TW 2.0 and NBIS will be complete by FY2028, we are accelerating the deployment of key capabilities now, including adjudicative improvements for public trust cases, expanded use of interim Secret clearances, and broader application of vetting services features.

Even with a renewed vision, this will not be easy. NBIS is a massive undertaking intended to replace deeply entrenched legacy systems across the Federal government. Getting this right is as important as getting it done quickly. DCSA now has the appropriate oversight, a clear mandate for change, and a leadership team committed to transparency within the Department, with partners in the interagency and industry, and with you here in Congress.

The exceptional team at DCSA is the driving force that will make this transformation possible. My commitment to you is that I will continue to foster a culture of innovation and accountability that empowers them. We appreciate Congress's engagement on this critical issue and look forward to demonstrating through our actions and results that DCSA is on a new and better path.

The remainder of my statement will outline DCSA's current personnel vetting posture, the work underway to develop and deploy NBIS, and how that aligns with the larger goal of implementing TW 2.0.

Personnel Vetting Mission

In FY2025, DCSA's Personnel Vetting mission conducted approximately 2.6 million investigation activities. This includes 426,400 Secret-level investigations, 142,800 Top Secret-level investigations, 423,300 Suitability investigations, 7,600 Reimbursable Security investigations (focused investigations on specific issues within an investigation), and



approximately 1.6 million Special Agreement Checks (which quickly verify an individual's criminal history). In total, DCSA vetting services support more than 4 million Federal personnel.

DCSA maintains an inventory of cases for initial background investigations, vetting alerts, and investigative activity derived from those alerts, as well as adjudications for the Department of War and cleared industry. In January 2026, our initial vetting background investigation inventory dropped to approximately 100,000 cases, reaching an all-time low. This represents a 65% decrease since the beginning of 2025. For context, our most recent inventory high point was just over 290,000 cases in September 2024. The all-time peak inventory was 725,000 cases in April 2018.

Although DCSA has undertaken multiple efforts to reduce inventory and improve vetting timeliness, we must increase focus on innovative solutions enabled by technology. Longer-term process improvements must increase efficiency and prepare the Agency to fully implement TW 2.0. DCSA worked with OUSW(I&S) and the PAC-PMO to identify and adopt targeted solutions before the full transition to TW 2.0. Significant work remains to modernize and improve vetting performance within DCSA, such as the implementation of virtual interviews, to ensure we deliver value to the American taxpayer.

Current Status of the NBIS Program

As DCSA looks to the future, our central focus is on delivering a modern, resilient, and efficient personnel vetting system for the Federal government. To achieve this, we must deliver the NBIS program as the secure, adaptable information technology backbone for the government's personnel vetting enterprise. Our vision is a seamless, innovative, and secure suite of shared information technology services that collectively support the evolving needs of the Federal government and the American people. The successful rollout of NBIS will enable real-time continuous vetting, improve risk management, enhance onboarding speed, and provide stakeholders with transparent, data-driven insights into the vetting process.

The NBIS program now follows an established roadmap with key milestones and a cost estimate against which it is working. The NBIS Requirements Governance Board, led by OUSW (I&S), oversees delivery of NBIS capabilities against this roadmap. This process ensures decisions are not made in a vacuum but are instead collaboratively aligned with stakeholder needs.

The NBIS program has also moved out on a new contracting and acquisition strategy, approved by OUSW(A&S) as the Milestone Decision Authority. Instead of relying on one large contractor, contracts are modular, competitive, and tied to agile development cycles, providing flexibility and faster delivery of capabilities.

The NBIS program has strengthened its core technology foundations to provide a secure, reliable, and agile platform. DCSA completed the migration and modernization of seven NBIS systems into a single, unified cloud environment. Additionally, DCSA has deployed eApp, improving the user experience when filling out personnel vetting forms.



DCSA is committed to expanding pilot programs and phased deployments of NBIS capabilities across all Federal agencies. We will continue agile practices that enable iterative development and feedback cycles. We are strengthening Agency partnerships and industry engagement to incorporate user feedback and improve our systems. DCSA is working collaboratively with Federal agencies, industry partners, and our oversight bodies to ensure our systems are resilient, secure, and adaptable to future threats and mission needs.

DCSA is also developing a comprehensive workforce strategy, focused on recruiting, training, and retaining top talent in data analytics, cybersecurity, program management, and technology development, ensuring we have the expertise to meet tomorrow's challenges. We will invest in our workforce, enhance training and recruitment, and embed a culture of continuous improvement to sustain excellence.

While I present the reforms in place that we are accelerating, make no mistake: we will not ignore the failures of the past. At DCSA, transparency and accountability will remain foundational to our approach. We will continue to provide frequent updates to Congress, Federal customers, and other stakeholders on our progress. We will maintain open channels for feedback and oversight to strengthen trust in our mission.

Trusted Workforce 2.0 Implementation and the Trusted Workforce Implementation Group

Just prior to my arrival at the behest of OUSW(I&S), DCSA created the Trusted Workforce Implementation Group (TWIG) to undertake the operational planning necessary to guide NBIS development. This initiative is years overdue. Through the TWIG, DCSA is engaged with customers to ensure operational needs will be met by NBIS delivery. We can now accurately forecast when business value will be delivered. Through the TWIG, we prioritize the following PAC-PMO objectives:

- Get People to Work Faster: Reduce the time-to-hire and increase onboarding speed;
- Eliminate Waste: Streamline operations through unified information technology to achieve cost savings and reduce redundancies;
- Optimize Risk Management: Enhance vetting to mitigate risks and safeguard assets;
- Strengthen Experience and Engagement: Increase the transparency and customer feedback loop, fostering improved satisfaction and engagement.

Between today and the full transition to TW 2.0 in FY2028, we are accelerating the deployment of key capabilities including:

- Improvements to speed up adjudication of certain public trust cases, allowing eligible individuals to advance through initial vetting and a trust determination automatically via specific business rules.
- The rollout of the expanded use of interim clearances for eligible positions at the Secret level. This will allow agencies to onboard eligible individuals through automated business rules with an interim clearance while awaiting a full investigation.
- Expanded continuous vetting features will become available across a broader population of vetted Federal personnel. This includes those employees in non-national security



positions who could still cause damage through misconduct. They will now be monitored using the same system as those in the national security workforce.

- Deployment of a Status Tracker will allow individuals to see where they are in the vetting process. We will deliver stages iteratively, leading up to an end-to-end, real-time view of an individual's vetting journey.

Moving Forward

Even with this significant work, getting to an operational end point will not be easy. NBIS is a large-scale IT system being built to replace long-entrenched legacy personnel vetting systems with interfaces across the Federal government. Getting this right is as important as getting it done swiftly.

By the end of 2027, DCSA will deploy core NBIS shared services – including the Personnel Vetting Questionnaire, enhanced data repositories, and background investigation functionalities. Key customers will transition to NBIS, and legacy IT systems will enter the final migration phase.

By the end of 2028, DCSA will operationalize the end-to-end TW 2.0 model, enabling all agencies to use modernized vetting workflows, streamlined onboarding, and risk-based continuous vetting. Legacy investigative products, standard forms, and systems are scheduled to sunset, culminating in a unified federal vetting ecosystem.

With the right oversight, a clear mandate for change, and a transparent leadership team, we have an opportunity to transform DCSA. Through the TWIG, we have identified the key requirements to turn policy into a real-world system, paving the way for full customer adoption of DCSA capabilities enabled by NBIS. We will continue to rigorously test our plan to deliver a modern, end-to-end vetting system for the trusted workforce. I expect this Committee and others in Congress to hold us accountable for delivering on our promises.