

AN UPDATE ON DOD'S STRUGGLING BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
GOVERNMENT REFORM

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

—————
FEBRUARY 24, 2026
—————

Serial No. 119-58
—————

Printed for the use of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform



Available on: [govinfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov), [oversight.house.gov](https://www.oversight.house.gov) or [docs.house.gov](https://www.docs.house.gov)

—————
U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

62-790 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2026

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

JAMES COMER, Kentucky, *Chairman*

JIM JORDAN, Ohio	ROBERT GARCIA, California, <i>Ranking Minority Member</i>
MIKE TURNER, Ohio	ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, District of Columbia
PAUL GOSAR, Arizona	STEPHEN F. LYNCH, Massachusetts
VIRGINIA FOXX, North Carolina	RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY, Illinois
GLENN GROTHMAN, Wisconsin	RO KHANNA, California
MICHAEL CLOUD, Texas	KWEISI MFUME, Maryland
GARY PALMER, Alabama	SHONTEL BROWN, Ohio
CLAY HIGGINS, Louisiana	MELANIE STANSBURY, New Mexico
PETE SESSIONS, Texas	MAXWELL FROST, Florida
ANDY BIGGS, Arizona	SUMMER LEE, Pennsylvania
NANCY MACE, South Carolina	GREG CASAR, Texas
PAT FALLON, Texas	JASMINE CROCKETT, Texas
BYRON DONALDS, Florida	EMILY RANDALL, Washington
SCOTT PERRY, Pennsylvania	SUHAS SUBRAMANYAM, Virginia
WILLIAM TIMMONS, South Carolina	YASSAMIN ANSARI, Arizona
TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee	WESLEY BELL, Missouri
LAUREN BOEBERT, Colorado	LATEEFAH SIMON, California
ANNA PAULINA LUNA, Florida	DAVE MIN, California
NICK LANGWORTHY, New York	AYANNA PRESSLEY, Massachusetts
ERIC BURLISON, Missouri	RASHIDA TLAIB, Michigan
ELI CRANE, Arizona	JAMES R. WALKINSHAW, Virginia
BRIAN JACK, Georgia	
JOHN MCGUIRE, Virginia	
BRANDON GILL, Texas	
<i>Vacancy</i>	

MARK MARIN, Staff Director
JAMES RUST, Deputy Staff Director
RYAN GIACHETTI, Chief Counsel
LISA PIRANEO, Senior Professional Staff Member
JENN KAMARA, Director of Strategic Initiatives
SAM MEUNIER, Professional Staff Member
BILL WOMACK, Senior Advisor
MALLORY COGAR, Director of Operations and Chief Clerk
CONTACT NUMBER: 202-225-5074

ROBERT EDMONSON, Minority Staff Director
CONTACT NUMBER: 202-225-5051

SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

PETE SESSIONS, Texas, *Chairman*

VIRGINIA FOXX, North Carolina	KWEISI MFUME, Maryland, <i>Ranking Member</i>
GARY PALMER, Alabama	ELEANOR HOLMES, Norton District of Columbia
TIM BURCHETT, Tennessee	MAXWELL FROST, Florida
BRIAN JACK, Georgia	EMILY RANDALL, Washington
BRANDON GILL, Texas	

C O N T E N T S

OPENING STATEMENTS

	Page
Hon. Pete Sessions, U.S. Representative, Chairman	1
Hon. Kweisi Mfume, U.S. Representative, Ranking Member	3

WITNESSES

The Honorable Justin Overbaugh, Deputy Under Secretary of War for Intelligence and Security, Acting Director, Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, U.S. Department of War Oral Statement	7
Ms. Alissa Czyz, Director, Defense Capabilities and Management, U.S. Government Accountability Office Oral Statement	9

Written opening statements and bios are available on the U.S. House of Representatives Document Repository at: docs.house.gov.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

* Questions for the Record: Ms. Alissa Czyz; submitted by Chairman Pete Sessions and Rep. Kweisi Mfume.

* Questions for the Record: Hon. Justin P. Overbaugh; submitted by Chairman Pete Sessions and Rep. Kweisi Mfume.

These documents were submitted after the hearing, and may be available upon request.

AN UPDATE ON DOD'S STRUGGLING BACKGROUND CHECK SYSTEM

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:02 a.m., in room 2247, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Pete Sessions [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Sessions, Foxx, Palmer, Burchett, and Mfume.

Also present: Representative Walkinshaw.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETE SESSIONS REPRESENTATIVE FROM TEXAS

Mr. SESSIONS. Good morning. The Subcommittee on Government Operations will come to order, and I would like to welcome everybody to this important hearing.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time. And I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

We welcome today's hearing on the modernization of the Federal Government's background investigations and security clearance process, in particular, the Department of Defense's National Background Investigative Services system, also known as NBIS. If the topic of today's discussion sounds familiar, it should. As a matter of fact, we are getting to know each other rather well in this room.

This Subcommittee first examined issues related to this back in June 2024 when Congress raised serious concerns about persistent failures in personnel vetting. Unfortunately, the need for continued oversight has only grown more urgent. And I must say that it is a welcome—seemingly welcome thing for the Administration, GAO to want to tackle this issue. But it also leads us to today's hearing.

Unfortunately, the need for this continued oversight has grown more urgent, and as I said, both—all three sides are willing to come together for this discussion. I want to thank the gentleman, Mr. Mfume, for his insistence that we continue down this pathway.

During our initial hearing, we heard from the gentlewoman, Ms. Czyz, the same GAO witness that we will hear from today. GAO has been tracking problems with our Nation's Federal personnel vetting process since as far back as 2005. We also heard from then

Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) Director David Cattler who, in this same hearing room, was brand new to the job, at the same time to speak about the program's significant management and oversight shortcomings, poor scheduling, poor cost planning, and dozens of cybersecurity risks, which many of them have become true.

At the time, our witnesses offered recommendations and commitments to correct action. Today, our focus remains squarely on NBIS and whether the program is on track to support the Administration's stated goals of accelerating background investigations and security clearances.

Specifically, we want to know whether this system is progressing as discussed, what additional steps may be necessary to deliver a modern, reliable personnel vetting platform that is long overdue that exists in law.

NBIS was envisioned as a one-stop shop for all faces of Federal personnel vetting by providing modern tools for investigators. Once again, not a mission being met.

It has become especially critical after the 2015 Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data breach in which the personnel data and sensitive information of over 21 million current, former, and prospective Federal employees and their families were exposed. Yet today, NBIS has deployed only limited capacities and capabilities, and the program is now more than eight years behind schedule, with completion delayed from 2019 to 2028. This has cost the American taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars and has wasted valuable government resources.

I will note, before I turn the page, it would be simple to blame the people who are here today, and I do not intend to do that. I intend to work with the people who are here and to move forward. But we are going to take seriously what is done today with the need to correct that action.

In addition, it has called into question the safety and reliability of all aspects of the Federal personnel vetting system. It has also showed the broader governmentwide initiative to reform personnel vetting policies and processes known as, in the law, Trusted Workforce 2.0, zero. The Federal workforce and the government's industrial partners deserve better. That was why we have held so many hearings, and that is why the law was made. Without these vetting reforms in place or the promised information technology like NBIS that serve as their backbone, security clearance providers and recipients lack advanced tools and the assurance that their personnel information is guarded and safe.

Agencies and contractors are left struggling with the same persistent challenges: slow and delayed onboarding, delaying their access to facilities, and inefficiencies that undermine mission readiness that people, like Mr. Mfume and the Administration, need to make sure that they have the assured people in place.

As was clear from our last hearing, concerns about NBIS are shared by Members of Congress on both aisles. This is not a partisan issue. This is a national security issue. We must continue to work together to ensure the security, efficiency, and accountability of these personnel vetting systems and processes, which play an in-

creasingly vital role in safeguarding our national interests comes to fruition.

