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Whistleblower Disclosures of Sanitation Problems in D.C. VA Hospital Are Confirmed

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Today, in a [letter](#) to the White House and Congress, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) reported on widespread sanitation issues in the main food preparation area in the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Robert Johnson, a former supervisory cook in the hospital's Nutrition and Food Services Program, disclosed the problems to OSC, which the VA confirmed.

The VA's [investigation](#) found general uncleanliness in the kitchen, including a cockroach infestation, open and undated packages of meat, spoiled produce, and inconsistent food labeling. The VA concluded that these policy violations created a danger to public health.

The hospital has taken corrective actions that investigators recommended, such as assigning responsibility for maintaining safe and sanitary conditions and coordinating efforts to eradicate pests. Also, prior to the VA's investigation, in response to failing to uphold sanitation standards, the current chief of the hospital's Nutrition and Food Services Program terminated four employees and reprimanded six others.

"Mr. Johnson did the right thing by blowing the whistle on the disturbing conditions in the VA hospital kitchen in our nation's capital," said Special Counsel Carolyn Lerner. "Our veterans deserve to be treated well and should not have to worry about the safety of their food while in any VA hospital."

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent federal investigative and prosecutorial agency. Our basic authorities come from four federal statutes: the Civil Service Reform Act, the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Hatch Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). OSC's primary mission is to safeguard the merit system by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially reprisal for whistleblowing, and to serve as a safe channel for allegations of wrongdoing. For more information, please visit our website at www.osc.gov.