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SSBI SOURCE YIELD

An Examination of Sources Contacted During the SSBI

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**SSBI SOURCE YIELD:
AN EXAMINATION OF SOURCES CONTACTED DURING THE SSBI**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

To meet the requirements of Executive Order 12968 to develop a common set of investigative standards for background investigations for access to classified information, the Personnel Security Committee (PSC) of the Security Policy Board (SPB) commissioned a study of the sources contacted during the Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI).

Method

A team of personnel security adjudicators reviewed 1,101 cases at four agencies which routinely conduct the SSBI: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Department of Defense (DoD), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), and Office of Personnel Management (OPM). To ensure that the study examined only cases eligible for a full scope SSBI, case review focused on Subjects age 28 or older who had not received a prior investigation and who had issues in their background. Information was collected on the type of issue(s), the investigative source(s) which provided information about the issue(s), and the minimum length of time required to develop the issue(s).

Findings

In 81% of the cases the Subject, through the Personnel Security Questionnaire (PSQ) and the subject interview, provided the issue information. This means that only 19% of the cases were developed from sources other than the Subject.

The most productive standard interview sources were Ex-Spouse, Relative, Employment, and Developed and Listed reference interviews. The most productive record sources were Local Agency checks, Financial records and Employment records. Residence, Birth records (BVS), and Education records had very low productivity.

The data indicated that 97.6% of all issue cases were developed within a 7-year scope. When the Subject did not disclose the issue, 86.6% of the issue information was captured within a 7-year scope.

To isolate the contribution of non-subject investigative sources, a subset of cases was selected for re-examination. The subset consisted of issue cases where the non-subject interviews or record sources developed the issue. A total of 177 cases were reviewed within the time-frame allotted.

Forty-five cases in the subset were either denied clearance or resigned because of security issues. Analysis indicated that 13.3% of the denied cases (6/45) required a scope of 8 to 10 years to develop the issue. However, for a large percentage of the denied cases the significant source of information was the polygraph. When this source was dropped from the analysis, only 4% of the denied cases (1/25) required a scope greater than 7 years.

Conclusions

The study can be used to support either a 7- or 10-year scope for the SSBI. The strong points for each argument are listed below

7-Year Scope	10-Year Scope
Subject provided significant issue information in 81% of the cases	In cases with a serious issue, Subject may provide self-serving information
97.6% of all issue cases were developed with a 7-year scope	When the Subject does not disclose the issue, only 86.6% of issue cases were developed with a 7-year scope
Only 4% of denied cases went beyond 7-year scope	The 2.4% of cases beyond a 7-year scope accounted for 15% of denials
Approximately 90% of non-subject information from higher yield sources (Relative, Employment, Developed and Listed Interviews, and Financial and Employment Records) were captured with a 7-year scope.	The highest yield sources (Ex-Spouse and Local Agency checks) developed only 80 to 85% of issue information within 7 years.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In September, 1995, the Personnel Security Committee (PSC) commissioned a study of the sources contacted during the Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI). The impetus for the study was the introduction in 1995 of Executive Order 12968, *Access to Classified Information*, which directs the Security Policy Board (SPB) to develop standard guidelines for the scope of the SSBI. Prior to the E.O., the scope of the SSBI was set by National Security Directive (NSD) 63, *Single Scope Background Investigations*, with a nominal scope of ten years¹. The purpose of this study was to provide the PSC with the necessary data to evaluate the effectiveness of the SSBI if the scope were reduced to 7 years.

Method

A five-member team was drawn together from four agencies, CIA, DoD, NRO, and OPM, to review cases. The team members were experienced personnel security adjudicators and stayed together throughout the course of the study. This allowed for a consistency of data collection and greater accuracy in the results of the study.

To ensure that the study examined only cases eligible for a full scope SSBI, case review focused on Subjects age 28 or older who had not received a prior investigation and who had issues in their background. Sampling methodology varied from a convenience sample consisting of the most recent cases processed by an agency to a one hundred percent sample of all cases which met the parameters².