I am hopeful that our witnesses who have taken place—who have provided this Subcommittee with data and information over the last few weeks recognize that the progress that has been made over the last 18 months must continue. Last September, after Director Cattler's retirement from DCSA, Ranking Member Mfume wrote the DOD to express our concerns about this leadership—strike that—Department of War, DOW. We encourage swift action to put a new director in place, especially given the ongoing problems that NBIS has and the need to effectively place leadership in that role. We will probably hear today some of the followup to that. But it comes with a lot of uncertainty and a lot of frailties attached to it. We are still going to have the hearing, and while I have no doubt that this Administration will find another leader with necessary commitment, passion, and qualifications to guide this full and successful implementation, I remain deeply concerned.

Now, over seven months since Mr. Cattler announced his retirement, DCSA remains without a permanent director, and part of the discussion today will be to put on record that needed desire for this Administration to accomplish this. I am confident that my friend and colleague, Mr. Mfume, not only shares my concern but I want to thank him for his professionalism in addressing these issues.

Today, I look forward to hearing more about the progress, bringing a new director on, as well as status of the National Background Investigation Service program because this hearing will further develop because GAO is here. Lots of other ideas that they have got, that are challenges that must be met. I look forward to hearing how we continue to use this relationship that we share with the Administration, GAO.

And I would now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Mfume, for his opening statement. The gentleman is recognized.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER KWEISI MFUME
REPRESENTATIVE FROM MARYLAND**

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Chairman Sessions.

And good morning to all of our witnesses.

I want to thank you, Mr. Sessions, for your partnership on this issue and a lot of other issues that have come before this Committee that really require a bipartisan approach. You have been very clear in that regard, and it has been clear, I think, also, to the full Committee and to others who have watched us over the last couple of years.

Again, my thanks to the witnesses. When it comes to national security, I think we all can agree that partisanship stops at the water's edge. At least that is what I was taught long ago. And it is important to underscore that because our goal is straightforward: deliver a background check system that keeps United States of America safe, that also gets qualified people to work without delay, and continuously verifies that they deserve and have earned our trust.

America, in my opinion, cannot hope to maintain our technological advantage in the national security space if we make the best engineers, scientists, linguists, analysts, and others spend

months if not years, sometimes, in limbo before they can serve. And if we cannot clear people, we cannot complete our missions. It is very, very simple.

The National Background Investigation Services, or NBIS program, was launched, as we all know, to replace the outdated, cumbersome legacy systems and to reduce backlogs and to harden cybersecurity. However, successful implementation is still far from a reality, and the current plan is for technical capabilities in Fiscal Year 2027, full implementation in 2028, and continued rigorous oversight, if necessary, to get us across the finish line.

Now, since 2017, the government has spent about \$2.4 billion on NBIS and legacy sustainment to keep outdated systems up and running. That is an awful lot of money. \$2.4 billion. And the Department projects that about another \$2.2 billion is needed to finish the job. So, we are far off the mark of where we had hoped to be. It is an enormous amount of money for the government to spend on anything and have so very, very little to show for it.

I understand that this project reached a state of disarray and that after eight years of implementation, it had to return to a planning phase to restructure the entire acquisition strategy. This has left contractors in my district, and districts all across the country, stuck with unclear instructions and increased costs as they juggle various systems.

In a region where roughly nine percent of jobs require a security clearance, this really is not a small problem. It is a huge, huge problem. It is a direct hit to workers and employers in my city of Baltimore, and cities and towns and hamlets all over this country, east to west. They depend on a functioning clearance system to be able to do their jobs. And so, the consequences do not stop with my district or the Chairman's district. This is chaos. And in many respects, it has also come with system outages that have stopped work on ground operations and have caused things to come to a halt all over the globe.

These are more than just teachable moments, I hope. And these issues have real mission impacts. So, here are a few points I would like to hone in on and make sure are on the record today.

First, we need an ongoing sense of vigilance on this project, otherwise we will be right here a year from now treading water. The DCSA team has provided quarterly plans and gives a quarterly report to the industry. We need that in an ongoing fashion. But I pledge that we here in Congress are not going to get bored or look the other way, and we will not settle for surface-level check-the-box compliance exercises. And I think many of you who have followed the work of this Committee know that that is the case. We are going to be and continue to be very dogged about trying to bring about change here, and we will make sure that the goals of NBIS implementation are quantifiable and that they are very, very clear. We will be monitoring progress toward each milestone, and we will do that quarter by quarter.

Second, we must ensure that transparent costs on taxpayers are just that, transparent. And so, taxpayers can trust NBIS and trust also that the costs that they are paying, since it is more than double than what was previously expected, will be looked at and looked over.

I think all of us here agree, whether you are on this panel or in the audience, that we owe it to the American people to hold the Department accountable for overruns and prevent such gross mismanagement moving forward both for the remaining steps of NBIS implementation and for future projects.

Finally, I expect that real results from real people will be coming soon. We need to know that we are seeing measurable work and progress in bringing down the backlogs. We cannot just trust that things are getting better, and we will not let up until we get GAO's seal of approval and can see for ourselves that the prospective employees are on the jobs as fast as possible.

I am going to repeat what the Chairman just said, and that is that the last DCSA director, David Cattler, announced his retirement, as you heard, from his role in July of last year. I cannot help but to wonder how we are still sitting here seven months later and we still do not have even a nominee for DCSA.

Today, we have a Director of Defense, Intelligence and Security Agency before us overseeing DCSA. That is just one of the many duties, Mr. Overbaugh, that you have. We appreciate your work. And we expect that you will keep NBIS on track as acting director. But it seems like that is a full-time job, to me, and so I ask for the following clear, on-the-record commitments from the Department.

One, name a permanent DCSA director and the plan for getting a qualified candidate into the position as soon as possible.

Two, a full cost profile that ties dollars spent on NBIS to the effectiveness of personnel security reform.

And, three, a commitment to ongoing quarterly briefings about NBIS' progress toward its stated milestones. And if any of those milestones slip, I would expect, and I am sure the Chairman would also, that the Department will notify this Subcommittee in writing within five business days regarding the cause, the impact, and what the recovery plan is.

People in this country expect stewardship of their money, and they expect trust and trustworthy persons in and around government to carry that out. And they expect the Department and a trusted workforce onboarded without delay will become a reality very, very soon. They expect transparency when things go right and when they go wrong. That is the spirit of this hearing. There will also be transparency in measuring the progress or the lack thereof.

So, if we do our jobs here, all of us, those of us who have sworn an oath and have the privilege of representing congressional districts and those of you who are working for the Agency or other agencies, we will turn plans into demonstrable results and turn intent into real and lasting impact. That is the spirit of this hearing today.

I want to thank, again, Chairman Sessions for being as dogged as he is in making sure that as a team, we work together to bring about real and lasting change, otherwise we have really just failed our jobs and failed our mission.

And, Mr. Chairman, I would yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much. I appreciate the gentleman's comments. I know that the people who are witnesses today

and have been a part of this for quite some time, do recognize that you and I are attempting, along with this Subcommittee on a bipartisan basis, to move a decisionmaking and authority. And I concur completely with your comments that this hearing today will be the beginning of that, that will increasingly—upbeat tempo will be required on both sides.

Without objection, I would allow and have Congressman Walkinshaw of Virginia, a very kind gentleman, who has asked to be waived onto the Subcommittee for the purpose of questioning the witnesses at today's Subcommittee hearing, we welcome him to this Subcommittee hearing.

I also, just to be nice and fair, because she is my dear friend from the last couple hundred years, we welcome the distinguished Chairman [sic] of the Rules Committee, also a member of this Subcommittee, my dear friend, Virginia Foxx. Virginia, welcome today. I am delighted that you are here.

Ms. FOXX. I am trying to be inconspicuous.

Mr. SESSIONS. Oh. Well, you did not make that, Virginia.

For those of you who know, I have told Virginia for the last 20 years or so, every day, "I love you, Virginia." And Virginia, I love you, and thank you.

Ms. FOXX. I love you too.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes.

