

COMMITTEE ON  
**SCIENCE, SPACE, AND  
TECHNOLOGY**  
CHAIRMAN LAMAR SMITH



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**Statement of Space Subcommittee Chairman Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.)  
Hearing on NASA Security: Assessing the Agency's Efforts to Protect Sensitive Information**

**Chairman Palazzo:** Welcome to today's joint hearing on NASA's ability to protect sensitive information.

Recent events have reminded us that protecting sensitive aerospace information is more than a matter of national pride; it is also a matter of national security. Yet, NASA continues to struggle with the protection of sensitive information, even as the agency is persistently targeted by our adversaries. Today we discuss the reports that have shown that NASA's casual and negligent approach to foreign national access - and failure to control sensitive information - is allowing our Nation's prized aerospace technology to be compromised. The purpose of today's hearing is to ensure that NASA follows through on addressing these failures.

On March 16, 2013 federal agents conducted a search of a foreign national contractor from the Langley Research Center before departure to China. This search was prompted by concerns that the individual was inappropriately granted access to sensitive information. Despite the fact that the individual pled guilty to a misdemeanor offense, the nature of the information on his computer, and how he obtained it, remains under investigation.

Similarly, a multi-year investigation dating back to 2009 showed that foreign nationals were granted inappropriate access to information and facilities at NASA's Ames Research Center. As a result, NASA's Office of the Inspector General issued a detailed 41 page report highlighting troubling cases where improper access was granted under direction from senior center leadership.

Today's hearing is one in a series of congressional actions to address these matters. In addition to a hearing held last Congress in this Committee, Dr. Paul Broun, Chairman of the Oversight Committee requested a GAO review of NASA's export control processes. And Rep. Frank Wolf petitioned NASA to work with the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to conduct an independent review of NASA's foreign national access management. Unfortunately NASA has only released a summary of this report.

These reports confirm our worst fears: that the incidents at Langley and Ames are not isolated incidences. Among conclusions from these reports we find: most centers continue to release Scientific and Technical Information that has not been reviewed for export control purposes. NASA lacks both clear export control policies and the oversight necessary to enforce them. The NASA network has indeed been compromised, and these vulnerabilities could have significant impacts on national security. And finally, a troubling trend we've seen across agencies in this Administration: the failure or the unwillingness to hold accountable those responsible for these errors.

Congress has also continued addressing these matters in the NASA Authorization Act that recently passed the House by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 401 to 2. Our bill directs NASA to give a timely report on compliance efforts in response to the recommendations of the NAPA report. It also calls for a GAO review of NASA's compliance and directs NASA to take national security into consideration when conducting technology transfers.

My goal as Chairman of this Committee is to hold NASA accountable while working with the agency to correct these serious matters. I understand that NASA has its challenges: the original Space Act directed the agency to simultaneously "provide for the widest practicable and appropriate dissemination of information concerning its activities" while also directing the agency to protect classified, trade secret, and confidential information. Additionally, NASA—like other federal agencies—is subject to the requirements of the Arms Export Control Act and the Export Administration Act. Too often, enforcement is left to the discretion of center leadership in a NASA culture that "has a tendency to lapse back into old habits once the spotlight is off the area under review." I will point out that that is more than my personal assessment- it is the independent opinion as expressed in the NAPA report.

I am pleased that NASA's Office of the Inspector General is here today to discuss these two reports, as well as their yearly report to Congress on NASA's compliance with Federal export controls laws. I am also pleased that two other outside groups have also reviewed the topic – National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) and GAO.

While much of the focus of today's hearing will be to identify the failures within NASA's current structure, it is also an opportunity to identify ways Congress can improve and clarify its own roles in providing oversight and accountability over NASA activities. I believe this is in the best interest of all involved as we look to the future in a world where our nation's space interests are impacted by both the cooperation and competition of international players.

Thank you.

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