

Response to Written Questions Submitted by Hon. John Thune to Hon. Allison Lerner

Question 1. From 2011 until 2016, Lockheed Martin held the Antarctic Support contract, NSF's largest. At that time Leidos took control of the contract. What is your assessment of Lockheed's performance over its contract term? Are there improvements Leidos can make?

Answer. NSF, through the United States Antarctic Program, manages U.S. scientific research in Antarctica. The Antarctic Support Contract (ASC) was awarded to Lockheed Martin in December 2011 and is NSF's largest contract, valued at nearly \$2 billion over 13 years.

We have not conducted a comprehensive assessment of Lockheed's performance over its contract term. Our 2015 audit that assessed the effectiveness of NSF's oversight of Lockheed's performance in ensuring the overall health and safety of USAP participants concluded that Lockheed's performance was generally effective and did not recommend any significant improvements.

In 2016, Leidos Holdings, Inc. and Lockheed Martin's Information Systems & Global Solutions business segment merged. Our FY 2017 audit plan includes an incurred cost of the Antarctic Support Contract and we are planning future audit work to examine issues related to the merger.

Question 2. At the hearing, you mentioned the importance of strengthening the cybersecurity of government information and systems. What are the most important steps the Director should take to increase the effectiveness of the agency's cybersecurity programs?

Answer. The most important steps NSF could take to ensure that it increases the effectiveness of its cybersecurity programs, would be to devote sufficient resources to correcting security vulnerabilities and to follow up to be certain that the Foundation implements proposed corrective actions in a timely fashion to ensure the integrity of its information and systems.

NSF agreed with the six recommendations in our FY 2016 Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) evaluation to strengthen controls necessary to protect its data from unauthorized access. Significant recommendations included development of policies and procedures for privileged account access to ensure that the right people have the proper level of access to NSF systems and developing a process to ensure that system vulnerabilities are remediated in a timely manner. We received NSF's corrective action plan in February 2017 and have issued a memo resolving the recommendations. The FY 2017 FISMA evaluation will assess NSF's implementation of its proposed corrective actions.

The confidentiality, integrity, and availability of NSF's data is crucial to NSF's ability to fulfill its mission. Thus, it is essential that NSF manage information security risk effectively throughout the organization. Complicating this effort is NSF's reliance on various technologies and service providers to support its Information Technology environment.

Question 3. As your respective offices issue recommendations based on audit and investigation work, what steps do you take to ensure that the recommendations are discrete tasks that are feasible for the agency to implement in a reasonable timeframe?

Answer. We take several steps to ensure that our recommendations are discrete tasks feasible for NSF to implement in a reasonable timeframe. Our recommendations are tied directly to our findings, which we discuss with NSF management during the course of the audit. We also discuss recommendations with NSF management and may revise recommendations, as appropriate, based on the agency's feedback to our draft report.

Once we issue a report, we communicate frequently with NSF management during the audit resolution process to help ensure that our recommendations are addressed in a reasonable timeframe. In 2010, OIG and NSF management established a Stewardship Collaboration, comprised of staff from NSF's financial division and OIG's Office of Audits, which meets monthly to discuss current issues and identify possible barriers to resolving audit recommendations. This forum has helped resolve a number of audit recommendations more efficiently and helped ensure that NSF takes corrective actions in a timely manner.

Response to Written Question Submitted by Hon. Deb Fischer to Hon. Allison Lerner

Question. Inspector General Lerner, your testimony references the Intergovernmental Personnel Program. I am concerned that this program could be a significant source of waste, fraud, and abuse at the Foundation. For example, the Foundation has paid salaries of up to \$440,000 for members of the program and has funded a significant amount of travel for them as well. What steps is the Foundation taking to reduce the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse in this program and where do you think they can improve?

Answer. In response to our 2013 and 2016 recommendations, NSF has taken steps to reduce IPA costs. In October 2016, NSF announced that it would start a pilot program to require institutions to contribute a 10 percent cost share for IPAs' salaries and fringe benefits and NSF will eliminate lost-consulting reimbursements in new IPA agreements. In addition, in 2016 NSF limited IPA travel to the home institution under the Independent Research and Development Program to 12 trips per year.

As a next step toward lowering IPA program costs, NSF could evaluate other cost saving measures recommended in our 2013 and 2016 audits, including limiting the annualization of IPA salaries to comparable federal pay rates and closely reviewing what it pays for IPA fringe benefits.

Our audits have not identified fraud in the salaries paid under the IPA program.

Response to Written Question Submitted by Hon. Dean Heller to Hon. Allison Lerner

Question. A difficulty for Inspectors General across federal agencies has always been getting the information they need and pushing back on the agency when they dispute the IG's claims.

It's something I've seen frequently at the Department of Veterans Affairs, and I've always felt very strongly that IG's must be willing to confront agencies to get the information they need to conduct a full investigation.

Have any of you had difficult accessing the information you need to hold your agency accountable and are there tools you need from Congress to increase transparency?

Answer. During my tenure as IG at NSF, my office has not had difficulty accessing information needed to hold NSF accountable. Additionally, the agency has not significantly delayed IG access to information or objected to IG access. I would add that the NSF Director recently reinforced OIG's access authorities by re-issuing a directive to all staff, reminding them, among other things, to fully and promptly comply with all OIG requests for documents, interviews, briefings, and other information and materials.

We appreciate the Committee's support for IGs in general and for our office's oversight efforts to strengthen accountability and safeguard scarce Federal research dollars. We also grateful for the provisions in the Inspector General Empowerment Act that affirm and clarify IGs' access to necessary information in a timely manner.