



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / www.oig.dhs.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, August 10, 2017

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CBP Spent Millions on Polygraph Exams for Applicants Who Admitted Disqualifying Criminal Activity

In a new report, the Office of Inspector General (OIG), Department of Homeland Security, found that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) spent more than \$5 million on polygraph exams for job applicants who had admitted disqualifying criminal acts or drug use on employment documents or during pre-polygraph interviews. This occurred because CBP's process did not stop, and is not sufficient to prevent, unsuitable applicants from continuing through the polygraph examination.

OIG auditors analyzed a statistical sample of 380 polygraph exams administered to applicants from fiscal years 2013-2016. Nearly 20 percent of that sample made disqualifying admissions during the pre-polygraph interview. According to CBP's own data, approximately 2,300 applicants made pre-polygraph admissions including illegal drug use, drug smuggling, human trafficking, and to having close personal relationships with people who commit such crimes. Despite these admissions, CBP administered the polygraph examinations, costing taxpayers \$2,200 each, to all of those applicants. CBP further failed to consistently use its on-call adjudication process, which gives the examiners an official method to confirm right away that an applicant's pre-test admissions are in fact unsuitable and a basis for ending the exam.

CBP implemented the OIG's recommendation to immediately contact adjudicators when an applicant admits to wrongdoing. If the adjudicator determines the applicant is unsuitable, the examiner ends the test and the applicant is removed from the hiring process. CBP has also initiated a pilot program for a new polygraph format. The combination of the new format and its implementation of the OIG's recommendation has improved efficiency and allows CBP to focus on suitable candidates more likely to pass the polygraph.

"Given its plans to hire 5,000 additional Border Patrol Agents, it is important that CBP focus its resources on the most qualified and suitable applicants," said Inspector General John Roth. "We are pleased that CBP has adopted one of our recommended changes to increase efficiency in its polygraph process."

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