

ClearanceJobs Security and Suitability Clearance Glossary

— A —

Active Clearance – Security clearance status where the individual granted a clearance currently occupies a position for which the clearance is required.

Adjudicative Guidelines – Document containing the 13 criteria used by federal security clearance adjudicators to determine an applicant's eligibility for access to classified national security information.

ANACI – Access National Agency Check with Inquiries. Type of personnel security investigation required for initial-hire federal employees who need a Confidential or Secret clearance or a DoE "L" Access Authorization.

— B —

BI – Background Investigation. Type of personnel security investigation conducted for High-Risk Public Trust Positions. BI is also used as a generic term for any personnel security investigation.

— C —

CAF – Central Adjudication Facility. The office of a federal agency that adjudicates all security clearance for that agency. Within the Department of Defense there are 10 CAFs (Army, Navy, Air Force, DISCO, JCS, WHS, DIA, NSA, NGA and NRO).

Classified Information – The three levels of classified national security information are: Confidential, Secret and Top Secret. There are categories of classified information, such as SCI, SAP, and COMSEC, within these three levels requiring special safeguarding and access controls that exceed those normally required for information at the same classification level.

CNWDI – Critical Nuclear Weapons Design Information. A category of Department of Defense (DoD) Secret and Top Secret Restricted Data that reveals the theory of operation or design of the components of a thermonuclear or fission weapon or test device. Special access controls and briefings are required for CNWDI.

COMSEC – Communications Security. Protective measures taken to deny unauthorized persons information derived from telecommunications of the U.S. Government relating to national security and to ensure the authenticity of such communications. COMSEC is also a category of classified information that requires special safeguarding, access restrictions and briefings.

COSMIC Top Secret – Control Of Secret Material in an International Command. The term used for NATO Top Secret information and clearances.

CRYPTO – Cryptographic. A category of classified information at the Secret and Top Secret levels related to cryptographic logic, keys and authenticators that require special access controls and briefings.

Current Clearance – Commonly used term to describe the status of an individual's security clearance where the clearance has terminated but is eligible for reinstatement.

CUI – Controlled Unclassified Information. Unclassified information pertinent to the national interest of the United States or to the important interests of entities outside the Federal Government. Other unclassified information protected by law from unauthorized disclosure is also designated CUI. (See also FOUO and SBU.)

CVS – Clearance Verification System. Investigation and clearance database system operated by OPM and accessible to federal security personnel. CVS will eventually replace OPM's older SII database. CVS has linkage to DoD's JPAS database.

— D —

DCII – Defense Central Index of Investigations. Computer database that contains listings of criminal and security investigations conducted by DoD investigative agencies. The DCII is no longer being updated with new clearance

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data. Since July 2005, new clearance data are being entered into the Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS).

DISCO – Defense Industrial Security Clearance Office. Component of DSS that processes, adjudicates and grants security clearances for industrial (contractor) personnel under the National Industrial Security Program (NISP).

DOHA – Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals. Component of the Defense Legal Services Agency that issues decisions in security clearance cases for contractor personnel doing work for DoD components and 20 other Federal Agencies and Departments. It also conducts personal appearances for DoD civilian employee and military personnel security clearance appeals.

DSS – Defense Security Service. Formerly known as the Defense Investigative Service (DIS). DSS is responsible for administering the National Industrial Security Program (NISP) and providing security education and training to DoD and other federal personnel and contractors.

— E —

eQIP – Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing. Web-based versions of OPM Standard Forms 85, 85P, 85PS and 86 used for initiating federal personnel security investigations. The eQIP version of the SF86 replaced DoD's Electronic Personnel Security Questionnaire (EPSQ).

Expired Clearance – Commonly used term to describe the status of an individual's

security clearance where the clearance has terminated and is no longer eligible for reinstatement because time limits for reinstatement have been exceeded.

— F —

FOUO – For Official Use Only. Protective marking used to identify unclassified sensitive government information requiring special handling and access controls.

FRD – Formerly Restricted Data. Classified information which has been removed from the Restricted Data category after Department of Energy (DoE) and DoD have jointly determined that it relates primarily to the military utilization of atomic weapons and can be adequately safeguarded as national security information.

