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Washington, D.C. — Yesterday, Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA), Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management, and Representative Silvestre Reyes (D-TX), Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, sent a request to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) asking for a formal evaluation of Intelligence Community security clearance processes and the Director of National Intelligence's pilot project for security clearance reform.

On February 27, 2008, the Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management held an open hearing on security clearance reform, receiving testimony from a number of government witnesses. Though the witnesses testified to improvements in security clearances, it remained apparent that significant work is left to be done to improve the clearance regime and congressional insight into it. Witnesses did not identify the metrics used to evaluate the quality of the current security clearance process in the Intelligence Community, nor of the pilot program.

In subsequent testimony before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, outgoing Comptroller General David Walker said that security clearances are "an area where I think we could add value, not just to the Congress, but to the DNI." GAO considers clearances a "high-risk" area deserving of its attention and resources.

"The slow pace of security clearances has cost our country a fortune, both in terms of talent lost and dollars spent. Prospective employees aren't always willing or able to wait six months for a clearance. They find new jobs and this country is left holding the bag. We need to do better. Both the House and Senate have held hearings on this issue. Asking GAO to establish a baseline of where the IC stands is the right way to start," said Representative Eshoo.

"It's time Congress took a hard look at Intelligence Community security clearances. GAO has already done work on DOD clearances, so it has the experience and the expertise needed to evaluate these processes. Congress and the IC will certainly benefit from this evaluation," said Representative Reyes.

The two requests are the first made by either of the Congressional Intelligence Committees since 2002, when the House and Senate Intelligence Committees requested that GAO review of the government's ability to combat a WMD terrorist attack against the United States.

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