



**EVERYTHING**  
YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT  
**THE SECURITY**  
**CLEARANCE PROCESS,**  
BUT ARE AFRAID TO ASK

**THE WHO, THE WHAT & THE WHY**  
**ABOUT THE SECURITY CLEARANCE PROCESS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you for your interest in my book, *“Everything You Need to Know About the Security Clearance Process, But Are Afraid to Ask”*. Chances are that you purchased this book because you are either an individual or company seeking advice and knowledge regarding the sometimes lengthy and often confusing process for obtaining and maintaining a security clearance.

When seeking advice, it’s common to go to people that you know to get the inside scoop. I bet that you know someone who has a security clearance or had one previously. However, if you ask them a question about their job or the security clearance process, you’re likely to get the response, "... if I told you, I would have to kill you...", or "...well, I got mine a while ago and the laws and process have probably changed..". So where do you go to get your information?

You could spend months researching your questions and all the while, you run the risk of unknowingly saying the wrong thing that could get you flagged as a candidate for rejection.

The more productive, safer, quicker alternative is to spend a couple of hours reading through this informative book loaded with questions and answers from more than 20 years of experience working in and with the system to help you reduce your risk and cut through the red tape delays that are inherent in the system.

Here’s what you will learn from this book:

- insight into the process for obtaining and maintaining Security and Facility clearances
- awareness of the risks that you face for delays or possible rejection and what to do about them
- straight forward answers to the standard and not so standard questions people often ask about the security and facility clearance process
- clear definitions to the confusing industry terms, abbreviations and acronyms

Who am I? My name is Diane Griffin, President / CEO of Security First & Associates, LLC. I am that friendly expert that WILL give you the inside scoop of what is relevant to your specific needs for obtaining and maintaining a security clearance today. And, no, this book won’t self destruct nor will I have to kill you for giving you the answers.

I began my career in the industry more than two decades ago working for various government contractors. While working for these companies, I was responsible for satisfying the requirements of security functions involving human resources, data management, and hardware and software security.

Then in 2002, I satisfied my entrepreneurial spirit by creating Security First & Associates, LLC consulting individuals and companies with all levels of security. As you can imagine, after 9/11 and with our country in the midst of two wars, the demands and dynamics of security clearances have changed drastically.

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So whether you are a security professional, a student of criminal justice, someone interested in pursuing a government career, or a company pursuing government contracts that require a security clearance, you will have many questions regarding the process. And this book has many answers - even to those questions that you are afraid to ask.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to write this book and thanks to my family and friends for supporting me when I wanted to give up; KS, PC, AC, CW, AJ, and JP for always being in my corner. Doug, thank you for your patience and sense of humor. And for those of you that have come in and out of my life for a reason and a season, much love.

“True individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

Mark Amtower - the Godfather of Government Marketing (<http://federaldirect.net/index.html>)

Douglas Dolan - The Solopreneur's Guide (<http://thesologuide.com>)

Angela Dingle - ExNihilo Management (<http://www.exnihilo-mgmt.com>)

Julie Peck - JuMP Strategic Marketing (<http://www.jumpstrategicmarketing.com>)

Margaret & Guy Timberlake (<http://www.asbc.org>)

Jeff Bennett – ISP (<http://www.redbikepublishing.com/>)

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Defense Security Service (<http://www.dss.mil>)

All my connections at LinkedIn

“What the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”

- Napoleon Hill

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The author made every effort to insure that the information in this book is current, accurate and complete. However, government policies and procedure change often. The author wrote this book to provide insight and guidance regarding security clearances in the United States. The author is not a lawyer and does not engage in providing legal advice. If you require legal assistance, you should seek out the services of a competent attorney specializing in security clearance law. The author does not assume any responsibility for errors, omissions or contrary interpretation of this information.

## **THE BASICS BEHIND SECURITY CLEARANCES**

The United States is under constant threat of having individuals, fundamentalist groups and foreign countries compromise the nation's security. In order to combat this threat, the U.S. Federal Government maintains a process for identifying credible and trustworthy individuals, companies and industries to assist with protecting our national interests and citizens.

These dynamics make Trust a precious commodity. Nothing can take its place. In order for the U.S. government to identify trustworthy candidates, it must take them through a stringent process prior to granting them access to sensitive data and critical positions.

A security clearance is a privilege and not a right. The award of a security clearance does not give the recipient access to classified information in and of itself. The recipient must have a [need to know](#) the specific classified data that is given access to.

With this section, I will pose appropriate questions and provide answers that are basic to security clearances including systems and people involved in the process. As you read this book and as you participate in the process of seeking a security clearance, if you have any doubts how to respond to inquiries, just remember, telling the truth is always the best practice.

### **Q: What is a Security Clearance?**

**A:** A security clearance is a determination by the United States government that a person or company is eligible for access to classified information. There are two types of clearances: Personnel Security Clearances (individuals) and Facility Security Clearance (companies).

### **Q: What is SCI?**

**A:** SCI is the abbreviation for Sensitive Compartmented Information. The Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) establishes standards to govern access to SCI.

### **Q: What are the different levels of a security clearance?**

**A:** There are three security clearance levels: Confidential, Secret and Top Secret.

#### Top Secret Clearance

Top Secret level clearance covers information that reasonably could cause exceptionally grave damage to the national security if disclosed to unauthorized sources.

#### Secret Clearance

Secret level clearance covers information that reasonably could cause serious damage to the national security if disclosed to unauthorized sources.

#### Confidential Clearance

Confidential level clearance covers information that reasonably could cause damage to the national security if disclosed to unauthorized sources.

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**Q: What is e-QIP?**

**A:** The Electronic Questionnaires for Investigations Processing (e-QIP) will replace the Electronic Personnel Security Questionnaire (EPSQ), previously used within Department of Defense (DoD) as the automated request for personnel security investigations and clearances.

E-QIP is a secure website that will eventually contain all PSI forms, including the SF 86, SF 85P, and the SF 85. Within the DoD, the Facility Security Officer (FSO) at a cleared facility will initiate the request through the Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS) that will permit the employee to access the site and complete the personnel security questionnaire on line.

**Q: What is JPAS?**

**A:** JPAS is a consolidated database constructed by the DoD for the purpose of collecting and disseminating information on the security clearance status of virtually everyone in the DoD sphere of influence. This includes military, government civilian personnel, and industry contractors.

The government created JPAS to create a near real-time environment where the agencies that grant clearances and the departments that use them could share a common source of information. Before JPAS, a collection of databases kept by numerous agencies, kept mostly in parallel, were responsible for keeping all this information accessible. Most of these databases were not highly accessible for user input, and information mostly rolled in one direction, from the Central Adjudicating Facilities (CAFs) to the user.

JPAS was introduced in stages starting around 2002/2003 and gradually made increasingly available and then mandated for contractors around late 2004.

**Q: What is the difference between an interim and a full security clearance?**

**A:** Interim clearances are granted in exceptional circumstances where official functions must be performed before completion of the investigative and adjudicative processes associated with the security clearance procedure. There is no difference between an interim and a full security clearance as it relates to access to classified information. However, when such access is granted, the background investigation must be expedited, and, if unfavorable information is developed at anytime, the interim security clearance may be withdrawn.

**Q: How much does a security clearances cost?**

**A:** Currently, there is no direct charge for a Facility Security Clearance (FCL) or Personnel Security Clearance (PCL).