— H —

HSPD-12 – Homeland Security Presidential Directive Number 12. Mandates a standard for secure and reliable forms of identification for personnel requiring physical or logical access to federal facilities or computer systems. Sponsorship plus a favorably adjudicated NACI are needed to obtain a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card required by this directive.

— I —

Interim Security Clearance – Temporary security clearance based on the favorable completion of minimum investigative requirements, pending the completion of the full investigative requirements for the final clearance determination.

— J —

JPAS – Joint Personnel Adjudication System. Web-based system that connects security personnel with a database used to initiate and manage DoD personnel security investigations and clearances. It is managed by DoD Central Adjudication Facilities (CAFs) and is composed of two subsystems: Joint Adjudication Management System (JAMS) and Joint Clearance Access Verification System (JCAVS).

— L —

LAA – Limited Access Authorization. Permission granted by the Federal Government to non-U.S. citizens for access to classified national security information where the non-U.S. citizen possesses unique or unusual skill or expertise that is urgently needed to support a specific government project involving access to specified classified information and a cleared or clearable U.S. citizen is not readily available.

“L” Access Authorization – DoE clearance that authorizes access up to Secret Formerly Restricted Data and Secret National Security Information.

LBI – Limited Background Investigation. Type of personnel security investigation used for Moderate-Risk or High-Risk Public Trust positions.

LOD – Letter of Denial. Letter issued by a security clearance adjudication facility informing an applicant of a final decision to deny the applicant a security clearance and of the applicant's right to appeal the



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decision to the agency's Personnel Security Appeals Board.

LOI – Letter of Intent. Letter that accompanies a “Statement of Reasons” explaining why a tentative decision to deny a security clearance was made and offering the applicant an opportunity to rebut or mitigate the reasons.

Loss of Jurisdiction – Status of an individual's security clearance when employment for the required clearance terminates after a clearance action is initiated but before a final determination is made to grant, continue, deny or revoke the clearance.

— M —

MBI – Minimum Background Investigation. Type of personnel security investigation used for Moderate-Risk Public Trust positions.

— N —

NAC – National Agency Check. Basic component of all federal personnel security investigations. As a minimum all NACs include a check of FBI Headquarters records, an FBI technical fingerprint search, and a check of OPM and DoD investigative databases.

NACI – National Agency Check with Inquiries. Type of personnel security investigation used for determining federal employment suitability or for the issuance of a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card required by HSPD-12. An NACI plus credit check can be used as the basis for contractor Moderate-Risk Public Trust positions.

NACL – National Agency Check with Local Agency Checks and Credit Check. Type of personnel security investigation used for Confidential and Secret clearances or for DoE “L” access authorizations. This investigation is not authorized for initial-hire federal employees requiring a security clearance or a DoE “L” Access Authorization.

— O —

OHA – Office of Hearings and Appeals. Component of the Department of Energy (DoE) responsible for conducting hearings and issuing decisions involving personnel security clearance cases of DoE employees and contractors.

OPM/FISD – Office of Personnel Management/Federal Investigative Services Division. Principal supplier of personnel security investigations to the Federal Government.

— P —

Period of Coverage – Also known as the Period of Investigation. Standard period of time covered by a Personnel Security Investigation (PSI). Each type of PSI has an overall period of coverage and specific periods of coverage for individual components (i.e. employment, police records, and education) of a PSI.

Polygraph – Device that measures and records physiological responses while a subject answers a series of questions. It relies on the belief that false answers will produce distinctive measurements. Polygraph examinations are used as an adjunct to an SSBI for some Special Access Programs and can be either

Counterintelligence-Scope or Full-Scope (lifestyle and counterintelligence questions).

PPR – Phased Periodic Reinvestigation. Abbreviated form of the Single Scope Background Investigation - Periodic Reinvestigation (SSBI-PR). The PPR is an optional form of the SSBI-PR reserved for personnel with no unfavorable information listed in their clearance application.

PR – Periodic Reinvestigation. Reinvestigations required at specific intervals to maintain a security clearance or a designated public trust position.

PRSI – Personal Subject Interview. In depth interview of the subject of a personnel security investigation by a security investigator. The PRSI is a standard component of the SSBI, SSBI-PR, PPR, BI, MBI, LBI, and PT-SBI.

PSI – Personal Security Investigation. Term that encompasses all types of background investigations used to determine employment suitability and security clearance eligibility.

