

New Sentinel Blue Report: Five C3PAOs Say the DIB's CMMC Problem Was Never Just Assessor Capacity

New research based on interviews with five independent C3PAOs finds defense contractor unpreparedness rooted in cost and complexity, not assessor capacity.

CULPEPER, VA, UNITED STATES, August 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Sentinel Blue, a [managed security services provider](#) supporting the Defense

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Industrial Base (DIB), today released a new industry report examining the state of CMMC Level 2 readiness in the wake of the Department of Defense's July 13 suspension of CMMC Phase II.

The report, based on interviews with five C3PAOs (Cybersec Investments, Hive Systems, Kieri Solutions, Sentinel Blue, and Smithers) finds that the DIB's lack of readiness has less to do with assessor capacity and far more to do with the cost and complexity of the framework itself.

While the DoD cited a shortage of available C3PAOs relative to the roughly 100,000 DIB businesses requiring assessment, the report finds that assessors have consistently turned away prospective clients for a different reason: those organizations simply weren't prepared for assessment, regardless of scheduling availability.

The report identifies two consistent barriers keeping organizations from readiness: a widespread lack of understanding of what CMMC assessment requires, and the substantial cost of both preparation and certification. It also outlines which organizational profiles tend to fare better or worse in assessments, the documentation failures that most often derail an engagement, and the specific controls that trip up organizations most often.

“We wanted to get past the headlines and talk to the people actually running these assessments,” said Andy Sauer, CEO of Sentinel Blue. “What they told us is exactly what we've seen ourselves: the DIB's lack of preparedness is based on complexity and cost as much as assessor capacity. Hearing what independent C3PAOs are seeing in real-life assessments is

particularly valuable as the CMMC enforcement mechanism is being reviewed.”

Sentinel Blue released the report as DoD collects industry input through an RFI closing August 14, five of whose seven questions ask contractors about the cost and burden of implementing the framework. The task force is expected to deliver recommendations in mid-September.

“The most important thing about CMMC has always been the cybersecurity underneath it,” Sauer said. “Defense contractors are handling sensitive information that adversaries are actively trying to get their hands on, and the threats aren’t slowing down just because the enforcement mechanism is paused. No matter what the DoD decides about the assessment process, the underlying work of securing the DIB remains our top priority.”

The full report, “The CMMC Readiness Gap: What the Assessors Saw Before Phase II Was Paused,” is available at <https://www.sentinelblue.com/c3pao-report-2026/>.

About Sentinel Blue

Sentinel Blue is a CMMC leader and managed security service provider bringing the power of enterprise cybersecurity tools to federal contractors of all sizes. Specializing in emerging technologies and digital transformation, Sentinel Blue offers comprehensive, scalable, end-to-end cybersecurity solutions for clients and partners within the Defense Industrial Base and other highly regulated industries. Guided by a belief that enduring security is built through thoughtful leadership, creative problem solving, and a commitment to doing the work the right way, Sentinel Blue partners with government contractors and enterprises to protect sensitive information, meet regulatory requirements, and support national security missions.

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