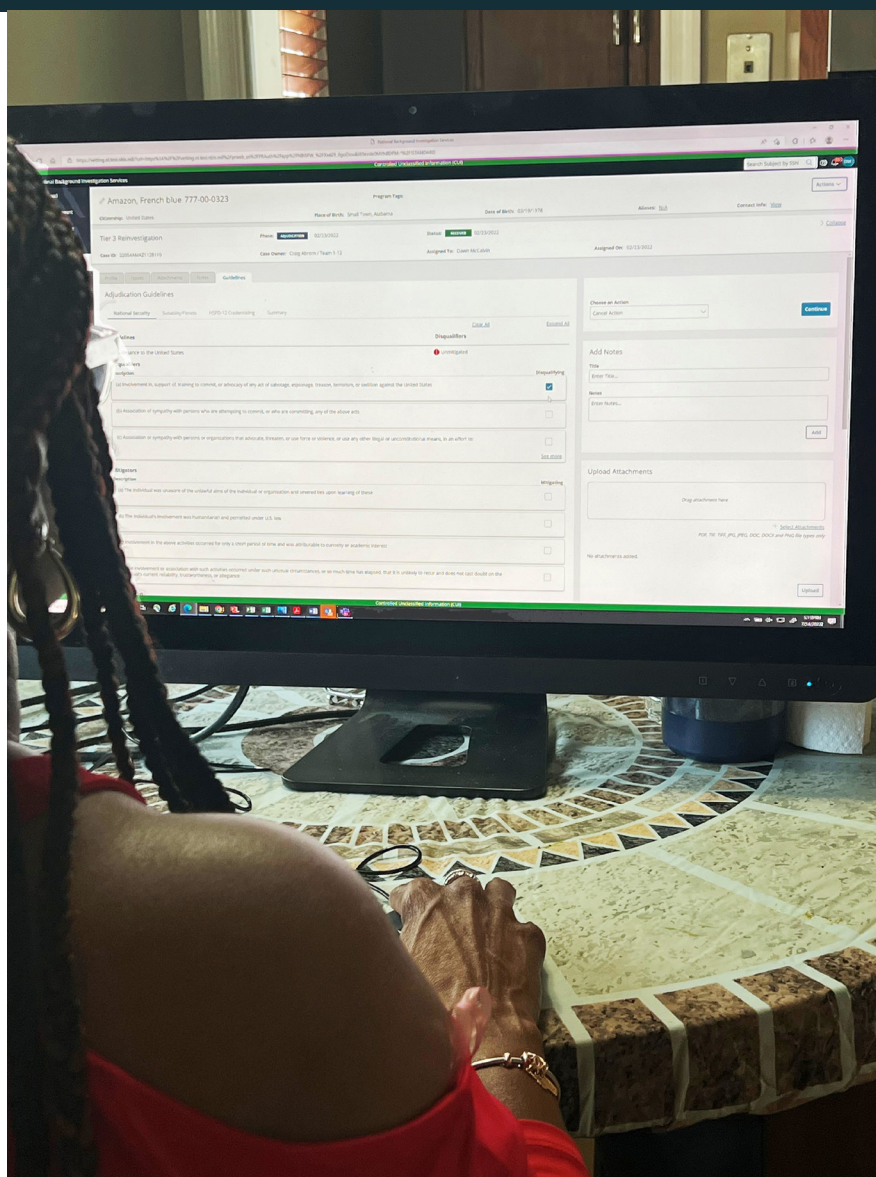# National Background Investigation Services (NBIS)

The National Background Investigation Services (NBIS) program proficiently employs Agile software development techniques to field and build out capabilities in support of personnel security missions. Operational testing has not yet been conducted, but operational assessments are planned for FY24. Developmental testing continues.

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

NBIS is a cloud-based system-of-systems that will function as a single-source information technology solution for all tasks associated with end-to-end personnel security vetting and continuous reviews. NBIS includes legacy and newly developed applications in a common architecture to support data gathering, storage, and management of data associated with personnel background investigations in a secure and protected environment. NBIS will replace several legacy systems.

MISSION

The Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA), other Federal agencies, and industry partners will use NBIS to authorize and support background investigations for new applicants as well as incumbent government, military, and contract personnel. NBIS has four operational mission areas: case initiation, adjudication, continuous vetting, and background investigation. It also has three cross-cutting support missions (up from one in FY22): service operations, metrics and reporting, and subject management. These missions allow agencies to initiate clearance requests, enable candidates to complete background investigation forms, gather

public data concerning personnel applying, manage the findings of an investigation, adjudicating personnel clearances and provide continuous vetting of cleared personnel. The system of systems also simultaneously supports and measures system performance across these functions.

PROGRAM

NBIS transitioned to the software acquisition pathway in FY21 and is being developed using Scaled Agile Framework (SAFe) and Development Security Operations (DevSecOps) methodologies. The DCSA assumed operational control for NBIS from the Defense Information Systems Agency in October 2020, and is deploying NBIS in multiple releases of increasing capability while building upon and replacing legacy systems (such as the existing clearance application software and the visit management systems), which will be decommissioned through FY24. The program has employed SAFe methodologies to rapidly develop and field capabilities in collaboration with the testers and intended customer/user base. Early releases to a limited and restricted user base supported continuous developmental testing and a cumulative validation of system and data security. In March 2022, DOT&E placed NBIS on oversight due to program size, complexity, and importance to DoD operations. DOT&E has approved an NBIS Evaluation

Strategy and an online test management process for NBIS.

» ### MAJOR CONTRACTORS

- Peraton, Inc. – Reston, Virginia (software development)
- Soliel, LLC – Vienna, Virginia (data migration)
- HII (formerly Huntington Ingalls Industries) – Newport News, Virginia (big data platform)
- Salient Systems – Austin, Texas (cyber support)
- Copper River Information Technology, LLC – Chantilly, Virginia (systems engineering)

TEST ADEQUACY

NBIS testing continues to focus on software validation and release, and developmental testing. Joint Interoperability Test Command has completed multiple rounds of cyber survivability tests and is planning operational assessments in FY24. DOT&E approved an NBIS Evaluation Strategy in December 2022, and approved an online test management process that makes extensive use of online planning software in lieu of written test documents for NBIS in July 2023 as a pilot effort with potential relevance to other Agile software developments. Two cybersecurity tests were conducted by the Joint Interoperability Test Command in March and June of 2023.

PERFORMANCE

» EFFECTIVENESS

The operational main mission areas of NBIS are developing at different rates: case initiation and adjudication capabilities are both relatively mature. Continuous vetting capabilities continue to mature, and background investigations capabilities are in early development. The cross-cutting mission areas are also in varying stages of maturity at this time.

» SUITABILITY

Suitability testing is ongoing, and assessments of training, helpdesk support, and issue tracking and resolution are not yet completed. DOT&E expects to complete a full assessment in FY24.

» SURVIVABILITY

Several rounds of cybersecurity testing have been conducted on NBIS and relevant connected legacy systems. One cyber test uncovered a vulnerability affecting not only NBIS but many other DoD programs which access cloud-based resources. To address this vulnerability, the Defense Information Systems Agency developed, successfully tested, and implemented a mitigation, which has been validated for NBIS. The system is currently considered survivable against a moderate threat.

RECOMMENDATION

DCSA and the NBIS Program Office should:

1. Continue the progress demonstrated to date, including development of their online test management process.