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May 14, 2010

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Re: OSC File No. DI-09-1621

Dear Mr. President:

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(3), the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is forwarding to you an agency report concerning disclosures from Bassey Udofot, a whistleblower formerly employed as an Aerospace Engineer Group Leader at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC), Advanced Manufacturing Branch Plating Group (Plating Group), Greenbelt, Maryland. Mr. Udofot, who consented to the release of his name, alleged that during his tenure at NASA, he witnessed practices that placed employees in danger of exposure to hazardous chemicals and compromised the quality and safety of the products that the Plating Group handled.

Mr. Udofot's disclosures were referred to Mr. Christopher Scolese, then Acting Administrator, to conduct an investigation pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(c) and (d). Mr. Scolese referred the inquiry to the NASA Safety Center in Cleveland, Ohio, which assembled an Independent Assessment (IA) Team to conduct the investigation. We received a report of this investigation on November 23, 2009. The agency found all but one of Mr. Udofot's allegations to be unsubstantiated. Mr. Udofot provided comments on the report to this office pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(1). As required by law, 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(3), I am now transmitting the report and Mr. Udofot's comments to you.

The agency report did not substantiate the majority of Mr. Udofot's allegations, but did make recommendations to ensure the safety of employees and the quality of plated parts. These recommendations included having Plating Group employees attend safety meetings and first aid training. The report also recommended that the lab's documentation be updated and that new measures be put in place to document process controls in the plating lab. The recommendation was also made to maintain or eliminate certain pieces of lab equipment that have not been properly maintained over time.

The report did substantiate Mr. Udofot's allegation that coating thicknesses on parts plated by the lab were improperly measured. The report notes, however, that the problem was resolved while Mr. Udofot was still employed at GSFC through the purchase of new equipment to properly measure plated parts. The IA Team indicated that the improper measurements constituted a low risk to the form and fit of plated parts, and noted that functional tests are also performed on completed parts to ensure they meet requirements. The report recommended that

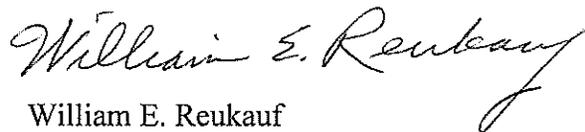
quality assurance personnel and Plating Group employees receive additional training on plating specification requirements and assessment of plating measurements, and that an in-house list be created and maintained of the plating capabilities in the lab in order to ascertain when an outside vendor should be used. The report also recommended that equipment be purchased for the plating lab to validate thickness requirements or that validation be confirmed through a vendor.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(1), Mr. Udofot had an opportunity to review the agency report, and comment on the investigation. Mr. Udofot stated his dissatisfaction with the IA Team's conclusions. He specifically noted that he believed the agency violated its own policies when it failed to properly train employees on how to use and maintain lab equipment. He stated that he believed the IA Team overlooked certain circumstances that occurred while Mr. Udofot was still employed at GSFC, including the failure to properly monitor and flush the water used to rinse parts in the lab. Mr. Udofot reiterated his belief that the rinse water was unsafe, posed a health threat to employees, and could lead to corrosion of plated parts. He also reiterated his allegation that the Plating Group improperly plated parts with a different type of gold than the type specified by the client, without the client's knowledge.

We have reviewed the original disclosures, the agency report, and Mr. Udofot's comments. Based on that review, OSC has determined that the agency report contains all of the information required by statute and that the findings of the agency head appear to be reasonable.

As required by law, 5 U.S.C. § 1213(e)(3), we have sent a digital copy of the agency report and a paper copy of Mr. Udofot's comments to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation and the House Committee on Science and Technology. If you would like to request a paper copy of the agency report, please contact Catherine A. McMullen, Chief, Disclosure Unit, at 202-254-3604. We have also filed a copy of the report and Mr. Udofot's comments in our public file, which is now available online at www.osc.gov, and closed the matter.

Respectfully,



William E. Reukauf
Associate Special Counsel

Enclosures