

Officer Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do I get into OSI (71S) career field?

A: Via the OSI home page under Vacancies, please select the most appropriate link (e.g. cadet, active duty officer, etc.) to your situation or contact the Air Force's Personnel Center 71S Assignment Officer at 210.565.4457 (DSN 665) M-F during business hours central standard time.

Q: How can I make my application package more competitive?

A: Applicants are evaluated under a "whole person concept" and must appreciate OSI is a federal law enforcement career. Demonstrated maturity and strong leadership qualities are necessary; all 71S officers are expected to be informal and formal leaders during their OSI tenure and serving as an OSI Special Agent warrants a great deal of responsibility and autonomy. Competitive applicants should exude discretion, comfortably manage constant change, attention to detail, constructive conflict management, and employ emotional intelligence within their daily interactions. Applications should reflect professional and personal successes, highlight special skills (e.g. foreign languages, computer or forensics training, internships, etc.) and accomplishments to set them apart.

Q: Will a particular academic major make me more competitive?

A: No; each applicant package is considered via a "whole person" concept as its foundation with well-rounded selects as the goal. Selected applicants generally present a strong grade point average with consistent academic performance. While many applicants are science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors, every academic major is vital to ensuring our officer corps remains diverse and well-rounded.

Q: Who should provide my letters of recommendation?

A: Cadet or active duty applicants must have their commander furnish one of the three requisite letters, however generally speaking, letters of recommendation should be provided by people who can accurately represent you on a personal and professional level. Letters of recommendation should highlight applicant qualities and what they are capable of accomplishing. Consider what you want the board to know about you and your potential.

Q: How can I accomplish my mandatory interview with OSI?

A: Proactively contact a geographically near OSI unit (refer to <http://www.osi.af.mil/> for unit listing). Mission permitting, OSI unit leadership may allow the applicant to shadow their unit and provide the applicant realities of the profession in addition to the formal interview. 71S is a unique duty; applicants should commit themselves to make an informed decision about applying to OSI.

Q: I already have a Top Secret clearance; does that make me more competitive?

A: No, an applicant's clearance level/status is not a selection discriminator. If an applicant is selected to be a special agent, HQ OSI will initiate an Agent Suitability Investigation (ASI) which includes completion of paperwork for a Top Secret clearance. After the applicant is approved for duty, the appropriate security clearance will be completed through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Q: What is an Agent Suitability Investigation (ASI)?

A: OSI will administer a stand-alone investigation to evaluate an applicant's emotional, physical, and overall suitability for 71S duty. Apart from the formal suitability investigation, a selected applicant will continue to be formally and informally evaluated throughout the hiring process up until graduation from the academy and subsequent completion of an agent probationary period.

Q: If I apply for OTS but am not selected for OSI, will I still be commissioned into the USAF?

A: Yes; once an individual is selected for OTS, their 71S application is provided to a special selection board comprised of senior Special Agents and OSI professional staff who review each applicant's package via a "whole person" concept. Available quotas change annually in accordance with Department of Air Force manpower assessed needs, but historically do not exceed ten (10) annual quotas, with multiple dozens of applicants. If the applicant is not selected for OSI, fails the Agent Suitability Investigation, or needs of the Air Force demand it, the applicant would be reclassified into an alternate career field as a commissioned officer.

Q: What is the difference in serving in OSI as an enlisted, officer, or civilian agent?

A: Enlisted, civilian, and officer agents all train together as agent trainees. After graduation and earning their badge and credentials, all complete the additional basic education program during their probationary periods at a field unit. They will generally all begin their OSI careers focused on field investigations and general field work. After the first couple of years, they will begin to follow more structured career progression consistent with their respective enlisted, officer, or civilian paths. Many pursue specialties after the first couple of duty years and then use those education and skills later as they transition into leadership roles.

Officers are always expected to be informal or formal leaders within their units and OSI command. As they evolve, it's aligned with officer professional development largely by alternating staff and leadership roles to grow a greater breadth of experience. Around E-7, enlisted agents typically transition into a field leader and may assume formal leadership roles as a Superintendent or Special Agent in Charge (SAIC). Civilian agents may also progress into a SAIC or Director.

Q: What type of cases do OSI agents work on?

A: The vast majority of OSI's investigative activities pertain to felony level crimes including economic crimes, counterintelligence matters, murder, robbery, rape, assault, major burglaries, drug use and trafficking, sex offenses, arson, compromise of Air Force test materials, black market activities, and other criminal activities.

Q: If selected for OSI, will I get to choose the location where I work?

A: Unit manpower assessments are maintained by higher headquarters outlining what grades and billets are available at certain locations. While the OSI officer corps is small allowing for a more personalized approach to individual officer career progression and development, needs of the Air Force come first and will always take precedence in determining what unit and location personnel are assigned to. Time on station requirements also differ for various assignment types and location, but members will not typically spend longer than four years in the same location.

Q: If I am currently an Air Force officer, how do I cross flow into OSI?

A: Officers (Capt and below) interested in cross flow into 71S must first communicate with their core career field assignment officer team and leadership chain to see if they qualify for career field release. Releasing and gaining career field managers must authorize the change based on the officer's commissioning year group and its impact to overall career field sustainment on both fields. Newer officers within their first couple years of military service should generally expect to learn their core job first, gain operational experience, and then explore crossflow opportunities. OSI accession is competitive; prospective cross flow officers would be considered using the whole person concept and applying for 71S does not guarantee a reclassification into 71S as OSI has separate, requisite program and security requirements.