I am pleased to welcome our witnesses for today. Mr. Justin Overbaugh is currently serving as both the Acting Director of the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, as well as the Deputy Under Secretary for Defense for Intelligence and Security. In this important role as Acting DCSA Director, he is responsible for leading efforts to protect Americans' trusted workforce, trusted workspaces, and classified information. And he has a daytime job and a nighttime job, obviously, because this, as Mr. Mfume noted, is a heavy lift, and we appreciate him, his professionalism, in taking time to be with us today.

Then we also welcome Alissa Czyz who serves as the Director in the Defense Capabilities and Management Team at GAO. In her role at the Government Accounting Office [sic], she oversees reviews on the personnel security clearance process, artificial intelligence, intelligence infrastructure, and DOW's approach to business transmissions, among other topics. And we have found her testimony, professionalism, and reliability to not only want to work with this Subcommittee but in a professional attribute that is related to her agency. And we welcome her. So, thank you very much. I look forward to—if I could have both of you stand and raise your right hand for the purpose of administering the oath to the witnesses.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses that stand before us raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of ayes.]

Let the record reflect that both the witnesses answered in the affirmative. Thank you very much. And you may take your seat.

We are now going to move to recognizing the witnesses. And we appreciate you being here. You are not new to this. You know that we have got a yellow light—a green light, yellow light, red light. I would ask, as I always do, for the gentleman to understand that we would like for our witnesses to give us the information that is necessary. And I am not going to stick to necessarily a 5-minute rule if either side goes over. But we are here today to get to the bottom of this, because I think that this will be a hearing that whoever you hire will want to know how serious this is and will want to know that it has been vetted not only by GAO, but the importance to each of these Members that are here. And so, we are not going to cut you off. We want you to give full testimony, full hearing, full articulation on the matter. And I am delighted that you are here. The gentleman, Mr. Overbaugh, is now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF HONORABLE JUSTIN OVERBAUGH
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF WAR
FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY
ACTING DIRECTOR, DEFENSE COUNTERINTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF WAR**

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Good morning, Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. It is an honor and a privilege to represent the over 13,000 civilians, service members, contractors of the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency.

I was appointed Acting Director of DCSA on November 19, 2025, with a clear mandate from the Under Secretary of War for Intelligence and Security, Hon. Bradley Hansell, to ensure DCSA finally delivers the critical security capabilities our Nation requires. I understand this Committee has received testimony from previous leaders suggesting the Agency was largely on track. Respectfully, that assessment was too optimistic. The truth is, DCSA has been an agency in the midst of an identity crisis. After it was cobbled together from disparate programs, DCSA never truly self-actualized or forged a unified culture. I contend that this foundational issue has directly contributed to the significant challenges in delivering both Trusted Workforce 2.0, and the National Background Investigation Services program on time and on budget.

It is my assessment that previous Agency leadership, in an effort to establish a brand, focused more on marketing than on delivering value and allowing that value to speak for itself. The Agency's original purpose became blurred, drifting toward an intelligence-focused entity rather than embracing its vital security mission.

Instead of focusing on executing its most important functions with excellence, the Agency attempted to accumulate more missions to the point that it failed to achieve its core purpose. Altogether, the lack of a viable vision, clear expectations, and leadership accountability from past Department oversight allowed DCSA to fail.

Under Secretary Hansell dismissed DCSA leadership because the transformation required here cannot be incremental. It must be complete and total. He had little confidence that the leadership he inherited would have been successful in leading the change from a

sclerotic, compliance-based bureaucracy to a customer-centric, business-oriented entity the Department of War and the Nation need DCSA to be.

While the Under Secretary continues to search to select a new director with the optimal mix of private sector technology and government experience, he directed me and the interim DCSA leadership team to steer toward a business model that mirrors Secretary Hegseth's approach of eliminating bureaucratic processes in favor of speed and innovation. In my short time as Acting Director, I have found what I expected: a dedicated, talented, and innovative workforce unfortunately shackled by burdensome processes designed not to empower them, but to maintain the status quo and sustain layers of management. Our focus now is on unleashing their potential.

To that end, we are designing the Agency for purpose, moving it from a cumbersome bureaucracy to an agile organization that can serve as a model for the rest of government. At DCSA, we will build a workforce of the future founded on a culture of meritocracy, efficiency, creativity, empowerment, and accountability that enables timely, risk-informed decisions.

DCSA's struggles to deliver NBIS and implement Trusted Workforce 2.0 are but symptoms of the deeper cultural problems I have outlined. These two efforts are not merely programs. They are the backbone of our national security personnel vetting enterprise. Their delivery is nonnegotiable.

While the Government Accountability Office rightly noted recent progress on the NBIS program's cost and schedule estimates, we must be honest that this progress is fragile. Without the cultural and structural reforms we are now implementing, technical gains alone will not secure success. Absent this transformation and a refocus on its core mission, DCSA would surely continue to fail to meet its targets for NBIS development and deployment. We look forward to partnering with GAO to give us an objective look at the Agency as we continue to make reforms.

Under Secretary Hansell and I share as a top priority the delivery and development of NBIS by Fiscal Year 2028. He and I are aided in this task by the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment, Hon. Mike Duffey, who has designated NBIS as an acquisition category 1 special interest program, subjecting it to the highest level of scrutiny.

At DCSA, we are overhauling our governance, acquisition strategy, and partnership with industry to ensure every decision serves the core mission. Through the Trusted Workforce Implementation group, we work to validate the policy requirements and make sure that they are matured through the executive agents and are translated into real-world capabilities delivered by NBIS.

These goals are to get people to work faster, eliminate waste, optimize risk management, and improve the experience for our government customers.

While the full transition to Trusted Workforce 2.0 and NBIS will be complete by Fiscal Year 2028, we are accelerating the development of key capabilities now, including adjudicative improvements for public trust cases, expanded use of interim secret clearances, and broader application of vetting services features.

Even with the renewed vision, this will not be easy. NBIS is a massive undertaking intended to replace deeply entrenched legacy systems across the Federal Government. Getting this right is as important as getting it done quickly. DCSA now has the appropriate oversight, a clear mandate for change, and a leadership team committed to transparency within the Department, with partners in the interagency, industry, and other stakeholders, and with you here in Congress.

The exceptional team at DCSA is the driving force that will make this transformation possible. My commitment to you is that I will continue to foster a culture of innovation and accountability that empowers them and that I will maintain oversight in my role as Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence and Security.

We appreciate Congress' engagement on this critical issue, and look forward to demonstrating, through our actions and results, that DCSA is on a new and better path. Thank you, and I look forward to addressing your questions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

The gentlewoman is now recognized.

**STATEMENT OF MS. ALISSA CZYZ
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND MANAGEMENT
U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Ms. CZYZ. Chairman Sessions, Ranking Member Mfume, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify again on GAO's work on personnel vetting, and specifically the National Background Investigation Services system, or NBIS for short.

As you know, the U.S. Government relies on over four million personnel with security clearances to protect our Nation. Personnel vetting helps ensure a trusted workforce, but the government has struggled with managing this process for years. This issue has been on GAO's high-risk list since 2018, due in part to challenges with IT systems. Reform is urgently needed. The Federal Government is taking too long to grant security clearances to essential personnel. For example, it takes over 200 days to grant a top-secret clearance. This is 80 percent longer than the government's goal.

As you know, after a massive cybersecurity breach of OPM's systems in 2015, the President tasked DOD with building a new IT system to manage personnel vetting. The Department began developing NBIS in 2016. My statement today focuses on the Department's progress with NBIS and what actions are still needed to ensure its success and achieve personnel vetting reform.

First, the good news: DCSA has made progress addressing our recommendations. It now has a reliable cost estimate for NBIS for the first time ever. A reliable estimate should help the program better manage expenses, avoid unexpected increases, and promote transparency. However, the government is years late in delivering NBIS. This failure happened in part because DCSA had not developed a reliable schedule for the system as we first recommended several years ago. DOD had originally planned for NBIS to be fully functional in 2019 and has changed its deadline several times since then. In 2024, DCSA paused NBIS development while it drafted a recovery plan. Just last summer, the Department began develop-

ment again. DCSA now projects it will finish NBIS development in 2027, or Fiscal Year 2028, according to DCSA's statement. This is nearly a decade after its original goal.