The team reviewed 1,101 cases at the four agencies. Reviewers recorded the occurrence of up to three issues in a case file. Information was collected on the type of issue(s), the investigative source(s) which provided information about the issue(s), and the minimum length of time required to develop the issue(s). Seventy-three cases had to be eliminated from the study because the primary source of information was not a standard NSD-63 scoping requirement. A final total of 1,028 cases were available for analysis.

A subset of 187 cases were pulled from the sample and reviewed more closely. As will be clarified later in this report, this additional review was needed in order to permit a more detailed analysis of information provided by sources other than the Subject.

¹ NSD-63 requires a 10-year scope of investigation for interviews of character and employment references and for checks of all employment, education, and local police and court records. Interviews of neighbors are scoped for 5 years and records are checked only at the current residence.

² Because of the sampling methodology, confidence intervals of the true population cannot be estimated. Nevertheless, the size of the sample suggests the findings are fairly robust.

Sample

Demographics

The demographics of the study sample are depicted in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Demographics

Gender³

Males	749
Females	253

Age⁴

28-32	243
33-37	266
38-42	155
43-47	155
48-52	99
53-57	56
58-62	32
63+	4

Employee Communities

	Military	Civilian	Contractor	Total⁵
DoD	153	40	94	290
CIA	1	133	23	159
NRO	14	13	248	282
OPM	1	113	179	297

³ Gender not indicated on 26 cases

⁴ Age not indicated on 18 cases

⁵ There were 16 unclassified employees (3-DoD; 2-CIA; 7-NRO; 4-OPM)

Issues

Reviewers recorded up to three issues per case. Table 2 shows the distribution of number of issues per case (2a.) and the distribution of the first issue of the cases in the sample (2b.). The first issue was not necessarily the most important issue in multiple issue cases.

TABLE 2a
Number of Issues per Case

One	697
Two	249
Three	82

TABLE 2b
Distribution of First Issue

	Number	Percent
Alcohol	122	11.9
Criminal	69	6.7
Drugs	119	11.6
Emotional/Mental	121	11.8
Financial	290	28.2
Personal Conduct	119	11.6
Sexual Behavior	10	1.0
Security Violation	20	1.9
Allegiance	2	0.2
Foreign Influence	151	14.7
Foreign Preference	1	0.1
Outside Activities	0	0.0
Misuse of Automated Systems	4	0.4
Total	1,028	100.0

RESULTS

Sources

Subject

An interview of the Subject by an experienced background investigator was introduced as a standard element of the SSBI by NSD-63. Part of the purpose of the present study was to assess the utility of the subject interview for developing derogatory information. The results show that the subject interview in combination with the Personnel Security Questionnaire (PSQ) provides the major proportion of issue information.

Table 3 shows the number of cases where the Subject provided issue information through the PSQ and the subject interview. As the table indicates, the PSQ provided issue information in 617 of the 1,028 cases for a rate of productive contacts of 60%. It is of interest to note that in a similar study conducted in 1990 (Director of Central Intelligence, 1991), the PSQ was productive 57% of the time.

Table 3 also points out that independent of the PSQ the subject interview provides issue information in 43% of the cases. Some of the subject interview information overlapped with that provided by the PSQ, but the subject interview provided an additional indication of an issue in 21% of the cases where the information was not on the PSQ.

Taken together, in 81% of the cases the Subject, through the PSQ and the subject interview, provided the issue information. This means that only 19% of the cases were developed by sources other than the Subject.

TABLE 3
Percent of Productive Contacts
Contributed by Subject

Source	Percent of Productive Contacts	Percent of Additional Issue Information Provided by Source	Cumulative Percent of Issue Information Provided by Subject
PSQ	60 (617/1,028)	-	60
Subject Interview	43 (436/1,008 ⁶)	21	81

⁶ Subject interview results not indicated on 20 cases

Interviews and Records

Reviewers evaluated the type of information that each type of source provided about an issue. If a source provided information that was sufficient to prove the presence of an issue, the source was rated as having provided material information about the issue. If the source confirmed an issue but did not provide first-hand evidence of the issue, the source was considered to have provided corroborative information. Table 4 shows the number of times each type of source was contacted and the proportion of cases where the source type provided material and corroborative information about an issue. The proportions are also summed to give an overall measure of source yield. Additionally, Table 4 displays the number and percent of cases where the source yielded issue information that was not provided by the Subject.

