



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Peter T. King (R-NY)
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“The Insider Threat to Homeland Security: Examining Our Nation’s Security Clearance
Processes”**

Remarks as Prepared

This Monday our Nation celebrated Veteran’s Day to honor the men and women who have fought, and continue to fight, for our country. In addition to these brave individuals, other Federal employees from the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, CIA, the NSA, and many other agencies work every day to protect Americans and US interests from threats. These patriots deserve our gratitude for their tireless work.

The unfortunate reality is that they must also guard against internal threats. Appalling events over recent years involving trusted individuals who have damaged national security or committed tragic acts of violence have put a spotlight on the need for reforms and rigorous oversight over the security clearance process and programs to detect insider threats.

- PFC Bradley Manning is serving a 35-year sentence for leaking classified information to WikiLeaks. The next step is to prosecute Julian Assange who published the documents.
- In May, media outlets reported that former CIA analyst and current NSA contractor Edward Snowden had fled to Hong Kong and released a large amount of data on classified NSA surveillance programs.
- On September 16, just shy of two months ago, Aaron Alexis – a DOD contractor shot his way into the Washington D.C. Navy Yard and killed 12 people.

All of these individuals were vetted, trusted U.S. security professionals who abused that trust and committed heinous acts. It is vital that more is done to identify potential insider threats.

While none of those examples involved DHS or DHS personnel, the Department of Homeland Security has over 120,000 employees with a security clearance. It is vital that we continually evaluate the internal processes and procedures for how those clearances are investigated, adjudicated, and reviewed.

In addition to our review of DHS security practices, today's witnesses will be asked to evaluate the quality and standards for security clearance investigations and adjudications, as well as address potential problems limiting information sharing between agencies on employees with clearances. For example, in the Snowden case the after action review completed by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) disclosed that the 2011 background check was incomplete. According to the Wall Street Journal, the investigation did not verify Snowden's account of a security violation while at the CIA, review travel to India Snowden failed to disclose, and include interviews with anyone outside of his mother and girlfriend. If the investigation had been done properly it could have impacted Snowden's clearance. This also raises serious questions about what standards are used in reviewing the background investigation and adjudicating a case, and why this one wasn't sent back to the investigator for a more thorough review.

There are nearly 5 million U.S. government employees or contractors with security clearances, including over 1.4 million with a Top Secret.

Now is the time to reinforce the message that a security clearance is a privilege granted so that individuals can protect the U.S. from threats. Not only can a clearance be revoked for cause, but violations must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

There are a number of reviews underway in the aftermath of the Manning, Snowden, and Alexis incidents. It is vital that necessary reforms are implemented expeditiously to detect and disrupt future insider threat situations.

These reforms must include an update to the Federal guidance for background investigations. In a post-9/11 world, security clearances must address evolving threats such as radical Islam and cyber-crime. Had investigators looked differently into Edward Snowden's background they might have identified disturbing trends that made him unfit to hold a clearance of any kind and a potential insider threat to U.S. national security.

I look forward to hearing more from the witnesses on these efforts, including whether or not the 5-year reinvestigation for Top Secret clearance holders is appropriate, what additional periodic or continuous monitoring capability exists, and what more can be done to safeguard our classified information technology (IT) systems from abuse.

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