



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOJ OIG Releases Management Advisory Memorandum of Concerns Identified in the Drug Enforcement Administration's Use of Polygraph Examinations in Pre-employment Vetting

Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General Michael E. Horowitz announced today the release of a [Management Advisory Memorandum](#) to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) identifying concerns related to the DEA's use of polygraph examinations in pre-employment vetting.

The DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found inconsistencies in the implementation of the DEA's 2019 polygraph policy. We identified significant risks involving the DEA's polygraph program, including hiring Special Agents and Intelligence Research Specialists who have not successfully completed some or all of the polygraph examination and allowing task force officers who have failed the polygraph examination to remain on DEA Task Forces.

The OIG's findings included the following:

- **2019 Polygraph Policy Change.** Prior to March 2019, DEA policy did not prohibit the hiring of Special Agent and Intelligence Research applicants who did not pass the pre-employment polygraph examination. On March 21, 2019, DEA issued a memorandum stating that it will no longer hire Special Agent or Intelligence Research Specialist applicants who do not pass the polygraph examination. Despite the policy change and its stated purpose, we found that for the past 2 years the DEA hired 77 applicants (66 Special Agents and 11 Intelligence Research Specialists) who did not pass the pre-employment polygraph examination because the DEA has continued to use job announcements that were issued prior to the one referenced in memorandum. After reviewing a draft of this memorandum, the DEA told the OIG that, notwithstanding the prohibition on hiring individuals who had not passed a polygraph examination, the 2019 policy was intentionally written to allow for the hire of individuals who were already in the hiring process at the time of the 2019 policy change, even if they had not passed a polygraph examination.
 - **Mitigating the Risks Associated with Special Agents and Certain other Applicants Hired Who Did Not Complete Some or all of the Polygraph Examination.** In addition to the 77 applicants who were hired after March 2019 despite not passing the polygraph examination, we determined the DEA hired and entered on duty at least 3 Special Agents who did not meet DEA requirements to
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fully complete a pre-employment polygraph examination, namely both the Suitability and National Security polygraph. For example, we identified one DEA Special Agent, who is currently employed, that never took the National Security polygraph as required.

- **Allowing Task Force Officers Who Did Not Successfully Complete the Polygraph to Remain on DEA Task Forces.** As part of the DEA's pre-employment process, if a task force officer seeks employment with the DEA for a position that requires a polygraph examination as part of the pre-employment process, the task force officer is required to pass the polygraph exam. If a task force officer does not pass the polygraph exam, the task force officer is not eligible for hire and must be returned to their parent law enforcement agency. However, we have identified task force officers who did not pass the polygraph examination yet have been allowed to remain on DEA-lead task forces. For example, one task force officer, who did not pass the Suitability polygraph and never took the National Security polygraph was not hired but has been allowed to remain on a DEA task force.
- **The DEA Needs Controls to Prevent Pressure to Influence Polygraph Examinations.** The DEA unofficially defines a "legacy" candidate as an applicant who has a relative currently working for the DEA or that previously worked for the DEA. Our audit has identified multiple DEA personnel who have perceived or experienced pressure to influence polygraph examination for legacy candidates, be it the outcome or the expediency with which an examination is performed. To mitigate the risk of improper influence on the Polygraph Unit, DEA needs controls to explicitly prohibit contacts with the Polygraph Unit that may create actual or perceived pressure on the polygraph unit to expedite or influence the result of a polygraph examination.

The DOJ OIG made 5 recommendations to improve the DEA's use of polygraph examinations in pre-employment vetting. The DEA concurred with all of the recommendations.

Report: Today's report can be found on the OIG's website at the following link: <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/management-advisory-memorandum-notification-concerns-identified-drug-enforcement>

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