The latest NBIS schedule shows some improvements in key areas, but overall, we find that it is still not reliable, putting NBIS at risk of further delays.

Notably, DCSA has not done a risk analysis and thus cannot determine where slippage is most likely to occur. Without implementing this best practice, it cannot effectively target actions to milestones that are at the most risk. We are making new recommendations in our written statement today for DCSA to address these and other deficiencies.

Having a reliable schedule is a basic program management principle. We agree with Mr. Overbaugh, DCSA needs to get this right given the program's history of missed milestones.

Further, while DCSA has a reliable cost estimate for NBIS now, delays have caused the price tag to balloon. The Department has already spent at least \$2.4 billion developing new NBIS systems and maintaining OPM's legacy systems. It now projects spending an additional \$2.2 billion to finish NBIS, bringing the total cost to the taxpayer to about \$4.6 billion. This is a 100 percent increase over DCSA's previous projections.

Finally, strong and sustained leadership is critically important, especially with high-risk government programs like this one. When I last testified, NBIS had been failing. Since then, DCSA has taken some important actions to try to get things on track, but shortcomings still persist. This, at a time when DCSA does not have a permanent director, and the time it takes to get a security clearance continues to far exceed goals.

Strong leadership and oversight, like the important work this Subcommittee is doing, are essential for the program to continue to make improvements and ultimately deliver what it has promised. Simply put, personnel vetting reform has the potential to better protect our country. But the IT must be in place for this to happen.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much. Detailed information about what needs to be accomplished, I think, is very clear from your constant reports, and I appreciate that.

We now move to our Members, and I will move to the distinguished gentlewoman from North Carolina, the gentlewoman, the Chairwoman of the Rules Committee, Ms. Foxx.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

No one put in my notes that I should be very concerned about this, but I am, along with all of you. What our witnesses have said today is very, very troubling. But let me say, last fall, the Subcommittee was supposed to hear from DCSA Director Cattler shortly before he left Federal service. While I appreciate Mr. Overbaugh's attendance here today as Acting Director, I am disappointed there is still no permanent replacement for Director Cattler. As Ms. Czyn just said, steady leadership is important for continuity and accountability. The National Background Investiga-

tion Service needs to become operational. Having a permanent director at NCSA would send a strong message that DOD is serious about the issue.

Can you elaborate, Mr. Overbaugh, on how delays in the implementation of NBIS impacts other Federal agencies that rely on timely clearances?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Representative Foxx, I can. It is very clear to me that the entire Federal Government and all the agencies and partners that rely on DCSA to deliver Trusted Workforce 2.0 are impacted when employees cannot get to work in a timely and efficient manner.

Ms. FOXX. Well, as a followup, based on DCSA's recent review of NBIS implementation, what actions are you and others taking to get it back on track? We have just heard it is going to cost an additional \$2.2 billion, and be delayed to 2027, 2028. What in the world are you all doing?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. That is the exact question that I asked, Representative Foxx, when I took over the Agency in November. I can tell you that our teammates at DCSA have done a fantastic job on establishing the technology required with NBIS to ensure that we can get to Trusted Workforce 2.0. What the Agency had failed to do, however, in the past, was match emerging requirements, the business or the mission side, if you will, with that technology. As a result of that identified failure, the Trusted Workforce Integration Group was stood up. That brought together our technology specialists along with our operations and mission side.

Together, they produced, over the last couple months, a key set of milestones that we can use to judge DCSA's performance on delivering Trusted Workforce 2.0 moving forward. And those milestones are laid out in the PAC principle, the Performance Accountability Council's Fiscal Year 2026 implementation strategy.

Now, this is a great step forward, and it gives us something that we can sink our teeth into to hold ourselves accountable for progress. It is not complete. We need to do more here. We need to use these milestones to break down—almost a complete work breakdown structure so we are then able to identify the things that our GAO partners have told us are critically important; namely, critical paths and the identification of risks.

That is forthcoming. We are looking forward to producing that document in March, April timeframe, and would certainly look forward in future interactions with this body to share the work that we have done there.

Ms. FOXX. And the Chairman mentioned the issue of transparency and the need for that. Are you committing that the reports and the progress are all going to be transparent?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Without question.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you.

Ms. CYZ, in the Committee's 2024 hearing, you raised concerns about cybersecurity privacy protections. Has DCSA taken concrete steps to mitigate those risks, and have you seen evidence these steps are effective?

Ms. CYZ. Yes. DCSA has taken swift action to address our recommendations. At the time of our last hearing, we put out a report with 13 recommendations, mostly focused on the management of

cybersecurity, making sure that there is current guidance and effective oversight. The previous DCSA Director, Director Cattler, made it a priority to implement all of those recommendations within one year, which is very fast for a GAO report to have all recommendations closed in one year, so we think that that is a very positive efforts.

DCSA does need to remain very, very vigilant on this. This is the whole reason that the Department has a responsibility for personnel vetting because of that cybersecurity breach in 2015 that compromised, as the Chairman mentioned, data on over 22 million Federal employees and contractors. We do have work that is not available in the public setting to discuss, looking more specifically at NBIS and testing of cybersecurity controls and issued a recent report in December on that, which we have discussed with DCSA. But we are confident that they are taking it seriously, yes.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much. And thank you, Mr. Chairman, for recognizing me. I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time. Thank you very much. The gentleman, Mr. Mfume, is recognized.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to yield to the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Walkinshaw, who has waived onto the Committee, and I will pick up with my questions at some other point in the hearing. Mr. Walkinshaw.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Thank you. I thank the Ranking Member and Mr. Chairman, thank you for having me today, and to our witnesses for being here.

Mr. Overbaugh, as you laid out in your testimony, you have many responsibilities in your role as Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence and Security. I know that in your role you serve as Acting Director of DCSA, as we are discussing today. You oversee Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the National Security Agency (NSA). You serve as an advisor to the Under Secretary of Defense on intelligence-related matters. And given all of that, I guess my question for you is why should the Committee and the American people have confidence that you can manage this multibillion-dollar critical modernization while performing your many other duties, including safeguarding our Nation's secrets from adversaries, ensuring proper vetting of individuals with access to classified information, and, as I noted, acting as an advisor to the Under Secretary?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Representative Walkinshaw, I appreciate that question very much. And the short answer is, I am surrounded by a fantastic group of teammates who are assisting me in this endeavor. I have down at DCSA as Acting Deputy Director, Ms. Tara Jones, who also comes from our office at the Under Secretary of War for Intelligence and Security. In addition, we have Acting Chief of Staff Colonel Brooke Carr. Our team down there—and they are down there on a permanent basis to assist me in leading that organization. And I have fantastic teammates as well up in my office in the Pentagon.

And so, while I understand from an external perspective it looks like we are stretched thin, and in all honesty, there are times when it feels like it. But I will tell you that the passion that we have

as a group of teammates to get this task right, energizes all of us and the entire team. And, quite honestly, it is an honor and a blessing to be able to do this.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Thank you.

In a recent January 22, 2026, briefing with Committee staff here, I think it is accurate that you said you intended to eliminate what you have called inefficiencies within DCSA and suggested—and you can correct me if this is wrong—that you felt there is a need to eliminate positions at the Agency. So, are you planning to reduce the workforce at DCSA? And if so, how will you ensure that those cuts to the workforce do not further derail this critical modernization?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I think DCSA faces a challenge, Representative, that the entire government faces and, quite frankly, our society writ large faces. And that is the impact that technology is having and is going to have on the way that we work moving forward.

