
Office of Crisis Planning and Management
Personnel Security Division

USDA Personnel Security Newsletter

OCPM Issues Inaugural Personnel Security News Letter

Since its inception last year, the Office of Crisis Planning and Management has made personnel security one its top priorities. As a result, a Personnel Security Division was created and additional resources continue to be brought to bear to address compelling and urgent personnel security needs across USDA. This resurgence of the personnel security program in USDA follows many years of government-wide atrophy in the fields of human resource management and personnel security. While the rebuilding of the programs continues, with support from across USDA, personnel security services are now being provided in a timely manner. In the coming months and years, you will continue to see new and innovative approaches to personnel security that will reduce processing time and speed delivery of services to you, our customers. This newsletter will be used to keep interested parties throughout USDA periodically updated on what changes are occurring in personnel security.



Director
Office of Crisis Planning and Management

Personnel Security Team Continues to Grow

As part of Departmental Administration's continued commitment to personnel security, the Personnel Security Division continues to grow. Both permanent and on-site contractor staff have been added in recent months. Our most recent addition is Marty Brumback, our new Personnel Security Division Director. Marty comes to us with 23 years of human resource management experience within USDA, most recently in the Agricultural Research Service. We are truly excited to add Marty to our team and he reports for duty on March 10, 2002. With the addition of Marty, our team has the following staffing:

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Division Director
Marty Brumback

Personnel Security Specialists
John Sharkey
Kimberly Lew
Carl Johns *contractor*
Louise Borden *contractor*
Anthony Bolbosa *contractor*
Carrie Moore *contractor*
Janice Giles *contractor*

Administrative Support
Lucy Lew
Carolyn Robertson *contractor*

Got comments or suggestions for future articles? Please contact Kimberly Lew at (202) 720-7373 or Kimberly.Lew@USDA.GOV

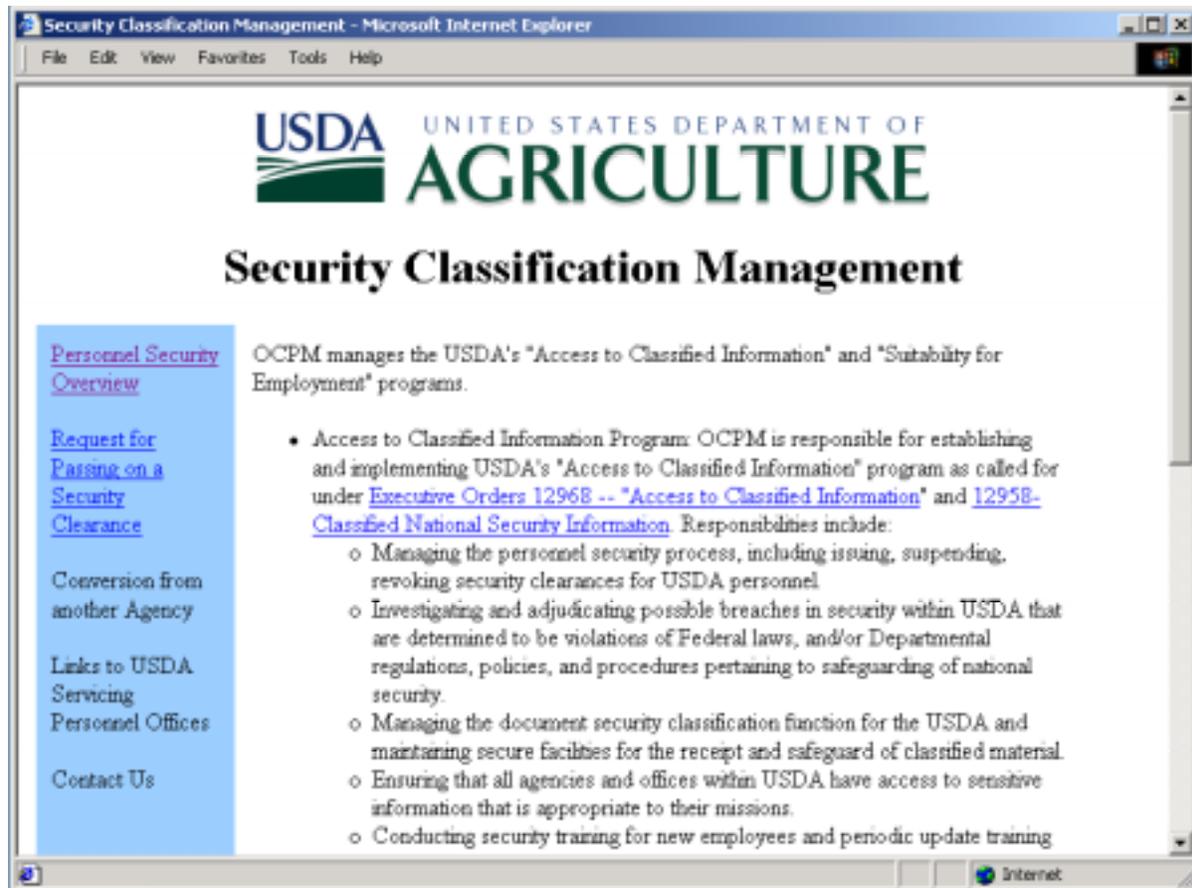
Personnel Security Action Team Successfully Completes Its Assignment

At the end of February, the Personnel Security Action Team (PSAT) will successfully have completed its assignment of supporting OCPM in eliminating the backlog of personnel security cases and assisting to purge the personnel security files. The team, composed of staff from across USDA, came together under the leadership of Sharon Friend, from the OIG, and completed the Herculean task helping us get on top of the personnel security situation within USDA. To help celebrate the success of the team, Lou Gallegos, Assistant Secretary for Administration, hosted an awards luncheon in the USDA Executive Dining Room. Mr. Gallegos awarded each team member with a Certificate of Appreciation. Please help us congratulate the team for a job well

done! Team members included: Sharon Friend *Team Leader* (OIG) ♦ Pete Sepe (Forest Service) ♦ Linda Raver (FAS) ♦ Jo Farrell (RD) ♦ Akiko Ward (OIG) ♦ De'Borah A. Applegate (FSIS) ♦ Marty Brumback (ARS) ♦ Juanita Makuta (FNS) ♦ Dan Loreda (OCIO) ♦ Sheila Bruce (FSA) ♦ Sue Bernstein (APHIS).

