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Report No. DODIG-2022-075



INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Defense

MARCH 25, 2022



(U) Evaluation of the Office of Net Assessment

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Results in Brief

(U) Evaluation of the Office of Net Assessment

March 25, 2022

(U) Objective

(U) We evaluated whether the DoD Office of Net Assessment (ONA) developed and implemented policies and procedures to conduct its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment."

(U) Background

(U) The ONA was established in 1973 with the mission to continually provide long-term comparative assessments of trends, key competitions, risks, opportunities, and future prospects of U.S. military capability to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and Deputy Secretary of Defense. The ONA has had only two Directors since its inception.

(U) The ONA is required to follow guidance outlined in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), DoD Directive 5111.11, and SECDEF Guidance memorandums. The ONA has 14 full-time personnel, 10 civilians and one from each of the Services. For FY 2020, the ONA's budget included \$18.06 million in Operations and Maintenance funding and \$3.19 million in Research, Development, Test and Evaluation funding. ONA personnel stated that the office produces eight types of products: Terms of Reference/Prospectus, Assessments, Red Assessments, Component Assessments, Outlines, Papers, Preliminary Net Assessments, and Mature Net Assessments. The production cycle for ONA products consists of research, production, refinement, and distribution. The times vary for each phase of production, depending on the type of product being developed.

(U) Findings

(U) The ONA has conducted its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, enabling the ONA Director to advise the SECDEF and to facilitate support to Congress, the President, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to the ONA 2020 Annual Report, the ONA issued two net assessment products, issued findings from two summer studies, drafted a component net assessment, and delivered ONA insights through more than 150 reports broadly across the DoD and within the U.S. Government.¹

(U) However, we identified four areas in which the ONA should develop, update, or implement policies and procedures. Specifically, the ONA does not:

- (U) have an official documented process for how internal research products are managed;
- (U) consistently implement the Technical Evaluation rating process in its Broad Agency Announcement Standard Operating Procedures for evaluating and selecting external research proposals received in response to the Broad Agency Announcement;
- (U) have a defined distribution process or a way for DoD senior leaders and agencies to determine whether the ONA's ongoing and completed studies or other products would be beneficial to DoD senior leaders or avoid duplication of effort with other DoD or government offices; and

• (S//NF) OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

¹ (U) According to the ONA Chief of Staff, since 1985 summer studies have covered a wide variety of topics, some oriented on Red, some on Blue, and others on technologies or geographic domains.

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Results in Brief

(U) Evaluation of the Office of Net Assessment

(U) Recommendations

(U) Recommendation 1

(U) We recommend that the ONA Director:

- a. (U) Establish written policies and procedures for selecting, producing, reviewing, and validating internal products.
- b. (U) Revise the Technical Evaluation rating process for rating vendor proposals, providing a method for the civilian analysts and military analysts to have clarification discussions with potential vendors about their proposals and reconcile disparate evaluations between the civilian analysts and military analysts, and ensure that marginal proposals are not selected for funding.
- c. (U) Develop a query capability for ONA customers to search ONA products.
- d. (S//NF) [REDACTED]
- e. (S//NF) [REDACTED]
- f. (S//NF) [REDACTED]
- g. (S//NF) [REDACTED]

(U) Recommendation 2

(S//NF) [REDACTED]

(U) Management Comments and Our Response

(U) The ONA Director agreed with recommendations 1.b, 1.d, 1.f, and 1.g, disagreed with 1.a and 1.c, and asked for clarification for recommendation 1.e. The responses provided addressed the intent of recommendations 1.d, 1.f, and 1.g; therefore, these recommendations are considered

(U) resolved. The ONA Director's response partially addressed recommendation 1.b; therefore the recommendation is unresolved and additional comments are required. Because the ONA Director did not agree to implement recommendations 1.a and 1.c, and required clarification for 1.e, these recommendations are unresolved. We provided additional explanation in our response and request that the Director reconsider these three recommendations.