DCSA faces this dynamic quite acutely with our responsibility to implement NBIS and Trusted Workforce 2.0. I cannot say at this time exactly what the workforce of the future at DCSA looks like exactly, but I know that we have an obligation to empower our teammates to ensure that they can be as effective as humanly possible in the future of work.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. So, you do not have any immediate plans to reduce the workforce short-or medium-term?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Quite the contrary, Representative Walkinshaw. We are constantly looking at the DCSA organization and determining where we can find efficiencies. I have no implementable plans at this time, but it is something that we will be looking at moving forward.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Okay. One of the things I understand this Committee has asked for previously is an organizational chart for your staffing and any proposed changes. Is that something you can commit to providing to us?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I would absolutely be happy to provide that to you once we have a clear understanding of the direction that we think we need to go in.

Mr. WALKINSHAW. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Overbaugh, DCSA's job, as you know, is to vet cleared personnel and ultimately ensure the protection of classified U.S. Government information. It is a cornerstone of our national security. I appreciate the passion that you have for the work and that your teammates have. I think I share the concerns on the dais here that the mandate is far too large and critical to function indefinitely under an acting director no matter how passionate. We need a director focused on its counterintelligence mission who has the skills and the bandwidth. I do not question that you have the skills. I question whether you have the bandwidth to keep this project moving forward. I hope you can commit to providing this Committee with a hiring plan and criteria for a new director promptly.

Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much. I have been approached by several Members who plan to be in attendance today. I would move next to the gentleman, Mr. Mfume, for any time he would choose.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me just be deliberately redundant for a quick second. NBIS, and the NBIS project, is, as you have heard repeatedly today, ten years behind schedule and already billions and billions over budget. So, I would like to know—and by the way, this keeps me up at night because America's secrets are at risk the longer we do not do what we ought to do here. And the Russians and the Chinese who can tune into *C-SPAN* whenever they want to, to be assured that we are behind, will look at what we are doing and, year after year after year, get emboldened because we are so transparent about why and when we expect to have this completed.

So, Mr. Overbaugh, when you look, as you have been doing since November when you came on board, at cost overruns, which ones are the most apparent to you?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Representative—or, excuse me—Ranking Member Mfume, to me, the most alerting is the overall amount of money that we have spent so far writ large, the \$2.4 billion, and not delivering the capabilities that we promised over time to the American people.

It is—there are many details within that. The failure to, as I mentioned earlier, to match up the operations and business side with the technical side, there are redundancies and inefficiencies in there. But I think that that number overall, the \$2.4 billion—correction—billion, is inexcusable and one of the things that drives me and the team on a daily basis to fix the things in the past that we have not done well so that we can deliver for the American people.

Mr. MFUME. Do you think your predecessor felt the same way? Was he driven the same way?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I will not speak to the intent or what was going on inside the minds or hearts of any of my predecessors. I know that the organization today sits ready, and they are excited about delivering for the American people.

Mr. MFUME. Well, and I understand and I appreciate it, but you have to realize what it is like to sit here year after year after year after year and be told the same thing, that it is getting better, the organization understands, we have got the right path, we are going to be transparent. And in that process, contractor after contractor is billing the U.S. Government for services that I assume are never fully completed within that caveat saying we could not do this, we will not do this, or we need more money for that. That is very, very disturbing, and it is not your fault. I am just giving you the history of how we got to this point and why it is so very disturbing to us.

You have heard the term, “fat rats.” Well, a lot of them are making out with a lot of money and not providing the kind of service that they are being contracted for and paid for. And Ms. Cxyz, if I could just ask you the same question. What are some identifiable cost overruns that repeatedly, year after year, GAO looks at, identifies, and points out?

Ms. CXYZ. Yes. In fact, our previous analysis showed that DCSA did not have a reliable cost estimate for NBIS. It was not accurate. It was not comprehensive. It was not credible and it was not well-documented. So, we cannot tell you where the problems were. It was across the entire estimate. It could not be relied upon for planning.

Now they have taken important steps including conducting an independent cost estimate to get a better handle on cost, so we are at a better place now. That estimate needs to be updated annually. And so, I advise the Subcommittee to stay on top of DCSA, as we will, to make sure that that is updated annually with actual costs, but they are better positioned now.

Unfortunately, and if I can kind of veer off a little bit, earlier on in the program, I think one of the key shortcomings was a lack of oversight, right? So, DCSA was really policing itself in its actions. No one broader in the Department was taking a look at what DCSA was doing as NBIS was going off the rails. There were some steps put in place for Intelligence and Security (I&S), where Mr. Overbaugh is from, to be now the program sponsor, and then even higher within the Department to have milestone decision authority.

There were some other mechanisms put in place, a requirements board, for example, that is supposed to meet quarterly, and some other reporting requirements. Where we do still have concerns, is some of these oversight mechanisms are great that they are in place but we are not actually seeing them working as they are supposed to be working. So, that requirements board that I just mentioned is supposed to meet quarterly. We think it met last Friday, but before then, had only met in June, right? So, maybe once a year.

So, it is good to put those mechanisms in place, but you have to exercise the oversight as well too. So, that is something that we will be taking a look at as the program moves on, making sure that oversight is actually working.

Mr. MFUME. And what would GAO immediately recommend be done as you look at where we are in this process? Notwithstanding the things you just mentioned.

Ms. CZYZ. Right. I think we have been on record for years that you really cannot plan effectively without having a reliable schedule for the NBIS program. Milestones have shifted for years. We are decades—it is a decade-long program now. Costs have increased 100 percent. We still do not have a reliable schedule. So, it is great that we are mirroring that policy with milestones, but our recent analysis showed that almost half, 46 percent, of milestones in the Trusted Workforce 2.0 strategy that are NBIS-related have slipped over the past nine months. 46 percent because of NBIS delays, right?

So, that is something that has got to be addressed right away. We have new recommendations, kind of to target in on what needs to be done for a schedule. And it is great that Mr. Overbaugh is very focused on this. But this is something that we have been talking about for years. We talked about at the last hearing as well. Without getting this in place, the program still is at risk of slip-page going forward and then increased cost to the taxpayer.

Mr. MFUME. And, Mr. Overbaugh, I know you have been there since November, but do you have some semblance of a schedule, a sketch, an outline—are you talking directly to GAO to figure out how and when that ought to be completed?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Ranking Member Mfume, the schedule has yet to be developed, and that is one of the great things that we have discovered through our partnership with GAO. And as a reminder,

as we dig down into the milestones that the TWIG recently established, we will be producing that schedule. That is the document that I hope to bring back to this body in the March and April timeframe.

I do want to push back on one thing that you said earlier. You mentioned that it is not my fault. I just want to give you the confidence, sir, as I am Acting Director, everything that this organization does or fails to do is now my responsibility. We do take on the fact that the previous failures are now our responsibility. And we own them. And that is part of the cultural change that we are trying to instantiate at DCSA.

Mr. MFUME. Well, that is good to know and it is good to hear, but it really was not your fault because you were not there. But I commend you for owning them.

So, are you saying to the Chairman and Members of the Committee that by late March or early April, this schedule will be in place? We can call another hearing and talk about it?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. What our team is attempting to produce by March, April timeframe is a business operationalization synchronization schedule. That is our attempt to get at the critical paths and the risks that GAO has rightly pointed out that we continue to lack. Once we have that established, I am happy to bring that product back. We have, as a goal, to establish that by the March and April timeframe.

Mr. MFUME. And just one other question. Are you interacting with GAO to make sure what you produce is exactly what they have identified?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. We will be moving forward. I had the opportunity to meet Ms. Czyz the other day in preparation for this hearing, and we agreed that we would interact on a quarterly basis moving forward. And we look forward to them helping us provide an objective look at our organization as we try and implement the change.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir. We will move to the distinguished gentleman from Tennessee. You are recognized.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things I like about your Chairmanship and your relationship with our Ranking Member—I always dig his line of questioning. And sometimes, like myself, it takes me a little longer than 5 minutes, and I appreciate you allowing us to do that.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman is recognized. And the gentleman does understand from his experience in dealing with Mr. Mfume and myself, I would like for you to take the time that is necessary to express yourself, as well our witnesses, to get everything out. And the gentleman is now recognized.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ma'am, your last name is Czyz? Is that how you pronounce it?

