

# OVER 54,000 MORE AMERICANS ADDED TO SECURITY CLEARANCE ROLLS IN LAST YEAR

I've long argued that our security clearance employment system is "an arbitrary system of control that does more to foster cowed national security employees than to foster actual national security."

So I'm none too happy to know more than 50,000 Americans have been added to this arbitrary system in the last year, making up something like 1.6% of all Americans.

The number of people who are cleared for access to classified information continued to rise in 2012 to more than 4.9 million, according to a new annual report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. This is only the third official tally of government-wide security clearance activity ever prepared, and it is the largest reported to date.

The total number of cleared personnel as of October 1, 2012 was 4,917,751. Although the number of contractors who held a clearance declined in 2012, the number of eligible government employees grew at a faster rate, yielding a net increase of 54,199 clearances, or 1.1 percent, from the year before.

I suspect adding 50,000 people to the rolls of clearance holders – whose lives are open to surveillance and from whom minor lies can be an excuse for termination – will simply increase the numbers of elite national security types who avoid pissing off the powerful.

Meanwhile, Josh Gerstein has an excellent report

on what's at stake in the Conyers v. Department of Defense lawsuit, in which two relatively low level DOD employees are fighting to retain their Merit Systems Protect Board protections in spite of the government deeming their jobs "sensitive."

The Justice Department and Defense Department are arguing that federal employees like commissary managers and accountants, who don't have access to classified information, can be demoted or effectively fired without recourse to the usual avenues of appeal if their jobs are designated as "sensitive." The ripple effect of that – critics say it would effectively strip huge numbers of federal workers of civil service protections by treating them like those who have access to the nation's most vital secrets – could hollow out legal protections that have allowed whistleblowers to speak out with less fear of being fired.

As I've noted, DOD argues that even those who sell Gatorade on military bases should receive no protections in case they're deemed a security threat. Which means people like Rhonda Conyers and Devon Northover, the plaintiffs in this case, can be fired for holding unpopular views, because that might make them untrustworthy to sell service members Gatorade.

This is a creeping system by which more and more lucrative (and semi-lucrative, in the case of "sensitive") jobs are subjected to arbitrary political whims.

And it's growing.