(U) The Defense Intelligence Agency Director provided comments too late to be included in the final report. Unless the Defense Intelligence Agency Director provides additional comments after the final is issued, we will consider the late draft report comments as management's response to the final report.

(U) Please see the Recommendation Table on the next page for the status of the recommendations.

(U) Recommendations Table

Management	Recommendations Unresolved	Recommendations Resolved	Recommendations Closed
(U) ONA Director	1.a, 1.b, 1.c, 1.e	1.d, 1.f, 1.g	None
(U) Defense Intelligence Agency Director	2	None	None

(U) Please provide Management Comments by April 25, 2022.

(U) NOTE: The following categories are used to describe agency management's comments to individual recommendations.

- (U) **Unresolved** – Management has not agreed to implement the recommendation or has not proposed actions that will address the recommendation.
- (U) **Resolved** – Management agreed to implement the recommendation or has proposed actions that will address the underlying finding that generated the recommendation.
- (U) **Closed** – DoD OIG verified that the agreed upon corrective actions were implemented.

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INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

March 25, 2022

(U) MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF NET ASSESSMENT
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY


SUBJECT: (U) Evaluation of the Office of Net Assessment
(Report No. DODIG-2022-075)

(U) This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation. We previously provided copies of the draft and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

(U) This report contains three recommendations that are considered resolved, but remain open, and four recommendations that are unresolved and require additional comments. As described in the Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response section of this report, the Office of Net Assessment (ONA) Director describes what actions the ONA has taken or plans to take to accomplish the resolved recommendations and includes the planned completion dates of the actions. Therefore, we will close the resolved recommendations once the ONA provides documentation that the agreed upon actions are completed. We will track the unresolved recommendations until the ONA has addressed them and submitted adequate documentation showing that all agreed-upon actions are completed.

(U) DoD Instruction 7650.03 requires that recommendations be resolved promptly. Therefore, please reconsider and provide additional comments to the unresolved recommendations within 30 days of the release of this final report.

(U) If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss the evaluation, please contact [DoD OIG: (b)(6)] at [DoD OIG: (b)(6)] (DSN [DoD OIG: (b)(6)]). We appreciate the cooperation and assistance received during the evaluation.


Randolph R. Stone
Assistant Inspector General for Space,
Intelligence, Engineering, and Oversight

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(U) Introduction

(U) Objective

(U) We evaluated whether the DoD Office of Net Assessment (ONA) developed and implemented policies and procedures to conduct its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment." See Appendix A for a discussion of the scope and methodology used during the evaluation.

(U) Background

(U) According to the ONA's website, the ONA was established in 1973. The ONA's mission is to continually provide long-term comparative assessments of trends, key competitions, risks, opportunities, and future prospects of U.S. military capability to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) and Deputy Secretary of Defense.² The ONA has had only two Directors since its inception.

(U) The ONA is responsible for following guidance outlined in the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), DoD Directive 5111.11, and SECDEF Guidance memorandums.³ The ONA has 14 full-time personnel, ten civilians and one from each of the Services.⁴ For FY 2020, the ONA's budget included \$18.06 million of Operations and Maintenance funding and \$3.19 million of Research, Development, Test and Evaluation funding.

(U) The ONA is responsible for producing a variety of products, including highly classified net assessments. Specifically, the ONA produces eight types of products: Terms of Reference/Prospectus, Assessments, Red Assessments, Component Assessments, Outlines, Papers, Preliminary Net Assessments, and Mature Net Assessments. The production cycle for the ONA's products consists of research, production, refinement, and distribution. The times for each phase of the production cycle vary depending on the type of product being developed. See Appendix B for a detailed description of each type of ONA product.

² (U) <https://www.defense.gov/Our-Story/Office-of-the-Secretary-of-Defense/Office-of-Net-Assessment>.

³ (U) DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment," April 14, 2020. SECDEF memorandums to the ONA Director dated June 4, 2015, April 14, 2017, and October 1, 2019.

⁴ (U) According to the ONA Director, one Space Force personnel was detailed to the ONA during the summer of 2021 but on a part-time basis until the ONA receives a full-time billet.

