# POSITION DESCRIPTION

**UNDERSECRETARY for SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

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| **OVERVIEW** |
| Senate Committee | Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs |
| Agency Mission | To ensure that homeland is safe, secure and resilient against terrorism and other potential threats. |
| Position Overview | Technology and threats evolve rapidly in today’s ever-changing environment. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) monitors those threats and capitalizes on technological advancements at a rapid pace, developing solutions and bridging capability gaps at a pace that mirrors the speed of life. S&T’s mission is to deliver effective and innovative insight, methods and solutions for the critical needs of the homeland security enterprise. Within that context, the undersecretary for science and technology acts as the technology advisor to the secretary for Homeland Security and manages science and technology research to protect the homeland. The undersecretary leads the mission to strengthen America’s security and resilience by providing knowledge products and innovative technology solutions for the homeland security enterprise |
| Compensation | Level III $165,300 (5 U.S.C. § 5314)[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary and deputy secretary of Homeland Security  |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** |
| Management Scope | The undersecretary for science and technology oversees the activities of five primary divisions: * Explosives Division
* Chemical and Biological Division
* Command, Control and Interoperability Division
* Human Factors Division
* Infrastructure and Geophysical Division

The undersecretary manages the three cross-cutting divisions of research, innovation/HSARPA (Homeland Security Advanced Research Projects Agency) and transition.The Science & Technology Directorate’s budget for fiscal 2016 was $778,988,000. |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Strengthening America’s security and resilience by providing scientific products and innovative technology solutions.
* Protecting the homeland, from development through transition, for department components and first responders.
* Providing the federal, state and local officials with the technology and capabilities to protect the homeland.
* Developing transition technology to protect the nation from catastrophic events.
* Advocating for the use of technology to solve major challenges.
* Inspiring potential commercial partners about the mission of the Science & Technology Directorate in order to secure joint investment in mutually aligned initiatives.
* Rapidly develop and deliver knowledge, analyses and innovative solutions that advance the mission of the department.
* Leverage technical expertise to assist DHS components’ efforts to establish operational requirements and select and acquire needed technologies—both through direct investment and through private sector partnerships.
* Develop risk assessments for new technologies (such as drones or cyber threats).
* Strengthen the homeland security enterprise and first responders’ capabilities to protect the homeland and respond to disasters.
* Conduct, catalyze and survey scientific discoveries and inventions relevant to existing and emerging security challenges.
* Foster a culture of innovation and learning, in S&T and across DHS, that addresses challenges with scientific, analytic and technical rigor.
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| Strategic Goals and Priorities | Depends on the policy priorities of the administration |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** |
| Requirements | * Effective scientific management and communication skills. Must be able to communicate effectively across different sectors and agencies at multiple levels within the government.
* Exceptional leadership and business skills, ideally with some experience in the private sector
* Risk-informed decision-making and interagency technology coordination experience
* Explosives, chem/bio, Interoperability/cyber security, border/maritime security, human factors/psychology of terrorism, infrastructure protection/geophysical effects and mission needs and solutions experience
* Science and technology research, development, testing and evaluation experience
* Understanding of inter-agency relationships in the community and ability to build and strengthen relationships at all levels
* Must be comfortable asking questions when clarity is needed
* Previous DOD experience would be beneficial
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| Competencies | * *Collaboration & Influencing*: Works effectively with peers, partners and others who are not in the line of command. In particular, proactively builds relationships with peers in other agencies/organizations and encourages subordinates to build complementary relationships.
* *Strategic Orientation*: Demonstrates complex thinking abilities, incorporating both analytical and conceptual abilities to manage and develop plans and strategies. Specifically, has the ability to anticipate new technology developments and prepares the administration to respond accordingly.
* *Results Orientation*: Drive for improvement of results demonstrated by a track record of substantially enhancing performance of the organization under this individual’s leadership. Sets appropriate metrics and tracks progress and results in line with the administration’s policy objectives.
* *Team Leadership*: Inspires teams to achieve excellence by attracting and developing exceptional talent in the organization. Fosters an environment of openness, respect and desire for achievement.
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| **PAST APPOINTEES** |
| Tara Jean O’Toole (2009-2013): CEO and Director of the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (2003-2009); Director, Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies (2001-2003) |
| Jay M. Cohen (2006-2009): Chief of the Office of Naval Research (2000-2006); Director, Navy Y2K Office (1999-2000); Deputy Chief of Navy Legislative Affairs (1993-1997) |

1. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)