TABLE 4
Proportion of Cases where Source Yielded Issue Related Information and Number and Percent of Cases where Source Information was not Disclosed by Subject

Sources	Number of Cases where Source was Contacted	A ⁷	B ⁸	Total Yield	Number and Percent of Cases where Source Provided Issue Info. not Disclosed by Subject	
Interview Sources	Number	Proportions			Number	Percent
Listed References	928	.02	.13	.15	30	3.2
Developed References	963	.03	.15	.18	40	4.2
Residence Interviews	983	.02	.08	.10	23	2.3
Employment Interviews	1,005	.09	.15	.24	56	5.6
Ex-Spouse Interviews	163	.21	.41	.62	20	12.3
Relative Interviews	204	.08	.45	.53	8	3.9
Medical Interviews	178	.27	.33	.60	10	5.6
Record Sources						
Local Agencies	1,001	.15	.15	.30	33	3.3
Birth/Vital Stats (BVS)	909	.00	.02	.02	0	0.0
Financial Records	987	.15	.14	.29	71	7.2
Employment Records	970	.06	.08	.14	37	3.8
Residence Records	556	.01	.03	.04	0	0.0
Education Records	666	.01	.00	.01	0	0.0
Medical Records	219	.28	.36	.64	16	7.3
National Agencies						
FBI - Name	1,008	.01	.08	.09	12	1.2
FBI - Fingerprint	1,004	.02	.06	.08	7	0.7
DCII	864	.01	.02	.03	4	0.5
SII	575	.00	.02	.02	2	0.3

⁷ A - Source provided information that was sufficient to prove the presence of an issue. Source provided material, relevant issue information.

⁸ B - Source provided information that corroborated the issue but did not provide first-hand evidence of the issue.

Productivity of All Source Contacts

One way to evaluate source productivity is to analyze the number of cases where the source was contacted and provided information about an issue. In Table 4 this information is available in the column entitled Total Yield. The results indicate that the most productive standard interview sources range from highs of 53 to 62% of issue producing contacts for Relative and Ex-Spouse interviews, to more modest 15 to 24% productivity for Employment, Developed Reference, and Listed Reference interviews.

The productivity of record sources varies from a high of 29 to 30% for Financial records and Local Agency checks to 14% for Employment records to a low of 1 to 4% for Education, Birth/Vital Statistics (BVS), and Residence records.

Medical interviews and Medical records both have a high proportion of productive contacts in the range of 60 to 64%, but these are specialized sources which are not a standard scoping requirement.

For National Agency checks, the FBI Name and Fingerprint checks are productive in 8 to 9% of the cases. The Defense Clearance and Investigations Index (DCII) and the Security Investigations Index (SII) have 2 to 3% rates of productive contacts; however, because the sample consisted of mostly first-time investigations there is no reason to expect hits from these sources.

Percent of Source Contacts Providing Non-Subject Disclosed Issue Information

A separate way to evaluate source productivity is to examine the number of cases where the source provided issue information that was not disclosed by the Subject. This shows the capability of a source to develop derogatory information which the subject may want to hide from security investigators. This measure of productivity is shown in the last two columns of Table 4. The most productive standard interview source is the Ex-Spouse interview which produces non-subject disclosed issue information in 12.3% of the instances the source is contacted. The other productive interview sources are Employment (5.6%), Developed Reference (4.2%), Relative (3.9%), Listed Reference (3.2%), and Residence (2.3%) interviews.

The most productive record source for non-subject disclosed information is the Financial record check at 7.3%. This is followed by Employment records (3.8%) and Local Agency records (3.3%). No unique issue information is provided by BVS, Residence, or Education records.

As before, Medical interviews and Medical records provide non-subject disclosed issue information in 5.6% and 7.3%, respectively, of the cases in which the source was contacted.

For NACs, only FBI Name checks provide more than 1% of non-subject disclosed issue information.