(U) ONA Products

(U) The eight types of products the ONA is responsible for producing include a wide range of assessments, studies, briefings, memorandums, and papers for numerous high-level DoD and other U.S. Government leaders. Each of these different types of projects is unique. A two-page memorandum for the SECDEF might take less than a week to prepare, while a mature, comprehensive assessment normally takes many years to complete. For the purposes of this evaluation, all ONA outputs are referred to as products.

(U) According to the ONA, it issued more than 150 different products to various Government leaders in 2020. During this evaluation, we reviewed 14 of the 71 ONA products that ONA staff developed (internal products) and 15 of the 303 products developed through ONA research contracts (external products) from March 2016 to November 2020. See Appendix C for a list of the ONA products issued in the last 5 years that the team reviewed. See Appendix D for a list of products the ONA included in its 2020 Annual Report.

(U) Internal Products

(U) The ONA's internal products are selected by the ONA Director, Special Assistant for Engagements and Special Projects, Deputy Director, and/or Research Director. These products are then researched and prepared by analysts referred to as civilian analysts/military analysts (CAMAs). The CAMAs are recruited and personally selected by ONA leadership for their knowledge and expertise in various areas of study. According to one ONA leader, CAMAs are "subject matter experts" in their fields.

(U) External Products

(U) According to the Federal Acquisition Regulation, agencies use Broad Agency Announcements (BAA) to fulfill requirements for scientific studies and experimentation directed toward advancing state of the art research and technologies or increasing knowledge and understanding rather than focusing on a specific system or hardware solution.⁵ The ONA has a BAA (HQ0034-ONA-18-BAA-0001) that is published and available to any contractor who wishes to submit a research proposal. The current BAA was issued in August 2018 and proposals in response to the BAA will be accepted through June 2023. The BAA lists 12 research topics for which the ONA is interested in obtaining proposals.

⁵ (U) FAR Part 35, "Research and Development Contracting," Section 35.016, "Broad Agency Announcement," authorizes the use of BAAs and establishes requirements for awarding contracts through BAA solicitation.

1. (U) Future Naval Warfare – Proposals to study the changing character of military competition on and under the sea.
2. (U) Proliferated World – Proposals exploring future security environments marked by varying degrees of nuclear proliferation.
3. (U) Space – Proposals concerning space as an area of military competition that is or may be undergoing significant change.
4. (U) Sustaining Current Areas of U.S. Advantage – Proposals diagnosing specific areas of military competition in which the United States has or might plausibly develop a position of considerable competitive advantage.
5. (U) History (Military) – Proposals for studies on historical topics of interest to the DoD, with a particular interest on military history.
6. (U) Precision Strike – Proposals for studies, wargames, and other analytic efforts exploring the potential future maturation and proliferation of technologies and concepts associated with precision strike, including reconnaissance, command and control, and weapon delivery systems of both long and short range.
7. (U) Economics – Proposals for the study of economics in peace and war.
8. (U) Wargames – Proposals to identify innovative approaches to implement wargames to explore the competition between peer and near-peer competitors.
9. (U) Information Dimension of Warfare – Proposals for studies, wargames, and other analyses addressing the role and value of information in military conflict.
10. (U) Machine Intelligence – Proposals concerning the future development in the design of intelligent agents, and especially machine-learning, automated reasoning, human-computer interactions, and robotics.
11. (U) Biotechnology – Proposals concerning possible future developments in the biological or life sciences, and especially areas such as synthetic biology, genetic engineering, and the understanding of human cognition.
12. (U) Additional Research Topics – Proposals on other important topics that may be of interest to the DoD or the U.S. Government.

