

Security Clearance Adjudicators Giveth in 2010, and Taketh Away

By Christopher Graham

Highlighting how people must fight harder to obtain or retain security clearances

, a new report shows that the ranks of federal employees

and contractors with various levels of clearances only marginally increased or decreased in the 2010 fiscal year.

According to the report

from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 642,831 new confidential, secret and top secret clearances were approved during the previous fiscal year. At the same time, 597,755 clearances were terminated, resulting in a 45,076 net increase in clearance volume from the 2009 fiscal year.

Given the surge in demand for security clearances

since the Sept. 11, 2011 terrorists attacks, it is not surprising to see that the ranks of federal government employees and military personnel ("federal employees

") with confidential or secret clearance inched up by 0.2 percent to 2.17 million (See chart).

Clearance Volume by Populations and Levels 2009 v. 2010

Type

Oct. 1, 2009

Oct. 1, 2010

Federal Government Employees and Military Personnel Employees Holding a Confidential/Secret

2,162,712

2,166,679

Federal Government Employees and Military Personnel Holding a Top Secret

701,142

666,008

Industrial and Independent Contractors and Consultants Holding a Confidential/Secret

552,088

541,097

Industrial and Independent Contractors and Consultants Holding a Top Secret

536,637

524,990

Others Holding a Confidential/Secret

99,644

139,264

Others Holding a Top Secret

168,792

228,053

Confidential/Secret Approved

512,076

Top Secret Approved

130,755

Data from the "Annual Intelligence Authorization Act: Report on Security Clearance Determinations for Fiscal Year 2010," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, September 2011. "Others" include personnel not categorized in databases.

What is surprising is the 5.0 percent decline in the ranks of federal employees with top secret clearances. Similarly was a 2.1 percent drop in the ranks of industrial and independent contractors and consultants (“contractors”) with confidential, secret and top secret clearance. Some of these declines could be explained by an increase in personnel not categorized in security clearance databases (“Others”).

While retirements, job changes, and deaths played a role in many clearance terminations, so did expirations and revocations. Federal employees

and contractors need to remember that a confidential clearance is reinvestigated every 15 years, a secret clearance every 10 years and a top secret clearance every five years. Often during these reinvestigations, investigators turn up financial, foreign influence, drug or alcohol concerns, or misuse of technology that prompt revocation notices.

Anyone who has received a Statement of Reasons (SOR) should immediately contact a security clearance law

attorney. Such an attorney could help federal employees and contractors obtain or retain a security clearance by pointing out incorrect information considered by adjudicators or how issues raised in the SOR have been resolved and that no longer constitute a threat to national security. And remember to always ask for an administrative hearing. Non-hearing decisions usually are decided against an applicant/appellant.

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