New Web Site Unveiled

In February, a new personnel security web site (www.usda.gov/da/ocpm/classtest.htm) was unveiled (see below) that provides information on our personnel security program, Adobe Acrobat Reader versions of personnel security forms, and tips on how to properly complete required forms. This is the first of what will be a series of improvements in on-line access to personnel security information. Comments and suggestions on further improving the web site are welcome.



What the New Personnel Security Web Page Looks Like

Coming to a Theatre Near You...E-Security!

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is working on rolling out e-security initiatives that should soon make it easier for employees to access personnel security services. The first significant effort is anticipated to culminate this summer with the release of the online version of the Standard Form (SF)-86, *Questionnaire for National Security Positions*.

Personnel Security Action Tracking Database Launched

Since August 2001, all requests for personnel security services have been tracked through a database. Several months'

back, each human resource office provided OCPM with a primary and secondary Point of Contact (POC) who is to be granted access to the database. The events of September 11, 2001 resulted in a delay in providing this access but we are pleased to announce that this is now back on track. For those POCs on Novell networks, access to the tracking database is scheduled to be provided by the end of the first week in March. For those on Microsoft networks, access is scheduled to be provided by the end of March. Once access is provided, the POCs will be able to determine the status of any pending personnel security action by accessing the database (see below) thereby eliminating the need to contact OPCM.

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Access application window titled "Microsoft Access - [PSD Database of Investigations1]". The interface shows a form view with various data entry fields and dropdown menus. The fields are organized as follows:

- Top row: Name, SSN, DOB, POB
- Second row: Agency (dropdown), Date Pkg Rec'd, Date Pkg Sent to OPM, Date Pkg Rtrnd to Agency for Corrections, Date Pkg Rtrnd from Agency w/Corrections
- Third row: BI Type (dropdown), Sensitivity Level (dropdown), Cir Level (dropdown, showing "N/A"), SCI (dropdown, showing "N")
- Fourth row: OPM BI Case # (with value "0"), Date OPM Scheduled BI, Date of Pending BI, Date of Closed BI
- Fifth row: Pending Adj: Date Supplemental Info Requested, BI Closed w/out Action due to: (dropdown)
- Sixth row: Adjudicator (dropdown), Adjudication Date, Date Clearance Granted
- Bottom section: Remarks (text area)

At the bottom of the window, the status bar shows "Record: 14 of 1949" and "Form View". The Windows taskbar at the very bottom includes the Start button, GroupWise - Mailbox, PSD Database of I..., PSD Database ..., Document2 - Micro..., and a system tray with icons and the time "8:30 AM".

What the Personnel Security Action Tracker Database Looks Like

OCPM and OPM Team Up To Offer Training

OCPM, in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will be offering two different training opportunities on personnel security issues to USDA staff. The first is “forms” training. This training provides instructions on how to correctly fill out the infamous SF-85, SF-85P, and SF-86 forms. The second training is on how to properly designate sensitivity of positions. See the Schedule below for the training dates. The training slots will be filled on a first come, first served basis, so sign up soon! Contact Kimberly Lew at either Kimberly.Lew@usda.gov or (202) 720-7373 for more information or to sign up. Kim will also be sending out a separate training announcement in the next couple of days.

Personnel Security Training Dates

Forms Training

Date: March 19, 20, and possibly 21, 2002
Time 8:30AM to 3PM
Location: TBD, Washington D.C. area

Position Sensitivity Training

Date: March – April 2002 (exact date to be determined)
Time: Half Day
Location: TBD, Washington D.C. area

OPM Agrees to Provide USDA With Preemployment Checks

OCPM has been working closely with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to put in place an agreement that will allow

USDA human resource management offices access to OPM investigative services to conduct preemployment checks. OCPM will soon enter into a special *Memorandum of Understanding* with OPM that provides access to OPM’s investigative services for preemployment checks. Under the agreement, each USDA human resource management office will have access to these services. Numerous agencies within USDA are actively considering using OPM’s investigative services to conduct preemployment checks for both new employees and contractors. While preemployment checks are a useful screening tool to determine whether a new employee or contractor should report for duty, they in no way replace or supplant the requirement that OPM conduct an employment background investigation on each employee and for each contractor who encumbers a public trust position, and to determine whether each is suitable in accordance with OPM’s adjudication regulations.

The two products that seem most useful are the fingerprint check and the credit report. Together these will cost \$33. As an added benefit, some of the costs may be recoverable, if a formal employment background investigation is requested from OPM within 120 days.

Once the agreement is signed, OCPM will issue guidance to USDA’s human resource management offices outlining the costs and explaining how to access these services. The decision to use or not use preemployment checks remains the discretion of each USDA agency or office. Use of these new services will help ensure a safe and secure workplace for all USDA employees, contractors, and further strengthen our ability to deliver uninterrupted essential services to our customers.