(U) The ONA uses the Washington Headquarters Services (WHS) for all of its contracting support. The BAA directs potential vendors to submit proposals during one of the following five months each year (February, April, June, October, and December). All proposals received during a cycle are sent to the ONA for Technical Evaluation. Each cycle, the ONA assigns two CAMAs to evaluate each of the proposals. If the cost of a proposal exceeds \$1 million, a third CAMA is assigned to the evaluation team. ONA personnel stated that they train CAMAs to conduct a Technical Evaluation and include topics such as rating proposals against BAA criteria, evaluating only what is provided, and being fair, thorough and consistent in their evaluations to name a few. According to the ONA Chief of Staff, the CAMAs are prohibited from discussing an evaluation with each other to ensure two (or three) independent evaluations are conducted on each proposal. Although this is considered ONA standard practice, the requirement for independence is not included in the ONA BAA Evaluation Guide.

(U) Each CAMA rates the proposal on two factors: (1) "Potential contribution to ONA mission and Department concerns, and (2) Offeror's capabilities, related experience, and past performance, including the qualifications, capabilities and experience of the proposed personnel." Each CAMA assigns one of the following possible grades for each factor.

- (U) Outstanding – meets requirements, indicates an exceptional approach, strengths far outweigh any weaknesses, and risk of unsuccessful performance is very low.
- (U) Good – meets requirements, indicates a thorough approach, strengths outweigh any weaknesses, and risk of unsuccessful performance is low.
- (U) Acceptable – meets requirements, indicates an adequate approach, strengths and weaknesses offset one another, and risk of unsuccessful performance is no worse than moderate.
- (U) Marginal – does not clearly meet requirements, has not demonstrated an adequate approach, has one or more weaknesses not offset by strengths, and risk of unsuccessful performance is high.
- (U) Unacceptable – does not meet requirements, contains one or more deficiencies, and is un-awardable.

(U) The BAA Evaluations Guide states that "a determination of (Marginal) or (Unacceptable) by consensus renders the entire quote unacceptable and therefore will NOT be considered for award." Once all required Technical Evaluations are complete, the graded checklists are provided to the ONA acquisition team. The acquisition team reviews the Technical Evaluations and prepares a memorandum for the ONA Research Director recommending proposals to award. The Research Director reviews the

(U) recommendations and selects proposals to fund. The Research Director then provides the selected proposals to the WHS Acquisition Directorate contracting officer who awards and manages the contracts. The ONA Acquisition Specialist is assigned as the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) for each awarded proposal.⁶

(U) Distribution of ONA Products

(U) The ONA keeps tight control over the distribution of its products. Almost all of the products that the ONA develops are provided to the DoD or U.S. Government recipient in hard copy with strict instructions that restrict or prohibit further dissemination to other Government personnel or agencies. The ONA Director is the approval authority for sharing the ONA's products and makes the decision on Service components or other agencies to which the ONA will provide each product.

(S//NF) [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

(U) Congressional Interest in the ONA

(U) In January 2019, Senator Charles Grassley requested that the DoD Office of Inspector General (OIG) review the ONA's contracting practices related to four specific contracts awarded to Professor Stephan Halper. In response, the DoD OIG conducted an audit to answer Senator Grassley's questions. The audit team identified weaknesses in the ONA's contracting practices, including incomplete contracting files, limited procedures to ensure that contractors performed their work in accordance with the contract requirements, and incomplete records to support contractor travel payments.

(U) In December 2020, Senator Grassley wrote the DoD OIG in response to this evaluation. Senator Grassley requested that the DoD OIG answer questions and perform analysis related to the ONA's mission, including analysis related to the ONA's performance of assessments and contracting practices.⁷ See Appendix E for Senator Grassley's questions relevant to this evaluation and our responses.

⁶ (U) The DoD OIG Audit Directorate conducted a separate audit of the ONA and the WHS contracting activities. We do not make any further comment about contracting actions in this evaluation report.

⁷ (U) The DoD OIG Audit Directorate addressed Senator Grassley's questions related to the ONA's contracting practices.

(U) Review of Internal Controls

(S//NF) DoD Instruction 5010.40 requires DoD organizations to implement a comprehensive system of internal controls that provides reasonable assurance that programs are operating as intended and to evaluate the effectiveness of the controls.⁸ We identified internal control weaknesses in the ONA's policies and procedures for developing internal products OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e). Specifically, although the ONA did have processes in place, it did not have written policies and procedures for selecting, producing, reviewing, and validating internal products. Developing written policies and procedures that include controls such as checking the sources used to develop products could help improve ONA products. OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

⁸ (U) DoD Instruction 5010.40, "Managers' Internal Control Program Procedures," May 30, 2013 (Incorporating Change 1, June 30, 2020).

