

National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
Office of the Administrator  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



February 7, 2014

The Honorable Richard Thornburgh  
Chair  
Panel on Independent Review  
of NASA's Foreign National Access Management  
National Academy of Public Administration  
1600 K St., NW  
Suite 400  
Washington, DC 2006

Dear Governor Thornburgh:

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you and your National Academy of Public Administration panel for the thoughtful and thorough review of NASA's Foreign National Access Management program. I deeply appreciate the panel's overall recognition of NASA's need to balance the advancement of our missions--which are prescribed by statute and national policy to include significant and valuable international involvement--with the protection of our sensitive information and technologies. Your recognition of the professionalism of NASA employees and their on-going efforts to improve our security processes is also appreciated.

NASA is committed to reviewing your recommendations thoroughly and to having them inform changes to our existing processes. To that end, I have directed the appropriate NASA offices to examine each recommendation and, where appropriate, to incorporate the panel's recommendation into our processes or identify any barriers to implementation, including resource constraints. The panel identified several broad areas of interest, with associated findings and recommendations, which I have addressed below. I would also like to bring to your attention those areas where we do not fully concur with the panel's findings.

*Integration of Foreign National Access Management*

Across several findings, the Report recommends the need for a more integrated Foreign National Access Management program that consolidates and standardizes various components across multiple Agency offices. NASA recognizes the value of a consolidated program to provide clear, consistent, and effective direction concerning foreign national access management. I have asked the Assistant Administrator for Protective Services to work with relevant Headquarters offices and NASA Centers on how best to accomplish this integration, with an emphasis on: (1) providing consistent guidance, training, and oversight across all NASA Centers; (2) engaging all stakeholders in the identification of best practices and creation of operational manuals and materials; and (3) incorporating stronger compliance and accountability mechanisms into NASA's existing Integrated Center Functional Reviews.

### *Information Technology Security*

The panel rightly identifies information technology (IT) security as a major area of emphasis. The panel's findings map with the findings of several other groups and reports, including by NASA's Inspector General, analyzing the state of IT security at NASA and across the Government as a whole. Based on these assessments, NASA's Chief Information Officer (CIO) is already moving to improve security in this area overall and the panel's findings will help to further inform these efforts. Specifically, the CIO will continue to work toward improvements in areas such as: (1) focusing IT security investments in capabilities that will provide a more holistic approach to protecting NASA's critical data; (2) developing a cross-functional IT Security and IT Operations project team to design and implement a modernized, risk-based solution for role-based elevated privileges management and tracking; and (3) implementing a more effective approval and maintenance paradigm that will enforce privilege pursuant to security requirements.

### *Counterintelligence*

The panel identifies several areas in which NASA's counterintelligence process can be enhanced in terms of awareness, resources, and coordination. I recognize the need to elevate awareness of this important program across the Agency, as well as the benefits of an enhanced counterintelligence program with increased integration of Counterintelligence Special Agents into Center Operations. I have directed my Assistant Administrator for Protective Services to examine the report's findings in this area and to develop an educational and awareness program for the Agency. The Assistant Administrator has recognized and begun to address the need for additional resources, and I have also asked him to analyze the Panel's recommendation that NASA add assets in this area and to present his recommendations in the budget planning process.

While I appreciate the factors underlying the panel's suggestion that reporting of Special Agents be realigned to respective Center Directors, I concur with the panel's intent but not with the implementation recommendation. NASA's counterintelligence program is focused on Agency assets, and by retaining the existing reporting structure, we ensure a standardized and consistent program across the Agency. NASA believes the underlying factors for the panel's recommendation can be achieved with an increased focus on the relationship between counterintelligence personnel and their respective Center leadership teams, without eliminating the benefits of the current management approach.

### *Export Control*

The panel found that NASA's export control processes could benefit from a more systemic and standardized approach, as well as by enhanced awareness of the program across the Agency. Accordingly, I have asked the Associate Administrator for International and Interagency Relations to review the panel's recommendations, with an emphasis on: (1) enhancing and standardizing our training and education for all Centers; and (2) exploring stronger compliance and accountability mechanisms. This review will include an assessment of additional resources that may be required to successfully implement the proposed recommendations.

*Organizational and Functional Relationships*

The panel made a number of observations and findings concerning communication, accountability, alignment, and awareness -- all Agency--level areas of emphasis to which I am strongly committed. I agree with the panel's focus on the importance of senior leadership attention and cross-Agency cooperation to ensure an increasingly effective security program. As you know, I am committed to our continuous improvement in this area, including by requesting this independent assessment of our operations. I will direct all NASA senior leadership to review this important report and, as appropriate, they will be involved in the examination and execution of the above-identified actions. I will also direct all senior leadership to express regularly to the workforce that security and the appropriate management of foreign national access to our facilities, technology, and information are critical elements to the successful implementation of our mission.

Relative to the panel's general findings regarding NASA's culture, specifically about Center competition and the panel's suggestion that NASA may have a tendency not to be a "learning culture," I would share my view that NASA's culture combines the richness of diversity and appropriately healthy competition among our Centers, while fostering an overall NASA team environment. I think that the panel understands NASA's commitment to this balance. Of course, we must still ensure better consistency, alignment, and accountability among all elements of NASA. As a former astronaut and leader in NASA's independent safety oversight panel, I have seen NASA continue to grow and learn from its past triumphs and tragedies. I expect no less in this area.

I want to thank you and the panel again for a job well done. The panel's acute level of attention to the details of foreign national access management, while recognizing the unique role and importance of international engagement to NASA's mission, ensures that this Report will make an essential contribution to the Agency's efforts as we continue to move forward to open frontiers, reach new heights, partner with international entities to advance our understanding of the world, and protect the Nation's investment in our research, technology, and programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Bolden, Jr.', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.  
Administrator

cc:

Joseph P. Mitchell, NAPA Director of Project Develop  
Joe Thompson, NAPA Project Director