Contractor Access to Social Security Administration Data
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SOCIAL SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION
OIG

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine (1) whether security profiles assigned to Social Security Administration (SSA) contractors provided access to SSA data they did not need and (2) if terminated contractors still had access to SSA systems.

Background

Controlling and limiting access to the Agency's information systems and resources is the first line of defense in assuring the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the Agency's information technology resources. SSA's systems access policy is built on the principles of least privilege and need-to-know. This policy applies to all SSA employees and other authorized users, such as employees of other agencies, business partners, contractors, agents, and any other individuals operating on the Agency's behalf and having direct access to and/or using SSA information system resources.

We identified three systems that contained contractor populations: Top Secret, the Electronic Personal Enrollment Credential System (EPECS), and the Contractor Suitability System (CSS).

Our Findings

SSA did not have a comprehensive, integrated process to identify all of its contractors. Although we obtained contractor populations from Top Secret, EPECS, and CSS, the lists were inconsistent. As such, we were unable to obtain a complete population of all current and terminated contractors. Despite this limitation, we reviewed records for 397 current and terminated contractors. We determined that SSA (1) granted systems access to some contractors in excess of what they needed to complete their job functions and (2) did not always terminate contractors' system access timely.

Additionally, we found the following.

- One unsuitable contractor still had a personal identification number and profiles in Top Secret and therefore had systems access.

- Twenty-eight contractors had access to SSA systems. However, SSA could not provide evidence of a suitability determination from either its internal system (CSS) or the Office of Personnel Management's Personal Investigation Processing System for all Federal agencies.

Our Recommendations

We made a number of recommendations to address the lack of a comprehensive, integrated process for tracking all contractors and ensuring suitability reviews have been conducted and documented for all contractors, current and future.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.