(U) ONA Conducted Its Assessment Mission but Could Improve in Certain Areas

(U) The ONA has conducted its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment," which enabled the ONA Director to advise the SECDEF and to facilitate support to Congress, the President, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to the ONA 2020 Annual Report, the ONA issued two net assessment products, issued findings from two summer studies, drafted a component net assessment, and delivered the ONA's insights in more than 150 reports across the DoD and within the U.S. Government in FY 2020.

(U) However, we identified the following four areas in which the ONA should develop, update, or implement policies and procedures.

- (U) The ONA does not have a documented process for how internal research products are managed. This condition exists because ONA leadership believes research operating procedures could restrict creativity of internal research efforts, so leadership relies primarily on oral feedback and informal instructions for the ONA internal products. As a result of not having a documented process for managing internal products, there is an increased risk that the ONA may not consistently execute its assigned net assessment mission.
- (U) The ONA does not consistently follow the Technical Evaluation rating process procedures in its BAA Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for evaluating and selecting external research proposals received in response to the BAA. This condition exists because ONA leadership did not always adhere to the rating process guidelines when selecting external proposals to fund. The inconsistent application of the Technical Evaluation process for external research increases the risk of the ONA not selecting the most impactful topics.
- (U) The ONA does not have a defined distribution process or a way for DoD senior leaders and agencies to determine whether the ONA's ongoing and completed studies and other products could be beneficial to the senior leaders or avoid duplication of effort. This condition exists because the ONA Director said that he does not see value in distributing the ONA's products to a wide audience and, therefore, restricts access based on his assessment of DoD offices' needs and what he believes will be useful to each office. The lack of a defined distribution process of the ONA's products and no tool that allows DoD senior leaders to look up ONA product titles may limit the availability of the ONA studies and

(U) products to DoD senior leaders and agencies that could use them. The ONA Director provides ONA individually selected research studies and products to some DoD senior leaders and agencies and not others based on his discretion and perception of DoD Agency needs.

- (S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e) [REDACTED]

(U) ONA Is Performing Its Assessment Missions in Accordance With DoD Directive 5111.11

(U) The ONA has conducted its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment," enabling the ONA Director to advise the SECDEF and to facilitate support to Congress, the President, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to the ONA 2020 Annual Report, the ONA issued two net assessment products, issued findings from two summer studies, drafted a component net assessment, and delivered ONA insights including more than 150 reports broadly across the DoD and within the U.S. Government in year FY 2020.

(U) DoD Directive 5111.11

(U) DoD Directive 5111.11 establishes the ONA Director as the Principal Staff Assistant and advisor to the SECDEF for net assessment matters.¹⁰ The ONA Director is responsible for the following actions:

- (U) develop and coordinate independent net assessments of standing trends and future prospects of U.S. military capabilities to compare with those of other countries or groups of countries to identify emerging or future threats or opportunities for the U.S;

⁹ (U) DoD Manual 5200.45, "Instructions for Developing Security Classification Guide," (Incorporating Change 2, effective September 15, 2020).

¹⁰ (U) DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment," April 14, 2020.