Ms. CZYZ. That is correct, yes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Well, Burchett. Nobody gets that right either. I was on some show this week, and I said it is birch like the tree and "ett" like I just ett breakfast. And they all laughed. And my wife got on me and said, "No, it is not Burchett. It is Burchett."

It is Burchett. You know? I mean, they can never get it right, so anyway. Thank you.

Since 2024, how has the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency, the DCSA, progress in addressing the NBIS high-risk areas like cybersecurity, and what issues remain?

Ms. CZYZ. So, since 2024, DCSA has made significant progress addressing cybersecurity issues with NBIS. We had issued a report in 2024 really focused on the management and lack of management attention on cybersecurity. We made 13 recommendations at that time. The DCSA leadership took swift action and implemented all of those recommendations.

Mr. BURCHETT. Did you say they implemented all of those?

Ms. CZYZ. They implemented all 13 recommendations from our 2024 report on cybersecurity, yes.

Mr. BURCHETT. Which of those are you most concerned about moving forward?

Ms. CZYZ. Right. So, we were very concerned that there was just a lack of management oversight of cybersecurity in general. They were using outdated guidance. There were issues with privacy controls. There were folks that did not have the necessary training to use the system.

So, those were some issues that we pointed out, and they did take immediate action, addressed all of those recommendations in a very fast timeframe for addressing GAO recommendations.

As I mentioned earlier, we do have a nonpublic report that we did produce in December on cybersecurity, too, looking at testing of cybersecurity controls.

So, it is a topic that we stay on, we know DCSA is taking seriously. But the entire reason that the department has a responsibility for the IT system was because of the cybersecurity breach in 2015 of OPM systems, so it is critically important to get that right.

Mr. BURCHETT. OPM means?

Ms. CZYZ. The Office of Personnel Management, who had previous responsibility.

Mr. BURCHETT. In my office, we do not use initials because I am 61 and it kind of fills up my brain.

Ms. CZYZ. Right. The Office of Personnel Management had previously had responsibility for personnel vetting, but that moved after that cybersecurity breach.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. CZYZ. Sure.

Mr. BURCHETT. When I get back to the office, I am going to have to ask some of my young people exactly what you just told me. So, thank you.

Sir, let me ask you a question. And your name is Overbaugh. I believe I can get that one right. Thank you, brother.

Since you were appointed, what steps have you taken to address the cultural issues identified? I think you made them in your opening statement.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Representative Burchett, thank you for the opportunity to chat with you today.

There have been a couple things that we have done from a cultural perspective.

The first thing was we looked at leadership across the organization, and we identified where we had individuals who were stymieing progress because they were too comfortable with the status quo, and we made some changes in that regard.

The second thing that we have done is myself and Ms. Jones have traveled to a number of the different locations where our DCSA colleagues and teammates reside. We have over 163 different locations across the United States. And we have begun to hear from folks who work on the front line across our agency about the types of things that we can do at a leadership level to change the culture.

Ultimately, the steps that we are taking are designed toward transforming it from a reactive to a proactive organization, from a risk-based or—correction—from a fear-based culture to one that looks for opportunities to continue to shore up security for the American people.

Mr. BURCHETT. This is not in my notes, but it jogged a memory of encrypted messages. They always, well, they cannot get into this, it is encrypted, and then there is some kid in a garage in southern California who has figured out how to do it in about 15 minutes.

Is there anything truly encrypted, in your opinion?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Representative Burchett, we could go into greater detail on that particular topic, but not necessarily in this forum. And I would want to bring back to you, from my role in I&S, a more fulsome picture on that perhaps in a closed setting in the future.

Mr. BURCHETT. Can I ask one more question, Mr. Chairman? I have run over just a minute.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, brother.

What do you think—what is your all's plan on getting everything on track for the next three years? Do you have a plan? I mean, I do not want you to disclose any secrets, but do you feel like you can obtain those objectives?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Yes, I do believe that we can attain the objectives, and the plan relies on a couple parts.

First, going back to what our GAO colleagues have talked with us about, we will and we must get our hands around a detailed schedule that enables the Agency itself to hold itself accountable and for our oversight partners to hold us accountable.

That is a nonnegotiable. We will achieve that in the coming months. And I very much look forward to coming back, either as Acting Director or in my oversight role in I&S, to report to you and your colleagues about the progress that we have made there.

In addition, though, we do have to change the culture of the organization, like I talked about earlier. We have to be adaptable, we have to be flexible, and we have to take on an attitude that our primary responsibility is to provide decisionmakers with risk-informed information so that they can make assessments about the trustworthiness of their workforce.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again for letting me go over. I wish more committees would allow us to do this.

And I appreciate the relationship that you have with the Ranking Member, because I think more committees could probably fashion a little bit more of their attitude toward us lower-level Members if they would follow your two leads.

So, thank you all.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the gentleman from Tennessee and will tell him that Mr. Mfume and I intend to maintain this relationship for the benefit of not only Members, but also the American people.

Mr. BURCHETT. Mr. Chairman, I would also like to say, I tend to like Mr. Mfume more than I like you. And I just want to say that for the record. Keep that off the record, though.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman is not recognized for more time. In fact, Tim, it is with great respect that you offer that feedback, because Mr. Mfume, in my opinion, is an outstanding example of collegiality and something which I think, as Mr. Burchett noticed, is desperately in need here on a regular basis. And so, thank you very much.

I will now yield myself such time as I may consume.

The opportunity to have both of you here with what I consider to be outstanding or sterling insight and ability to accept, as I say—you are accepting the role, Mr. Overbaugh, and the responsibility and the good things and the bad things.

Ms. CZYZ. part of what we are talking about today, we do not always get down to brass tacks, but what Mr. Overbaugh has spoken about is his analysis—which I do accept, appreciate, and respect—about how professional they are, about their ability to do their work.

He did, comma, suggest that there are some things that still need more tinkering with, more reliability.

Do you get into those management, personnel type things of frailties of outcomes that he spoke about?

Ms. CZYZ. I would say that the progress within this is very recent, and so it is fragile. Sustained leadership attention is critical for the program to continue to make the improvements that it has done recently and then continue to implement the recommendations that GAO has made for several years to have a schedule, to make sure the oversight mechanisms are in place, to marry up those milestones with Trusted Workforce 2.0, so we are not seeing continued slippage down the road.

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay.

Ms. CZYZ. So, it is important to not take—this is great that there is some progress, but I would agree with Mr. Overbaugh, it is recent and it is fragile if we do not have the leadership and oversight mechanisms in place.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Overbaugh, the discussions, without naming names, but do you find that there are people within the organization who are not interested in its success, in mastering the timeframes and allowing slippage, that they were seemingly happy with their performance that you have described?

Why did this even slip months? And were those people spoken to realistically or simply exited from the organization?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Chairman Sessions, I will tell you that 99.9 percent of the workforce today is absolutely passionate and capable for the task that we have in front of us.

I did find some individuals who embody the culture of wanting to maintain the status quo. Where we find those individuals, we will take the opportunity to give them a chance to serve in another capacity.

But for DCSA moving forward, we need a team that is 100 percent dedicated to the mission, that understands that we have a critical mission, and that we achieve that mission through the hard-earned dollars of the American taxpayer.

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay. Let us stay on this pathway, please.

You mentioned that you have offices, different people in 160-some different locations. Do you have metrics on them? And are they part of the slippage? Or are we talking about systems that they enter data into that then talk to people looking for more back-and-forth to then agree to that and then move? Is it system oriented or do you have a metric that determined it was people also?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. One of the things I recognize that we need at DCSA is a way to visualize the performance of our entire organization succinctly and clearly. We do not have that today. That is one of the things that I am working on internally to the organization, to be able to see, for example, from cradle to grave, how our investigative processes are going.

We have some of that picture right now and the team does a very good job of providing that data, but we can do much better. It will enable us to find those areas in the funnel where we have clogs or where we have obstacles that as leaders we can first identify how we can remove those obstacles for our teammates. And if it ends up being a personnel challenge, we can address that as well.