Length of Coverage

Length of coverage refers to how far back into a Subject's background an investigation should be scoped to develop relevant issue information. In this study the question was examined from two different perspectives: the case as a whole and the separate elements that comprise the case.

Analysis by Case

Examining the entire case focuses on the percent of cases in the sample in which issues are developed during each additional year of coverage. This results in a cumulative percent of cases that are developed in each subsequent year. Figure 1 shows the cumulative percent of issue cases developed during each year of coverage. Table 5 presents the same data in tabular form. The data is presented in two ways: (1) the entire case sample where the Subject was the source of information; and (2) the subset of 187 cases where the Subject did not provide the issue information.

When viewed from this perspective the data indicate that, where the Subject provided the issue information, 97.6% of all issue cases were developed within a 7-year scope. When the Subject did not disclose the issue, 86.6% was captured within a 7-year scope.

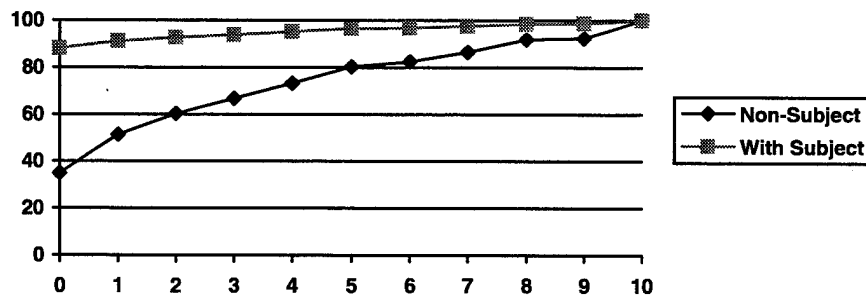


FIGURE 1 Cumulative Percent of Issue Cases Developed During Each Year of Coverage for Entire Case Sample and Portion of Sample where Non-Subject Sources Provided Issue Information

TABLE 5
Number and Percent of Cases Developed by Year of Coverage
Including Cumulative Percent for Non-Subject and All Sources Combined

Year of Coverage	Number of Cases Added	Cumulative Percent Non-Subject Sources	Cumulative Percent All Sources (+834)
0	65	34.8 65/187	88.1 899/1,021 ⁹
1	31	51.3 96/187	91.1 930/1,021
2	17	60.4 113/187	92.8 947/1,021
3	12	66.8 125/187	93.9 959/1,021
4	12	73.3 137/187	95.1 971/1,021
5	13	80.2 150/187	96.4 984/1,021
6	4	82.4 154/187	96.8 988/1,021
7	8	86.6 162/187	97.6 996/1,021
8	10	92.0 172/187	98.5 1,006/1,021
9	1	92.5 173/187	98.6 1,007/1,021
10	14	100 187/187	100 1,021/1,021

Analysis by Sources

A second perspective on the length-of-scope issue is the yield of sources during the scope of the investigation. Table 6 shows the number and percent of cases where the source contact provided material or corroborative information within 7 years and the number and percent of cases where the source contact provided information which was not disclosed by the Subject¹⁰.

⁹ 7 Cases were dropped because source was not indicated

¹⁰ The total number of productive contacts in Table 6 is the same value used to develop the proportion of "Total Yield" in Table 4.

TABLE 6
**Cumulative Source Yield at Seven Years Length of Coverage for all Productive Contacts and
for Contacts Producing Information not Disclosed by Subject**

Source	Total Number of Productive Contacts	Number and Percent of Productive Contacts within 7 years		Number of Non-Subject Disclosed Productive Contacts	Number and Percent of Non-Subject Disclosed Contacts within 7 years	
Interview Sources						
Listed References	144	118	81.9	30	26	86.7
Developed References	170	148	87.1	40	36	90.0
Residence Interviews	100	89	89.0	23	20	87.0
Employment Interviews	233	211	90.6	56	54	96.4
Ex-Spouse Interviews	100	80	80.0	20	17	85.0
Relative Interviews	100	93	93.0	8	8	100.0
Medical Interviews	108	87	80.6	10	10	100.0
Record Sources						
Local Agencies	300	236	78.7	33	27	81.8
Birth/Vital Stats (BVS)	20	13	65.0	0	0	-
Financial Records	283	258	91.2	71	64	90.1
Employment Records	135	123	91.1	37	34	91.9
Residence Records	20	17	85.0	0	0	-
Education Records	9	6	66.7	0	0	-
Medical Records	135	108	80.0	16	15	93.8