Public Trust Position – Designated federal employee and contractor positions that, due to the sensitive unclassified responsibilities of the positions, require suitability determinations based on personnel security investigations. Public Trust positions are designated as either Moderate-Risk or High-Risk. Public Trust position include positions designated ADP-I, ADP-II, ADP-III, IT-1, IT-2, IT-3, IT-5, IT-6, 5C and 6C.



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PT-SBI – Public Trust-Special Background Investigation. Type of personnel security investigation conducted for selected High-Risk Public Trust positions.

— Q —

“Q” Access Authorization – DoE clearance that authorizes access up to Top Secret Restricted Data and Top Secret National Security Information.

— R —

RD – Restricted Data. Classified information defined by the Atomic Energy Act as concerning: 1) design, manufacture, or utilization of atomic weapons; 2) production of special nuclear material; or 3) use of special nuclear material in the production of energy. RD is considered a special access program.

RRU – Request for Research/Recertify/Upgrade Eligibility. Direct notification to the appropriate CAF through JPAS of any personnel security clearance status changes a JPAS user cannot make within the system.

RSI – Reimbursable Suitability/Security Investigations. Specific investigative actions to gather information to resolve issues that surfaced during a standard OPM personnel security investigation.

— S —

SAP – Special Access Program. Program established for a specific category of classified information that imposes safeguarding and access requirements that exceed those normally required for information at the same classification

level (does not include COMSEC, CRYPTO, or CNWDI). SAPs are categorized as intelligence, acquisition and operations/support. They are also categorized as acknowledged, unacknowledged and waived.

SBU – Sensitive But Unclassified. Term that is being replaced by “Controlled Unclassified Information.” (See also CUI and FOUO).

Scattered Castles – Consolidated personnel security investigation and clearance database of U.S. Intelligence Community personnel. The database is operated and maintained by the Director of National Intelligence.

SCI – Sensitive Compartmented Information. Category of classified information with many separate subcategories or compartments that imposes safeguarding and access restrictions that exceed those normally required for information at the same classification level. SCI is a Special Access Program (SAP) involving intelligence sources, methods or analytical processes. SCI has three sensitivity levels – SSBI without polygraph, SSBI with CI-Scope polygraph and SSBI with Full-Scope polygraph.

Scope of Investigation – Standard components of an investigation, such as character references, employment records, credit report, police records checks, national agency checks and educational records. The term “scope” is often misused to describe an investigation’s “Period of Coverage.”

Security Clearance – Determination made by a government personnel security adjudicator that an individual’s access to classified information is clearly consistent with the interests of national security. Among adjudicators the term “Security Clearance” is being replaced by the term “Eligibility for Access.”

SF85 – Standard Form 85. Questionnaire for Non-Sensitive Positions. Form used as the basis for a NACI to determine an individual’s suitability for federal employment in non-sensitive positions or to hold certain non-sensitive federal contractor positions.

SF85P – Standard Form 85P. Questionnaire for Public Trust Positions. Form used as the basis for an investigation to determine an individual’s suitability to hold a Public Trust position.

SF85P-S – Standard Form 85P-S. Supplemental Questionnaire for Selected Positions. Form used in addition to the SF85P as the basis for an investigation to determine an individual’s suitability to hold selected High-Risk Public Trust positions.

SF86 – Standard Form 86. Questionnaire for National Security Positions. Form used as the basis for an investigation to determine an individual’s eligibility for a security clearance or for continuation of an existing security clearance.

SII – Security/Suitability Investigations Index. OPM’s computer database of investigations accessible to federal security personnel.



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SOR – Statement of Reason. Document from a security clearance adjudication facility advising an applicant of the specific reason(s) why the adjudication facility intends to deny or revoke a security clearance. The SOR also advises the applicant of his/her right to submit a written rebuttal and/or mitigating information regarding the allegations and in the case of contractors, the additional right to a hearing before an administrative judge.

SPIN – Special Interview. Subject interview to address specific unresolved issues developed during a standard OPM personnel security investigation.

SSBI – Single Scope Background Investigation. Type of personnel security investigation used for Top Secret clearances, DoE “Q” access authorizations, Sensitive Compartmented Information (SCI) and other designated Special Access Programs (SAP).

Compiled by William H. Henderson, author of Security Clearance Manual



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