

TSA criticized for excessive spending

Transportation Security Administration didn't follow procedures with \$1.2 billion contract, inspector says

BY KATHERINE PFLEGER SHRADER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Transportation Security Administration has overpaid Boeing Co. by at least \$49 million on a contract to install explosive detection equipment at U.S. commercial airports, according to an internal audit released Monday.

Homeland Security Department Inspector General Clark Kent Ervin found TSA failed to follow appropriate procedures in awarding Boeing the contract, worth \$1.2 billion with the possibility of lucrative extensions.

TSA gave Boeing at least \$44 million in "provisional award fees" — incentives designed to motivate the company to perform at a high level — without ever evaluating the job Boeing was doing.

"TSA did not follow sound contracting practices in awarding and

administering the Boeing contract," the report concluded.

Boeing was awarded the contract in June 2002 to install more than 7,000 explosive detection devices and systems at 429 airports. TSA initially estimated the contract was worth \$508 million and would last seven months, with options to extend it. But TSA modified the contract 54 times by December 2003, increasing the base value to \$1.2 billion and the length to 18 months, the report found.

TSA spokeswoman Amy Von Walter said the contract and payment structure were reasonable "given the competitive market conditions and the schedule-driven environment required to meet the numerous congressional mandates which existed during the first year of the agency."

Lawmakers have complained

about the slow pace of installation of bomb-detection equipment in airports and have criticized TSA's spending practices.

Last week Ervin's office issued a report criticizing the TSA for an "unnecessarily expensive" banquet marking its two-year anniversary. The November 2003 celebration, held at a lavish Washington hotel, cost \$461,745, including nearly \$200,000 for travel and lodging and \$85,000 for a party planner.

Ervin's office spent 11 months investigating the Boeing contract and found the profit paid to Boeing was "disproportionately high when compared to Boeing's cost and risk and compared to what other agencies allow as profit under such contracts."

For example, it found that while Boeing incurred costs of \$39 million serving as project manager and supervising subcontractors around the country, it received \$82 million from TSA to cover those costs, for a rate of return of 210 percent.

Boeing spokesman Fernando

Vivanco defended his company's work. He said Boeing did a job that "everybody said could not be done. We are pleased to have helped the TSA restore the confidence of the traveling public."

Boeing also has come under fire for military contracts. Last year, the Pentagon punished the company for stealing trade secrets from rival Lockheed Martin to help win rocket contracts.

Boeing also lost an Air Force tanker lease deal after an Air Force employee, hired by Boeing, rigged the contract to boost prices. She was recently sentenced to nine months in prison.

Ervin's office made a series of recommendations to TSA. Among them, he said the agency should come up with a plan to evaluate Boeing's performance and recoup any unreasonable fees.

TSA responded that the agency is reviewing the contract to make sure any extra costs are valid.

Education: Blair speaks on reform

Continued from page 4

government approved his proposals.

Education Secretary Charles Clarke seemed to approve the plan, telling legislators Monday it offers a "cogently argued, challenging and compelling vision for the future."

Clarke said the government would respond to the plan and make "positive and detailed proposals" early next year.

Prime Minister Tony Blair emphasized that GCSE and A-level exams would not be abolished if the proposals are implemented.

"Let me be clear that the purpose of reform will be to improve upon the existing system, not to replace it," he said in a speech in Birmingham, central England. "Reform will strengthen the existing system where it is inadequate."

Explosion: Violent incidents abound during election

Continued from page 4

Rahim Alikhel, identified the election worker as Dr. Sattar, a local physician who had helped organize the vote and was traveling to his clinic when he died. The police did not give Sattar's full name.

The other victims were the doctor's nephew, his driver and two other local men, Alikhel said.

The explosion was the latest in a string of deadly incidents casting a cloud over the election but failing to knock it off course.

At least 12 election workers died in the run-up to the vote, and three police officers were killed on polling day by suspected militants shooting at a convoy carrying ballot boxes in central Uruzgan.

Despite poor weather and Taliban threats of more attacks, an estimated 8 million Afghans cast their ballots in a democratic experiment supposed to cement the country's re-emergence since the Taliban fell in 2001 after a U.S. invasion.

By Monday, Karzai was dominating with 1.68 million votes, or 20.9 percent of the total cast, tallied. But his closest challenger, Qanooni, claimed to have evidence of organized fraud favoring Karzai.

