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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES

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November 29, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

I write to you with serious concerns regarding felony theft charges brought against the Department of Energy's Deputy Assistant Secretary for Spent Fuel and Waste Disposition, Sam Brinton.¹ It is in the interest of both the Department's mission and our national security that the Deputy Assistant Secretary's clearance be immediately revoked. Additionally, the Department should undertake all necessary steps to terminate their employment immediately.

As I stated in my unanswered July 20th letter to you regarding the Department's security clearance process attached here, it is imperative executive branch officials are free of a history of conduct unbecoming of federal service. The Department's inability to respond to my concerns regarding the DOE's clearance process is indicative of an egregious inattention to potential insider threats within the Department and the greater safety of the American public.

Accordingly, I am requesting that you immediately launch a comprehensive review of the Department's security clearance adjudication process and report to me the findings no later than February 1, 2023.

Additionally, in the interest of ensuring the rest of the Department's employees have and continue to operate with the utmost integrity throughout the execution of their duties, I ask that you answer the following questions no later than December 13, 2022.

Sincerely,


John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member

¹ Weiss, Benjamin. "DOE Spent Fuel Chief Brinton Charged with Felony Theft in Minnesota." *Exchange Monitor*, 28 Nov. 2022, <https://www.exchangemonitor.com/doe-spent-fuel-chief-brinton-charged-with-felony-theft/>.

Questions

1. Please describe in detail any security issues that arose in the course of Sam Brinton's background investigation and security clearance adjudication.
 - a. Who was ultimately responsible for the approval of Sam Brinton's security clearance?
 - b. Does the Department plan to launch its own internal review of its clearance process as a result of the charges brought against Sam Brinton?
 - c. Beyond administrative leave, what punitive actions has the Department taken as a result of this incident?
 - i. Please describe in detail the disciplinary process when employees are found to have engaged in criminal activity.
2. Who within the Department is responsible for the processing of security clearances for potential hires?
 - a. Please provide all relevant Departmental guidance and standard operating procedures for the clearance process related to all categories of cleared personnel.
3. Does the Department interface with the intelligence community to aid in the execution of the clearance process?
 - a. If so please list the relevant agencies and the nature of coordination specific to each agency.
4. If issues of concern arise during the clearance process specific to an applicant, when does the Department notify the applicant?
5. Does the Department currently employ any personnel that have had security issues flagged by the Department itself or any intelligence community agencies?
 - a. If so, please provide a list of these appointees who have been flagged.
 - i. Additionally, please provide the following information for each individual:
 1. Their position within the Department
 2. Whether or not they received a clearance
 - a. If so, the issuance date of the clearance
 3. How their respective security issue(s) were addressed

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July 20, 2022

The Honorable Jennifer Granholm
Secretary
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Secretary Granholm,

I write to you regarding the Department of Energy's (Department) process for vetting and granting security clearances to Presidential appointees working within the Department. As you know, it is imperative executive branch officials, especially unelected appointees, are free of a history of conduct unbecoming of federal service.

In the interest of ensuring appointed Department officials have and continue to operate with the utmost integrity throughout the execution of their duties, I ask that you answer the following questions no later than August 3, 2022.

Sincerely,


John Barrasso, M.D.
Ranking Member

Questions

1. Who within the Department is responsible for the processing of security clearances for Presidential appointees?
 - a. Please provide all relevant Departmental guidance and standard operating procedures for the clearance process related to all categories of Presidential appointments.
2. Does the Department interface with the intelligence community to aid in the execution of the clearance process?
 - a. If so please list the relevant agencies and the nature of coordination specific to each agency.
3. If issues of concern arise during the clearance process specific to an appointee, does the Department notify the Office of Presidential Personnel?
4. Does the Department currently employ any appointees that have had security issues flagged by the Department itself or any intelligence community agencies?
 - a. If so, please provide a list of the appointees who have been flagged.
 - i. Additionally, please provide the following information for each individual:
 1. Their position within the Department
 2. Whether or not they received a clearance
 - a. If so, the issuance date of the clearance
 3. How their respective security issue(s) were addressed