Near $1 Million Settlement Received by Los Alamos Whistleblower Compensation for Retaliatory Firing by University of California

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University of California has paid a roughly $930,000 settlement to Los Alamos National Laboratory whistleblower Glenn Walp, the nuclear weapons lab's former head of the Office of Security Inquiries, who was fired in retaliation for documenting national security breaches, mismanagement, fraud, cover-up, and corruption at the facility. Disclosures by Mr. Walp and a second whistleblower, Steve Doran, led to long overdue scrutiny of security failures of U.S. nuclear labs.

"This settlement surpasses the parameters of any personal achievement. More importantly, it represents a solid victory for all Americans whose hard earned monies were egregiously wasted and misused by leaders and managers at the Los Alamos Lab," said Glenn Walp in announcing the settlement. "Glenn Walp's settlement should send a clear message to managers in the nuclear weapons complex that retaliation is risky and expensive business," said Mr. Walp's attorney Lynne Bernabei of the Washington, DC firm Bernabei and Katz. "Steve and Glenn's courage in pursuing these issues have finally brought some measure of accountability to the national labs," she added.

Extensive national media attention and House Energy and Commerce Committee investigative hearings followed in the wake of Mr. Walp and Mr. Doran's firings and helped to put a spotlight on problems that went unaddressed for years, even after the sensational Wen Ho Lee scandal. As a result of disclosures by Mr. Walp and Mr. Doran, 18 top officials at Los Alamos Lab were either fired, demoted, or transferred including its Director and Deputy Director. In response, Department of Energy (DOE) Secretary Abraham announced that the contract to manage Los Alamos National Laboratory would be offered up for competition for the first time in the Lab's 60-year history. More significantly, Secretary Abraham directed an overhaul of security at the nation's nuclear weapons labs.

Mr. Walp authored a memo leaked to the Albuquerque Journal and the Project On Government Oversight that drew attention to 260 missing computers, radio devices, and other equipment at Los Alamos. The Department of Energy Inspector General recently concluded as a result of the missing computers identified in the memo that Los Alamos could not "provide adequate assurance that classified, sensitive, or proprietary information is appropriately protected." (see POGO Alert -- Inspector General Report Damaging to Los Alamos Lab and Department Of Energy).

Local counsel J. Gary Gwilliam out of Oakland, CA added, "This settlement confirms what has been said at Congressional hearings, by government investigations, shown in private lawsuits: There is a culture of retaliation at these Laboratories against anyone who stands up against management. Hopefully Glenn Walp's courage in taking on the University of California and their Laboratory will be the beginning of some necessary changes in management." (For further information on other related litigation, particularly against the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, please contact J. Gary Gwilliam, telephone: 510-832-5411 x2311, e-mail: ggwilliam@giccb.com).

Mr. Walp's settlement includes a $900,000 outright payment and three and a half months of salary. In January 2003,
University of California (UC) reinstated Mr. Walp and Mr. Doran to advise UC's President on oversight of its reform efforts at the Lab. Mr. Doran went back to work at UC as the Director of Public Safety and Systems Security, the senior law enforcement officer for the University.

In reflecting on the settlement, Mr. Walp added, "Hopefully, this settlement will initiate the dawn of a new approach wherein all national lab contractors conscientiously strive to be wise stewards of tax dollars, and aggressively and appropriately address the issues of corruption and crime, that, regrettably, appears to permeate these environments. May this settlement send a searing message to all national lab leaders, that they need to concentrate their efforts on the security of all Americans and not personal or corporate gain. Consequently, they need to listen to their people when they bring deficiencies to their attention, and then take appropriate professional action to correct these shortcomings."

For more information/background on Glenn Walp's whistleblowing:

- House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing "Procurement and Property Mismanagement and Theft at Los Alamos National Laboratory" testimony and background, February 26 and March 12, 2003

- CBS News story "Pink Slips for Lab Whistleblowers"

- POGO Alert - Whistleblowers at Los Alamos Fired in Retaliation, November 26, 2002

Founded in 1981, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) is an independent nonprofit that investigates and exposes corruption and other misconduct in order to achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government.

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