- b. (U) develop, advise, and consult on any net assessment portion of the Annual Report of the SECDEF to the President and Congress, congressional testimony, and foreign government discussions;
- c. (U) manage an independent research program that uses the latest thinking and relevant historical lessons, from diverse sources, and cultivates a network of experts for the DoD to draw from;
- d. (U) conduct future-oriented war games that examine the evolution of the character of war and assess the expected performance of our current and emerging capabilities relative to those of our adversaries;
- e. (U) provide guidance and staff assistance, represent the SECDEF in the development of national net assessments and resultant competitive strategies by the National Security Council, and serve as the primary Office of the SECDEF focal point for joint efforts with the Intelligence Community to produce net assessments;
- f. (U) provide support for the improvement of and coordinate on the development of technical and joint military net assessments within the DoD;
- g. (U) provide objective and independent analyses of national policy, doctrine, strategy, goals, objectives, and capabilities;
- h. (U) provide analysis of key trends and dynamics impacting the international system, its future trajectory, the nature of competition in the system, and their implications for our military advantage;
- i. (U) coordinate with DoD officials to ensure that DoD documents, deliberations, and discussions reflect appropriate, up-to-date assessment information;
- j. (U) ensure that assigned policies and programs are designed and managed to improve standards of performance, ethics, economy, and efficiency;
- k. (U) use existing systems, facilities, and services of the DoD and of other Federal departments and agencies, when possible, to avoid duplication and achieve maximum efficiency and economy; and
- l. (U) perform such other duties as the SECDEF may prescribe.

(U) National Defense Authorization Act and Secretary of Defense Memorandums

(U) According to the FY 2015 NDAA, the ONA Director reports directly to the SECDEF. Since 2015, new SECDEFs have provided memorandums to the ONA Director with general guidance and core tasks for the ONA to carry out during the SECDEF's tenure. The FY 2015 NDAA and the 2015, 2017, and 2019 SECDEF memorandums tasked the ONA to conduct independent net assessments. The net assessments were to include the standing trends and future prospects of the U.S. military capabilities and potential in comparison with the military capabilities and potential of other countries to identify emerging or future threats or opportunities for the United States.

(U) ONA Work Conducted to Meet the ONA Mission

(U) To determine whether the ONA is conducting its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, we requested and the ONA provided a list of completed internal and external products. The ONA Chief of Staff also provided us a document the ONA developed that matched the 12 DoD Directive 5111.11 requirements with a list of completed products the ONA believed met those requirements.¹¹ We compared and reviewed the ONA products released between FY 2017 and FY 2021 that ONA asserted met each requirement.

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[Redacted text block]

(S//NF) OSD/JS. (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[Redacted text block]

¹¹ (U) The ONA referred to this document as the ONA Mission Crosswalk.

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(U) DoD Senior Leaders' Satisfaction With ONA Products

(U) DoD senior leaders who received the ONA's products were generally happy with the products that they receive and find value in the ONA's work. We interviewed five DoD senior leaders who routinely received the ONA's products. One DoD senior leader told us that the ONA internal products, memorandums, and short papers were very useful. The senior leader further explained that the ONA's products were especially beneficial when it came to cost savings. The senior leader stated that his organization could use the ONA study instead of conducting its own study. The senior leader also stated that some of the ONA's historical products have been useful. Using historical ONA studies, the senior leader was able to consider what happened in the past to form their positions about what might happen in the future. The senior leader also appreciated that the ONA has asked for feedback on its products.

¹² (U) According to the ONA Chief of Staff, since 1985 summer studies have covered a wide variety of topics, some oriented on Red, some on Blue, and others on technologies or geographic domains.

(U) Another DoD senior leader told us that he uses some of the ONA's products and incorporates the work into his own pre-decisional analyses. The senior leader stated that he has recommended that others contact the ONA to receive its products because the ONA's products are useful. The senior leader added that the ONA's products have helped de-conflict some of his workload, allowing him to focus on more pressing topic areas since the ONA's research focuses on topics far in the future. He stated the ONA is a valuable organization because it is allowed to take intellectual chances, think boldly, and take educated, calculated risks. Overall, the five DoD senior leaders we interviewed felt that the ONA served a useful purpose as an honest broker outside the DoD bureaucracy.