Mr. SESSIONS. So, what have you found?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. As it relates to what in particular, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. SESSIONS. The delay of your 160 different offices. You seemingly would have an idea that you have a problem or do not have a problem or can set a standard that seemingly could be established rather quickly if that is the issue.

Once again, it is hard for me to know if that is the issue—people-oriented responses, decisionmaking, moving things along—or whether it is correspondingly in the processes of systems that then do not effectively provide the information to decisionmaking.

Ms. Cxyz, will you answer that?

Ms. CXYZ. Our work has found that it has mostly been in the lack of basic program management principles. Again, and not having a reliable schedule for the program.

We do know that DCSA has taken some efforts even before Mr. Overbaugh—

Mr. SESSIONS. So, you are worried about headquarters' decision-making for fixing the systems that people operate within.

I was asking him—and we will get here—the people who do the work and then that process, is it then the systems that are causing the delays?

And so, I want to then focus on the 160 offices that you are evaluating and yet the systems or tools by which they have to operate, where are the issues that you found?

And there could be some of both. But this is where then I want to come to Ms. Cxyz and say you have and GAO has a broader

viewpoint than just this organization on how to effectively deal with management systems and structures and try and work with them to find how to update which comes first, which vendor comes first, which system needs updating, which system needs new standards or procedures.

So, let me go back and have you both—feel free, once again, we are trying to get to the bottom of this.

You went out and visited some offices and you had an opportunity, which is very professionally oriented and good. What did you find out there?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I found both, Mr. Chairman, quite frankly. I found a dedicated workforce but one that suffered from lack of our technology integration and one that also, unfortunately, at some areas in management, was too oriented toward the status quo.

That is why the recommendations that the GAO has made to us about tools like the critical path and the risk schedule are so important, because metrics will drive behavior within the organization.

Once we have that clearer picture, once we have those metrics, we are going to be able to drive that cultural behavioral change in a much more effective manner.

But the short answer to your question, Mr. Chairman, was I found both.

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay. So, in other words, when you take on a particular issue, subject, a person, and you have got a request that may have been sitting there for a long time, you have then identified that we need certain data, certain information, processing of their form, verifying the data and information, touching base where an investigator will move forward, getting that investigator's recommendation, looking at feedback that others provided, and then sifting through that, and then placing that into some sort of system where that is then vetted properly.

That is people oriented. No, no, it is really system, too, because if you have got a system problem, they are not able to effectively do that.

Is that what you also have, a system problem?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. In the sense—if I understand your concern—

Mr. SESSIONS. You put your data in something that would be reviewed by—you decide how many—but several people. It is not just a one-person process. You have got an investigator that goes out and they put their data and information.

Is that a problem of getting that data and information? We are dissecting this now in this Subcommittee. Is that a problem? Because it seems like that may be part of your daytime job.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Yes, Chairman Sessions. And what I would say is that is—the problem that you are highlighting is the exact reason why we are—why it is so important that we get in this online so that we are able to achieve the goals laid out in Trusted Workforce 2.0. As it stands right now, from a system standpoint, we are using old and antiquated technology, I think developed in the 1980s, in order to do the task of personnel vetting.

Mr. SESSIONS. And we hear that, and that is that \$2.5 billion, and then the need to update it or make it work, \$2.5 billion.

My point is, are you looking for the director to cut through that and say, "We are going to do this until we get that done in ten years"?

I am worried about the ten years. I mean, you may not have what you are asking for, for ten more years. And I am asking you, how are we going to do that?

And then looking at Ms. Czyz and say, doesn't the GAO—I think the answer is yes—doesn't the GAO have some recommendation of which one of these systems may need to spend—I do not know whether it is \$600 million, I do not know what it is—to update it to make something happen, if not a relationship that you have identified to getting data quicker and faster, even though it is not the NBIS delivery. It is an interim step.

Somebody has got to do that. We cannot wait ten years. Mr. Mfume and I will not wait ten years. Will you? That answer is no.

I know you are very glib at understanding and nimble at understanding this, but I still have not heard back, "Okay, we got a problem here, we know we have got to fix that. We got good people, but this system, this one right here, has to be updated for these other factors to work."

And then Ms. Czyz to be able to say, "Yes, I think that is right, that we have got to do this, this one first, this one second, this one third over the next year to better the lot where we are."

That is what I am looking for. I think that is what Mr. Mfume and I are looking for, not, "Well, we are going to wait ten years. Well, we have got good people, but we have got a systems problem."

What the heck are we doing to work together to say we are going to update this one thing, which is material to the work that has got to be done. I do not want something out there done. I want something in here.

I have, unfortunately, been around enough in life where I have had to wait on computer systems, but we did—we understood when that was going to happen.

So, get ready for this next round when you are back. I want to know what systems. I do not need to know the vendor, you do not need to do a flow chart, but that you have taken the five or four most critical systems, and they are online, you are with standards and procedures and understanding about what they are supposed to do, and go get that darn thing done. I mean, we are not looking at paint drying and we are not going to do that.

Likewise, I do not think Mr. Mfume and I want to manage your job, either one of you. We want to provide oversight. We want to make sure, as you talked about, and one of the best things you said today was we got to get a person with the bandwidth, the bandwidth not to sit back and say, "I cannot get my job done because my boss is always gone."

Clear lines of authority, delegation authority, clear lines of responsibility, timeframes that are professionally established to be met, not to slip. And I just think that this has got to be done.

Ms. Czyz, can you make sense of what I have said?

Ms. CZYZ. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Do you have the desire and ability to understand the systems that if he talked to you or you would know where they are, what the problem is, and provided feedback back to them to

say, "We think this system is the first that needs to be updated," not waiting for NBIS? This is a backlog or a clog or a bottleneck in the system.

Do you think you have that level of detail?

Ms. CZYZ. So, those are what the recommendations we have made in our written statement go toward, the sequencing of events.

Mr. SESSIONS. Sequencing.

Ms. CZYZ. That was our whole point here, that the NBIS program has been focused on an agile program, very focused on near-term gains, that they are not looking at, if a milestone slips here, what is the effect of it down the road, right?

And that is what Mr. Overbaugh I believe wants, that visibility, and talked about having that visibility for him at the leadership level, too, so he can take action.

But he does not have that information right now because the NBIS program does not have a schedule set up to be able to sequence those events, to be able to identify risks, and then to be able to take action targeted toward those systems.

Mr. SESSIONS. Then how can we say it is going to be done in ten years? How can you say you have got a schedule in ten years yet if you do not have that schedule?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Well, Chairman Sessions, we do not have ten years. We have a couple years. And we are charged with delivering Trusted Workforce 2.0 by Fiscal Year 2028.

Mr. SESSIONS. Right.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. And I am quite confident that we can.

To address what I think one of the things that you are talking about is this. Aside from NBIS, in our current procedures, do we have the ability to generate trust decisions for our workforce? And the answer to that question is yes, we can.

We are operating with legacy systems, but we do have dedicated professional teammates who have experience with those systems and all the associated bolt-ons that go with it to provide those trust decisions.

We are not where we want to be. And as we implement and integrate NBIS, the team is looking at continual improvements that we can make to the process.

Mr. SESSIONS. So, would that be against the 80 percent model that Ms. Cxyz spoke about? The 80 percent model, you are 80 percent inefficient, is the way I took her comments.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I would need to hear again, ma'am.

Ms. CZYZ. Right. It is the time for granting top secret clearances is 80 percent longer than the government school.

Mr. SESSIONS. It is just one number that she threw out.

Ms. CZYZ. Right. It is one data point.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Yes. Yes, Mr. Chairman. And that is a concern that we have had. And I am encouraged by the work that DCSA has done to get down the investigative backlog to a number that is more acceptable. I think we spoke the other day on the fact it is about 100,000 now.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, you did.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. The team thinks that it can get to about 70,000 as part of a normal workflow process.

