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Securing the Biowatch Web Portal

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The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) BioWatch program is the only nationwide early detection system to provide warning, and situational awareness, to DHS decision makers, in the event of a bioterrorism attack. The BioWatch Web Portal is the means by which DHS collects, analyzes, and shares, bio-threat information amongst federal, state and local jurisdictions. Integrity and confidentiality of the information collected by the portal is paramount to that decision makers make decisions on reliable and accurate information. Just as important is the appropriate safeguarding of such information so that a malicious actor is denied sufficient detail as to the methods, materials and false negative rates that would enable such an actor to spoof the system or circumvent detection. An internal and external assessment analysis of the BioWatch Web Portal revealed that sufficient security controls to mitigate risk posed to the integrity and confidentiality of information processed by the BioWatch Web Portal was not in place. Furthermore, it was discovered that security counter measures were not in place to detect a possible breach. In addition, it was discovered that the information processes information at the secret level security classification.