FBI Investigates Leaks at OSI

A bizarre twist has occurred in the long-running dispute between National Institutes of Health director Bernadine Healy and Representative John Dingell (D–MI) over the operation of NIH's Office of Scientific Integrity (OSI). The two are now facing off over a probe by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) into leaks of confidential documents from OSI.

For nearly a year, OSI's staff has been hammered by Healy and scientists outside NIH because the office's findings in several cases have been leaked to the press. In particular, the results of two prominent investigations, involving intramural AIDS researcher Robert Gallo and Tufts University immunologist Thereza Imanishi-Kari—the latter in connection with a paper co-authored by Nobel laureate David Baltimore—have been widely reported. To Healy and other critics, the leaks have unfairly damaged or destroyed the reputations of the scientists involved before either case was fully adjudicated. OSI officials have denied any role in the leaks, but this hasn't prevented the office's reputation within the scientific community from suffering (*Science*, 6 September 1991, p. 1084).

NIH never formally investigated the leaks, however. But over the weekend of 7 March, a friend of an OSI employee alleged to NIH officials that confidential documents had been removed from OSI, according to a source close to the FBI investigation who is sympathetic to the NIH administration. Named in the allegation was Suzanne Hadley, formerly OSI deputy director, and two current OSI support staff. Hadley, now an NIH science education official who works part time for Dingell's oversight and investigations subcommittee, has had rocky relations with top NIH officials since Healy removed her from the Gallo and Baltimore investigations last July (*Science*, 26 July 1991, p. 372).

NIH passed the allegations to Richard Kusserow, the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services. Kusserow declined to conduct an investigation himself, according to a member of Dingell's staff, because he is receiving Hadley's help in an investigation of possible criminal violations with respect to claims made in applications for patents on an AIDS blood test developed by Gallo's lab. Instead, Kusserow referred the allegations to the FBI, which then opened an investigation.

Hadley says FBI agent Alan Carroll interviewed her on 11 March and told her he had already interviewed two support employees who had admitted giving Hadley confidential documents. Hadley declined to tell *Science* whether she had received such documents, and she says she also refused to tell Carroll. She said Carroll told her NIH claimed the leaks had rendered OSI "totally dysfunctional" and had resulted in financial damages on the order of $9,000 a day. According to Hadley, Carroll then told her that if these allegations proved true, the FBI would seek an indictment from the U.S. attorney's office. Contacted by telephone, Carroll hung up when a reporter asked him for his version of events. Hadley charges that she is the victim of calculated harassment: "It looks like what they're doing is attempting to terrorize people in the OSI and to intimidate me," she says.

Enter Representative Dingell. Last week, he fired off a letter to Healy stating that "this is not the first time we have been forced to write to you about apparent acts of harassment and intimidation aimed at courageous, public-spirited whistleblowers"—a reference to a protest Dingell made last summer when Hadley was removed from the Gallo and Baltimore cases. "This is the craziest thing I've ever seen," says one Dingell aide. "Leaking documents is clearly not a federal crime." But the source close to the FBI investigation claims that NIH had no choice but to pass on for investigation the "very serious allegations" it had received, and adds that additional unspecified allegations are also under FBI investigation. Healy chose not to speak for herself—she did not return a telephone call seeking comment, and an NIH spokeswoman said that the agency cannot comment on personnel matters or investigations.

While the investigation continues, NIH has transferred the two OSI support employees to other jobs at NIH. The locks on Hadley's office have also been changed. Although she is said to be free to return to work, she will be moved to another office and can enter her former office only under supervision. Dingell, for his part, is turning up the heat on NIH by launching his own investigation into the FBI probe. He has requested documents from NIH, including a memo that purports to spell out the damages caused by the leaks. ■ DAVID P. HAMILTON

A Plea for Aid to Ex-Soviet Science

The National Academy of Sciences last week issued an urgent plea for U.S. aid to help reverse the rapid erosion of the former Soviet Union's science and technology infrastructure. If the infrastructure collapses, the academy warns, the consequences could be devastating: Some military scientists would look for employment with atomic weapon programs in Third World nations, hastening nuclear proliferation. Existing research facilities, some ranked among the best in the world, would atrophy. "Outstanding" research teams would disintegrate as the best scientists leave for temporary or permanent positions abroad. And the former Soviet republics could founder without a strong science and technology base.

To avoid those dismal prospects, the academy report*—a product of workshops held on 3 March that brought together 120 leaders of the American science and engineering community—lays out a broad course of action for the U.S. government. Specifically, it suggests that the United States target four areas: conversion of former Soviet weapons science to civilian applications; support of existing civilian research groups; preservation of current interdisciplinary and multinational research projects, particularly those in energy research and environmental studies; and creation of opportunities for the commercialization of technology.

"The principal objective, with respect to the military labs, is the need to co-opt them, to interest them in civil affairs and the well-being of their citizens rather than in making weapons," says Ashton Carter, director of the Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University and one of the three co-chairmen of the academy workshop. To this end, the report calls for at least $25 million this year to support collaborative research projects between weapons scientists, nonweapons scientists, and U.S. researchers in such fields as warhead dismantlement, radioactive material storage, environmental cleanup, and energy and physics research. Such programs should involve the entire staff of the existing weapons laboratories.

The academy suggests that initial funding for this effort come from the International Science and Technology Center, a multinational "clearinghouse" for research projects involving former Soviet weapons scientists recently proposed by U.S., German, and Russian officials. But it adds that existing plans for the center are far from adequate.

**Reorientation of the Research Capability of the Former Soviet Union*, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C., 1992.