(U) ONA Should Formally Document Processes for Managing Internal Products

(U) The ONA does not have a documented process for how internal research products are managed. During our interviews with ONA personnel, we learned that the ONA does not have documented policies or procedures governing how it selected, produced, or validated internal products. The ONA Director selects the topics for internal products based on his meetings with the SECDEF or topics he believes may be of interest to DoD senior leaders. The ONA Director stated that he also meets with each new staff member assigned to the ONA and provides guidance on what a net assessment is, by ONA definition. During their initial meeting, the ONA Director provides a "Research Agreement Memo" that outlines the staff member's duties and the ONA Director's expectations of the staff member. The ONA Director holds monthly research review meetings during which staff members discuss their progress with the ONA Director and other ONA leadership. The contents of these monthly reviews are captured in Monthly Research Reviews where ONA officials discuss items such as completed and still action items, CAMA status updates, management questions and recent deliverables.

(U) In our interview with the ONA Director, he stated that he also provides examples of previous products and a mandatory read file of several hundred pages that defines a net assessment. A read file, however, is not a formal document such as an SOP which explains how an assessment should be conducted or the processes the CAMA should follow when conducting the assessment. The ONA Director also told us that, after the CAMAs finish writing their products, different personnel within the office perform copy editing, review the logic flow, and assist with polishing written products, executive summaries, memorandums, or briefings. The ONA also provided a slide they present to ONA staff during All-Hands meetings that explain the development of Net Assessments and what should take place during each phase of development. The monthly review and presentation documents, however, did not indicate that ONA conducts any type of review to verify that the CAMA has documentation or interview notes for the sources from which they obtained the information in their research or assessments.

(U) ONA Leadership Relies on Oral Feedback and Informal Instructions for ONA Products

(U) The ONA does not have documented processes for internal research products because the ONA leadership believes research operating procedures could restrict the creativity of internal research efforts. Therefore, leadership relies primarily on oral feedback and informal instructions for developing the ONA internal products. According to the ONA Director, when new ONA CAMAs are hired, they are either already experts in their specific work area or learn the area through on-the-job training. The ONA Director further stated that ONA leadership, including himself, the Research Director, and Chief of Staff, attend the 90-minute introductory training on the ONA's roles and functions, and provide guidance to new CAMAs as needed. For example, when the ONA hired a new CAMA in February 2020, the ONA Director provided her a memorandum to explain his expectations. The memorandum explained that the CAMA was given a set of three assignments instead of an overarching assessment area and the freedom to determine how to balance and make progress in each of the areas as the CAMA saw opportunities. The memorandum did provide the topics to pursue, insights on initiatives to try to help develop one of them, and expectations of progression. However, the memorandum did not include documents or instructions with procedures, such as phases, guidance for providing sources, developing steps, or methodology for completing the assessment.

(U) Although ONA leadership can explain how they select and oversee the ONA's products, the ONA should document how products are selected, produced, and validated. According to the ONA Chief of Staff, "a net assessment is more art (the production, conceptual inputs, chain of logic, application of intuition and insight) than science (the dry recital of facts or technical inputs for Red and Blue)." Therefore, he stated each assessment area or research topic would be judged on its own merits and have its own unique production process. Producing unique assessments is fine; however, the ONA's review process should ensure products are consistently produced with the elements that are required in ONA products. For example, Government entities such as the Intelligence Community developed Intelligence Community Directives (ICD). Specifically, ICD 203 establishes standards and procedures that provide analytical integrity as the Intelligence Community, like the ONA, routinely uses multiple sources in the products it produces.¹³ ICD 203 describes quality and credibility of underlying sources, data, and methodologies. It includes factors that affect sourcing, such as accuracy and completeness, possible denial and deception, age and continued currency of information, source access, validation, motivation, possible bias, or expertise.

¹³ (U) Intelligence Community Directive 203, "Analytic Standards," January 2, 2015. ICD 203 also references Intelligence Community Directive 206, "Sourcing Requirements for Disseminated Analytic Products," January 22, 2015, to provide source descriptors that further define the factors discussed.