Table 6 shows that the percent of productive contacts made within a 7-year scope varies depending upon whether the source is providing information that is collateral with or independent of subject-disclosed information. In general, Table 6 indicates that information that confirms subject-disclosed information takes longer coverage than information which the Subject has not disclosed. This in turn suggests that subject-disclosed information may involve old, long dormant issues which require a long scope to resolve.

On the other hand, issues which are not disclosed by the Subject may be developed within a shorter scope of investigation. It can be noted in the extreme right column of Table 6 that, with the exception of Ex-Spouse interviews and Local Agency checks, 90% of source information not disclosed by the Subject was developed within 7 years for the most productive sources. In other words, the productive sources identified in Table 4 (i.e., Employment, Relative, and Developed Reference interviews, and Financial and Employment records) provided issue information 90% or more of the time within a scope of 7 years.

The picture is complicated, however, because of the lower 7 year percentages for Ex-Spouse interviews and Local Agency checks. Ex-spouse interviews have the highest rate of producing non-subject disclosed issue information (12.2%), yet only 85% of the cases were developed within 7 years. Local Agency checks also have moderate productivity ratings (3.3%) but only 82% of the cases were developed within a 7 year scope.

These findings suggest that determining the scope of the SSBI requires balancing the overwhelming amount of information provided by the Subject with the information provided by other investigative sources when the Subject has not disclosed the issue.

Analysis of Issue Cases Developed by Non-Subject Sources

To isolate the contribution of non-subject investigative sources, a subset of cases was selected for re-examination. The subset consisted of issue cases where non-subject interviews or record sources developed the issue¹¹. Reviewers recorded the outcome decision of the case and made two ratings for each case. First, they rated the severity of the issue in the case. Secondly, they rated the information each relevant source provided about the issue. The second rating was done to get an idea of the importance of the information from each source in determining the severity of the issue. In effect the second rating showed how the information provided by each source was combined to result in an overall rating of the seriousness of the issue. The scale for rating severity of issue and of source information is provided in Table 7.

TABLE 7
Severity of Issue Ratings

In the absence of any mitigating information, rate the severity of the issue in terms of the DCID 1/14 using the following scale.

The issue is: (for issue ratings)

The information from the source indicates the issue is: (for source ratings)

1. Very unlikely to lead to an adverse decision. Not worth noting.
2. Sufficiently noteworthy for inclusion in the case file but will probably not result in an adverse action.
3. Likely to generate considerable discussion (deliberation) regarding the adjudicative decision.
4. Unless counterbalanced by mitigating information, issue would lead to a denial
5. So severe that it would likely lead to an automatic disapproval

A total of 187 cases fit the criteria for the subset, but only 177 cases were able to be located within the time-frame allotted for the review. This constituted the review sample described in Table 8. The table indicates that 78% of the review sample consisted of CIA and OPM cases, hence the large number of civilians in the sample.

¹¹ Cases were selected for review if the PSQ or the subject interview (SI) had not provided "material" information about the first issue.

TABLE 8
Characteristics of Review Sample

CIA	DoD	NRO	OPM	Total
79	18	21	59	177

Civilian	Contractor	Military¹²
106	56	14

	Number of Cases	Number Denied/Resigned	Percent Denied/Resigned
Single Issue	135	34	25.2
Double Issue	35	9	25.7
Triple Issue	7	2	28.6
	177	45	25.4

Adjudicative Outcome

Table 9 shows the adjudicative outcome for the 177 cases.

TABLE 9
Adjudicative Outcome - Review Sample

Approved	108
Denied	43
Resigned	2
Administratively Withdrawn	1
Interim	2
Pending	16
Not recorded	5
Total	177

Issues in Denied Cases

Singly, or in combination, Financial, Personal Conduct and Drug Involvement issues accounted for 88.9% of the denials. The distribution of issues in denied and resigned cases is shown in Table 10.