But we are also looking at things like the better that we get on the investigative side, we have to make sure that we are not overburdening the folks that do the adjudication. There are interoperabilities and relationships between those two tasks that will impact one another.

So, I am absolutely focused on the concerns that you are raising, and, again, why I would go back to the fact that I recognize that the progress that we have made is exceptionally fragile and we are going to have to stay laser focused on this.

I agree, we cannot wait another ten years. We have already spent way too much of the American taxpayers' dollars on this problem, and we are committed to delivering this capability by Fiscal Year 2028.

Mr. SESSIONS. It would be appropriate for me to recognize that both of you are, as I have said in the past, very professional, very inward looking, and attempting to focus on these things.

I want to put you in a position, however, that adds a little bit of fuel to the fire about decisionmaking that you and the department have to make. And you and I spent a little bit of time on that, about some of the intricacies, some of the problems of mirroring up who will take the job, who has got the background.

I will just say to you that something has got to happen there. We want the next person, as you have openly said, "I will accept the responsibility." And I think that is magnanimous. I am delighted, as opposed to, "Not my problem." But time clicks on.

This Committee will not become frustrated. Mr. Mfume and I are not frustrated. We want to hear progress that is on both sides, and that is that the GAO has a responsibility as our arm to look at this.

I just simply think that there are things that he and I need to get into to see the incremental progress, that we are going to need to see that the decisionmaking that was done did better itself over some small period of time.

And, it could be the things that you have delineated. You have delineated, look, we have been out and talked to people. We had a problem with some personnel that were satisfied with not moving the ball forward. We have made decisions. We are, least of all, I think concerned about being nice to people but getting results.

And, I think Mr. Mfume and I do recognize there is always room for someone else to move or if you have got a problem to move them somewhere else and for them to take that as a lesson, a learning opportunity. Perhaps they are better positioned to do something different. But not to get in the way and not when you have accepted responsibility. I expect you to be able to have the bandwidth to pull that off notwithstanding a myriad of Federal laws, okay, employment laws.

One last point that I would like to ask. Do you have a handle on your people, meaning the people in this organization, some 13,000 of them reporting to work by the President's directive in January 2025?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I am aware of no violations of the President's directive.

Mr. SESSIONS. So, you believe that you report, which you are required to do, report to Office of Management and Budget that your employees are back at work.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Yes. As far as I know now, Mr. Chairman, that is true, and if I am misspeaking, I will definitely—

Mr. SESSIONS. Okay, you are entitled to revise that. But if you would please go back and double-check that. In some areas of the government, we still have a larger number of people and it is dragging down the organization's ability to effectively meet its goals too.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Gladly. I will take that back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Mfume, do you wish to have further time?

Mr. MFUME. Chairman, yes.

I have got a question, I guess, that always pops up when we are talking about this agency. And there is an old saying that goes, "The hurrier I go, the behinder I get," which was the way people used to characterize frustration. Just spinning wheels, spinning wheels, spinning wheels.

And thinking about that, Mr. Overbaugh, I wanted to ask you, are you aware if the Secretary has sent from on high a directive all the way down to the thousands of people that work for you, and all that are on your level, that he wants in place a permanent director of the Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency? Talking about Secretary Hegseth.

Mr. OVERBAUGH. Ranking Member Mfume, I can assure you that through the leadership of Secretary Hegseth and my boss, Mr. Hansell, that the selection for a permanent DCSA Director is a top priority.

Mr. MFUME. Right. But has he sent that word down to the many, many minions and ranks below him as a directive from his office as Secretary that you may be aware of?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I am not aware of that communication, but I do know that Mr. Hansell views this as one of his top priorities and he has been looking for the right person to ensure that the progress that we have made continues forward.

Mr. MFUME. So, let me ask you another question about my frustration with the department at times.

Are you aware the department has failed seven or eight straight audits?

Mr. OVERBAUGH. I am.

Mr. MFUME. So, that is very troubling to me, and I am sure it is troubling to the Chairman of this Committee, because we just do not understand that. Seven or eight straight audits year after year after year with a budget that shrinks any other budget that is out there.

And one of the things that I try to do in dissecting that—and GAO was very helpful—I wanted to know what were the components that sort of led to that. And what we learned was that there was not a problem with the Marine Corps. They, for the last three or four years, have figured it out, gotten it done. And it was not a knock against the Army, the Air Force, or anyone else.

We asked, through GAO, what was the single most important feature that caused the Marine Corps to do what others had not been able to do, and the answer was that there was an order on

high from the Commandant straight to everybody below him: This is a priority, get it done. And they got it done.

So, I asked the question about the Secretary, because I think if there was a directive from on high straight down that says this is a priority, get it done, it would get done.

Now, you cannot respond to that because you are not the Secretary, and casually, and not so casually, we have always said to him that this Committee is wide open to receive him any time that he would like to come by and talk about that or anything else. And I just want to reaffirm that that is the case today.

But in the absence, in my opinion, of a clear directive from the Secretary that this is not only a priority but, "I want to get it done," I think we are kind of treading water, and one month turns into the next and the seasons change and the years change, and here we are now, aside from eight straight audits that have been failed, here we are now, 100 percent over budget years beyond where we should be.

So, that is not for your ears to God. It is for the Secretary's ears to God. I hope that he will understand why this is so very important and why in this case he is the man, as they say. He can get this done. There is nothing that the U.S. Government cannot do. I honestly have always believed that.

And I do not know to what extent beyond you people have gone to him and said this is exposure here, this is not good, eight straight audits, 100 percent over cost, ten years behind schedule.

So, I want to thank you for your work previous to November and your work since November, and thank you also for wanting to own some of the issues that predated you.

But as I said before, that is somebody else's ownership. We will be looking at you from November on, obviously, and hoping and wishing that things change, which is why I was particularly encouraged to hear the GAO say that there have been some improvements and there are some things on track and for us to talk about a schedule and trying to get something before this Committee again in March or April. And I want to wish you well.

My sense is that we will be having this discussion again when the Chair decides to call us together again, and maybe incrementally we can designate or pinpoint some sort of progress.

Ms. Cxyz, thank you also. I really want to thank the GAO. I do not want to call you the police, but you have done a great job of policing agencies throughout this government. And I am going to be heartened by your words, as I said a moment ago, that you have seen some improvements here, and we have got to make sure that every time we meet we can say that.

And I really hope, Mr. Secretary, if you are listening, that you would contact the Chair of this Committee and myself. We would love to talk with you, not to sling arrows but to try to figure out how do we put our finger in the dike to stop this amount of money going out and creating a security situation for the United States and its people and agents all over the globe that none of us want and none of us want to see come to pass.

So, Mr. Chairman, you have been very generous, as the gentleman from Tennessee said earlier. He is going to like you more than he likes me. It is just a matter of time. But thank you.

Mr. SESSIONS. I have got a little bit of time on my side, and I want to thank the gentleman.

If I could say that one of the things that temporarily disturbed us, is we did not hear—have back a letter that we sent to the Secretary. I did not see a response.

And Members of Congress that come from Subcommittees like ours where we attempt to approach things on a bipartisan basis to keep it level, to keep it professional, it would be appreciated that when we send a letter to hearing something back.

And I find it in a way that Mr. Mfume has been gracious about that. I do not write letters for the Department of War. I write letters to them. And I think that if there is one thing that you or the chief of staff, Mr. Hewett's here, would take back to some bit of people, that is when we get a letter, we should respond back professionally or at least respond back, "We do not intend to, too bad, we will wait to find out, it may take seven more months or ten more months."

But that letter was sent with good intent. And for us to maintain a professional standard of business that Mr. Mfume insists on and I do, too, I think that that open communication extends also beyond you, sir.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. I want to thank the time, your staff. I want to thank our staffs. We have spent a good bit of time on this issue, and as Mr. Mfume said, we are not going away.

I want to thank everyone for being here today. I want to move to my—where I have got to state in closing I want to thank our witnesses. There is a five day—there it is.

So, with that said, without objection, all Members have five legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to our witnesses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:37 a.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

