

Internal Audit Scores Contracting by DOD Labs

A new Defense Department audit has turned up evidence of frivolous or unnecessary scientific research and lax contracting practices. Specifically, it says that from 1982 to 1983 nearly one-quarter of all contracts let by Defense Department laboratories were apparently unrelated to the Pentagon's top "research priorities and requirements" and estimated that more than 95 contracts, worth approximately \$32 million, may have substantially duplicated other work.

The audit, conducted by the Pentagon's Inspector General at the request of Congress, examined all of the contracts submitted to the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC), supposedly the agency's central repository for scientific data. It also took a close look at hundreds of contracts let by ten of the Pentagon's 73 laboratories, including the Naval Research Laboratory, the Air Force's Rome Air Development Center, and the Army's Electronic Warfare Laboratory, picked as a representative sample.

It found that most of the laboratories kept no record of the military justification for the research they sponsored. Upon independent investigation, the auditors determined that most of the research "was closely related to the laboratories' assigned mission and used in some beneficial way," but that a significant portion of it was not. Sixty-six of the 118 contracts examined at three Navy labs "could not be related to [the] current priorities, tasks, and objectives" of the labs, for example.

Only about half of the labs conducted literature searches for duplicate work before writing a new contract, the auditors found. Some officials claimed that the searches were unnecessary because their work was unique or that the fields were already well known, but many said they had no good reason and most agreed to do it in the future.

A few of the labs said that they did not require a literature search through DTIC because it was obviously incomplete—a claim that the auditors were able to verify. Only 37 percent of all the contracts let during the audit period were disclosed to DTIC, and only 58 percent of the resulting technical reports were on file. In addition, those that were available were often inadequate. As a result, "research information was not available to researchers performing complementary work," the auditors said, and the chance of research duplication was increased.

The audit uncovered only three specific examples of contract duplication, out of a random sample of 360 contracts, a relatively

low percentage. But it attributed the results in part to faulty records and concluded that with better research reporting, "the actual amount of duplication [would appear] much higher." One of the studies, on gallium arsenide semiconductors, was commissioned by the Naval Research Laboratory at a cost of \$343,000, and "largely duplicated a 1978 contract awarded for \$170,000 by the U.S. Air Force Rome Air Development Center," the auditors said. Another involved a \$35,094 contract on shipyard noise from the Naval Ocean Systems Center, which "mirrored" a 1974 in-house investigation by the Naval Ship Research and Development Center.

The Navy maintained that all of the studies were complementary, not duplicative, and requested their deletion from the audit report. It also "nonconcurred" with the report's recommendation that the labs retain some evidence that their research meets military needs, claiming that it would add "an unnecessary and costly administrative burden." But the Army and the Air Force, as well as the under secretary of defense for research and engineering, all agreed, and promised to tighten controls and require more frequent reporting to DTIC. ■

R. JEFFREY SMITH

Working Women Still Segregated and Underpaid

Sex segregation in employment, which is the main reason that women earn less than men, is a "remarkably stable phenomenon" which "has not changed much since at least 1900," according to a recent report from the National Research Council (*Women's Work, Men's Work: Sex Segregation on the Job*). Although many changes have occurred in the past 15 years, the index of segregation is about 60, which means 30 percent of workers would have to move into job categories dominated by the opposite sex to even things out.

The report was prepared by the Committee on Women's Employment and Related Issues, headed by Alice S. Ilchman, president of Sarah Lawrence College. It states that women, who now make up 43 percent of the work force, still earn 60 percent as much as men, "a ratio that has been almost constant for at least the last 25 years."

Women continue to dominate in clerical, teaching, and human service jobs. They have made strong inroads into certain male-dominated occupations such as real estate, accounting, banking, and mail-carrying, but,

the report notes, the most change tends to be in areas where personnel needs are growing rapidly, or which do not entail working closely with men. Low status seems to cling to women—the report says, for example, an accounting firm dominated by women will have lower average salaries than a male-dominated one.

After reviewing the literature, the committee concluded that women's occupational choices and preferences "play a limited role in explaining occupational segregation by sex." Indeed, "reducing sex differences in personal traits produced by socialization without changing the labor market would probably reduce segregation only slightly." The barriers, rather, have to do with the lingering effects of discriminatory laws, personnel practices, and beliefs about women's proper roles. Beliefs about "female" traits, such as emotionality, limited capacity for abstract thought, high tolerance for tedium, and manual dexterity, are still alive and well. Furthermore, the fear of women as sexual distracters and distaste at the prospect of female supervisors also play a powerful role in decisions by male employers.

The discrepancy in men's and women's career paths is so thoroughly reinforced—by everything from early rearing to union-sponsored training programs to the tax structure—that the committee sees little prospect for rapid change. "Even if strategies to reduce segregation are fully implemented, because of the stability built into the occupational structure, sex segregation will continue for a very long time." Therefore, in addition to better enforcement of antidiscrimination laws, the report recommends that new ways be found to redress wage inequities. ■ CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Comings and Goings

Robert W. Fri has been named president of Resources for the Future, one of Washington's largest think tanks concerned with natural resources and the environment. A former deputy administrator of both the Environmental Protection Agency and the Energy Research and Development Administration, Fri succeeds Emery Castle, who has headed Resources for the Future for the past 6 years.

After spending the past 10 years in top positions at the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, most recently as staff director, William J. Dirks has joined the industry he has been regulating. He is now executive vice president of the Atomic Industrial Forum, the nuclear industry's chief trade and information group.