¹² 1 case unclassified

TABLE 10
Distribution of Issues in Denied Cases

	Number of Issues	Percent
Financial	17	37.8
Personal Conduct	14	31.1
Drug Involvement	9	20.0
Criminal	3	6.7
Emotional-Mental	1	2.2
Security Violation	1	2.2

Length of Coverage for Relevant Sources in Denied Cases

The length of coverage for the sources in the denied cases is shown in Table 11. The table indicates that in 13.3% of the denied cases (6/45) the information was provided by a source which required a scope of 8 to 10 years to reach.

TABLE 11
Number of Denied/Resigned Cases by Length of Coverage (Years)

Length of Coverage	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Cases	19	7	2	0	3	7	0	1	2	1	3

Secondary Analysis of Reviewed Cases

Table 11 should be interpreted with caution. It results from a primary analysis of the subset of cases where the Subject did not provide material issue information through the PSQ or subject interview. However, included in the sample are a number of cases where the Subject provided material information through the polygraph. These cases distort the length of coverage analysis because in a polygraph-developed case the Subject is the source of the issue and the case should be classified accordingly. When these cases are controlled, characteristics of the sample change significantly.

In 46 cases in the subset, the material evidence about the first or second issue was provided by the polygraph; they were all CIA cases. Without these cases the sample size drops to 131 and the number of denied cases totals 25.

Table 12 shows the length of coverage for denied cases in the non-polygraph sample. Only 4% of the denied cases (1/25) required a scope greater than 7 years.

TABLE 12
Number of Denied/Resigned Cases by Length of Coverage (Years) - Adjusted Sample

Length of Coverage	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Number of Cases	12	5	0	1	2	3	0	1	0	0	1

The difference between Tables 11 and 12 suggests that the longer scope for the denied cases in Table 11 results from using sources with longer scopes to verify issues developed and determined by the polygraph.

Comparison of Subject as Source with Other Sources in the SSBI

A final comment is offered in evaluating the scope of the SSBI. While the Subject is unquestionably the most productive source in the SSBI, the information the Subject offers tends to be self serving. When comparing the severity of the information provided by the Subject with the severity provided by other sources, the two agree in only 6.7% of the denied cases. In the remaining 93.3% of the cases the Subject consistently under-reported the severity of the issue in the case. The lesson is to listen to the Subject, but investigate with other sources.

The use of the polygraph tells a different story. For the denied cases there was 88.2% agreement between severity of information developed by the polygraph with the information developed from other sources. Here the lesson is to listen to the Subject and verify with other sources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was undertaken to provide data on the yield of the sources contacted during the SSBI to policy makers deliberating the feasibility of shortening the scope of the SSBI to 7 years. Arguments for either retaining or changing scoping requirements can be supported by this study. In support of the 7- year scope, this study found that the Subject provides so much information that 97.6% of all issue cases are developed within 7 years of coverage. However, for a small unrepresentative sample if the Subject is discounted as a source of issue information, between 4 and 13% of denials come from sources beyond 7 years of coverage. The following highlights the strong points for 7- and 10-year positions based on this study.

7-Year Scope	10-Year Scope
Subject provided significant issue information in 81% of the cases	In cases with a serious issue, Subject may provide self-serving information
97.6% of all issue cases were developed with a 7 year scope	When the Subject does not disclose the issue, only 86.6% of issue cases were developed with 7 year scope
Only 4% of denied cases actually went beyond a 7 year scope	The 2.4% of cases beyond a 7 year scope accounted for 15% of denials
Approximately 90% of non-subject disclosed information from the higher yield sources (Relative, Employment, Developed and Listed Interviews, and Financial and Employment Records) was captured with a 7-year scope.	The highest yield sources (Ex-Spouse and Local Agency checks) developed only 80 to 85% of issue information within 7 years

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Director of Central Intelligence (1991). *Evaluation of DCID 1/14 Investigative Requirements*, Washington, DC: Intelligence Community Staff.