Official results are expected by Oct. 31, but the winner should be clear this week.

While officials acknowledge minor problems during the vote, Karzai's opponents allege ballot boxes were stuffed with votes for Karzai in at least four provinces.

They also complained that the supposedly indelible ink used at some polling stations to mark voters' hands in an effort to prevent repeated polling turned out to be easily washable.

Qanooni said at a news conference that he believed he — not Karzai — would be headed for the simple majority needed to avoid a run-off if the ballot had been fair.

"The newborn baby of democracy in Afghanistan has been killed in front of our nation and the international community on the first day of its life," he told reporters at his Kabul home.

Almost all of Karzai's 15 opponents have complained of cheating to a panel of three foreign experts set up to head off their threat to boycott the results.

The panel has yet to report its findings. But Baheen, the election spokesman, suggested Qanooni's accusations were groundless.

"There is no indication of what the candidates are saying, that boxes have been emptied and refilled," Baheen said. "There's nothing like that."

Few independent observers believe Qanooni, a member of the ethnic Tajik minority, could command a country deeply fractured by years of tribal and ethnic warfare.

Karzai enjoys strong support among Afghanistan's traditional rulers, the Pashtuns, and is seen as a bridge to its international backers and a leader untainted by its bloody past.

Associated Press writers Matthew Pennington and Amir Shah contributed to this report

Oil: Spending increase to help grow technical college capacity

Continued from page 4

what the government is doing with the unexpected oil revenues is much different than during the first oil boom."

Bourland said the rise in foreign currency reserves suggests the Saudi government is banking much of the windfall and investing in foreign securities.

The increase in spending on training young Saudis will help vocational centers and colleges nationwide increase capacity by 250 percent over the next seven years, said Saleh al-Amr, vice governor for development in the Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training.

Omar Bafaqih and Mohammed al-Muhaidib, both technical college

students, are happy to see more government aid for the vocational centers. But investing the money may be only half the battle in displacing the foreign work force that came with the last oil boom.

"When I quit university to enroll in the technical college, people said I was a loser," said Bafaqih, 26, an electronics student who shocked his family by pursuing technical training. "It wasn't easy, but I made it."

Al-Muhaidib, a 23-year-old electronics major, has seen the same attitudes. "People look down on Saudis in overalls," he said. "That mentality has got to change and we can change it."

Call us at 343-8633 Open Mon-Sat 10-6 3131 West 11th. Ave.

AMD Sempron™ 2500+
"Power Player"
\$849.99

- Gigabyte 7T600-RZ Motherboard
- 64MB GeForce 4 4000 Video
- 40 GB 7200 RPM Hard Drive
- 512 MB DDR Memory
- Microsoft Windows XP Home
- 17" .27 NEC Monitor

VOS Virtual Office Systems Computers

AMD Athlon™ 64™ 3500+
"Ultimate Scorpion"
\$1799.99

- Abit AV8 Socket 939 Motherboard
- 128 MB ATI Radeon 9800 Video
- 120 GB Seagate SATA Hard Drive
- 1 GB PC3200 Memory
- Microsoft Windows XP Home
- 17" .27 NEC Monitor

Prices subject to change. Visit us on the web at WWW.VOSCOMPUTERS.COM Go Ducks!
VOS Computers of Eugene, LLC Systems are also available at the UO Bookstore. Prices good through 10/31/04.

Emerald Laundromat
• ALWAYS CLEAN •

165 E. 17TH (BEHIND SAFEWAY AND HIRONS)
OPEN 7AM-11PM DAILY

Your planet thanks you for using our machines—the most eco-friendly ever made!

Our exceptional equipment gives you:

- faster wash/dry!
- cleaner clothes!
- more clothes per load—fewer \$\$\$!
- more fun—TV & Free WiFi!

Free WiFi!

Oct. 23
FREE DRY!
you wash 'em, we'll dry 'em.
One per household please
8 am — 5 pm

Oct. 27
Halo laundry party
8 pm till whenever.
Play Halo while you do your laundry!

Oct. 20
How to clean all your outdoor gear...
an outdoor specialist will be on hand.
Bring your gear to wash and your questions!
6 pm - 9 pm.

All of our machines are front loader machines with 18-50 lb. capacity!