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NSF OIG Plans Antarctic Inspection, Security Audits; May Review Salaries

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Although on-site visits have been delayed due to COVID-19 precautions, the National Science Foundation (NSF) Office of Inspector General (OIG) plans to conduct an inspection in response to a report issued last summer on assault and harassment at NSF's research programs in Antarctica.

In December, the House Science and Technology Committee held a hearing about the *Sexual Assault/Harassment Prevention and Response* report.^[1] A week or so earlier, Inspector General Allison Lerner discussed OIG's plans with the National Science Board (NSB), which has oversight of NSF.^[2]

As detailed in OIG's fiscal year (FY) 2023 work plan, the agency also intends to conduct "a more comprehensive" review of NSF's oversight of awardee compliance with harassment policies more broadly "as resources permit."^[3]

In December, OIG was in the "early stages" of conducting the inspection but had decided to "potentially" issue "multiple products because we are going to try to get information out quickly as opposed to holding things until everything is done," Lerner told the NSB.

OIG representatives and NSB members had intended to visit Antarctica that month, but the trip was on hold because of the pandemic. The purpose of the site visit is to review financial information as well as "do some boots on the ground assessment of the actions that have been taken to respond" to the report, Lerner said.

OIG is already reviewing NSF's oversight of Leidos, the contractor managing the U.S. Antarctic Program, according to its FY 2022 work plan.^[4] "The \$2.3 billion Leidos contract, which is active through March 2025, is NSF's largest and most visible contract. It requires a strong monitoring program that includes cost monitoring policies and procedures; processes to ensure adherence to deliverable and deadline requirements; and appropriate identification and consideration of risks," OIG said in last year's plan."

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