(U) ONA Has Increased Risk for Inconsistent Performance of Net Assessment Mission

(U) As a result of not having a documented process for managing internal products, there is an increased risk that the ONA may not consistently execute its assigned net assessment mission. Oral, undocumented processes and procedures may be lost in the event of a change in the ONA leadership. In addition, standards that establish procedures for the work produced such as the ICD 203 that the Intelligence Community uses would help to address questions like the ones identified in the 2019 audit of the ONA. Although it was for an external product, the ONA could not provide evidence that a contracted professor visited locations, established an advisory group, or met with people listed in the statement of work. Analytical controls for the purpose of ensuring the quality and credibility of sources are of great significance to U.S. vital interests because the ONA's analytical conclusions inform strategic decisions and future acquisition decisions at the highest levels.¹⁴

(U) In addition, establishing written policies and procedures like, standards to address such matters as the sourcing and methodology that the CAMAs follow can have significant impact. Specifically, the lack of standards for these could raise reasonable questions of the quality and veracity of the information received and the analytical conclusions reached.

(U) ONA Needs Consistency in the Technical Evaluation Rating Process for External Research

(U) The ONA does not consistently follow the Technical Evaluation rating process procedures in its BAA SOP for evaluating and selecting external research proposals received in response to the BAA. As stated earlier, the ONA uses a BAA to solicit for external products. The ONA receives 4 to 24 proposals during each 2-month cycle, so it would have received a minimum of 192 proposals in the last 8 years. For example, according to the ONA Chief of Staff, the ONA received 146 proposals from WHS from August 10, 2018, to December 15, 2020. We reviewed a non-statistical sample of 127 proposals that the ONA reported that it received since 2014. The CAMAs produced 250 Technical Evaluations for those 127 proposals. Of the 127 proposals we reviewed, 32 resulted in funded projects and 95 proposals were not selected for contract awards. The ONA followed its policy by using two CAMAs to evaluate all proposals valued at under \$1 million and added a third CAMA for proposals costing over \$1 million.

¹⁴ The ONA Director and Chief of Staff emphasized that analytical conclusions that inform strategic decisions as we state above are not drawn on a single topic but instead on dozens of studies on a single topic.

(U) The CAMAs review the proposals based on the two evaluation factors of "Potential Contribution to the Mission" and "Past Performance." "Potential Contribution to the Mission" is weighted higher than "Past Performance." According to the Evaluation Ratings Guide, the following ratings are used:

- (U) Outstanding - Quote meets requirements and indicates an exceptional approach and understanding of the requirements. Strengths far outweigh any weaknesses. Risk of unsuccessful performance is very low.
- (U) Good - Quote meets requirements and indicates a thorough approach and understanding of the requirements. Quote contains strengths, which outweigh any weaknesses. Risk of unsuccessful performance is very low.
- (U) Acceptable - Quote meets requirements and indicates an adequate approach and understanding of contract performance. Strengths and weaknesses are offsetting or will have little to no impact on contract performance. Risk of unsuccessful performance is no worse than moderate.
- (U) Marginal - Quote does not clearly meet requirements and has not demonstrated an adequate approach and understanding of the requirements. The quote has one or more weaknesses, which are not offset by strengths. Risk to unsuccessful performance is high.
- (U) Unacceptable - Quote does not meet requirements and contains one or more deficiencies. Quote is not awarded.

(U) Of the 127 proposals we reviewed, 5 included disparate Technical Evaluations. One of the CAMAs rated the proposal "Outstanding" (the highest rating), while the other CAMA gave the proposal a "Marginal" rating. None of the five proposals were funded; however, where there was such a wide disparity between evaluations it would seem prudent to get a third person's opinion. In addition, the CAMAs posed questions to the offeror in several of the 127 proposals we reviewed but did not receive answers to those questions prior to the ONA funding the proposal.

(U) In April 2020, the ONA received a proposal from Baron LLC titled "Anticipating a Major Shift in U.S. Military Strategy." Both of the CAMAs rated this proposal "Marginal" on both evaluation factors. According to the ONA's [Technical] Evaluations Ratings Guide, "A determination of (Marginal) or (Unacceptable) by consensus renders the entire quote unacceptable and therefore it will NOT be considered for award. The quote must be rated (Acceptable) or higher overall to be considered for award." Nevertheless, the ONA awarded this contract for \$360,603.38.

(U) In April 2021, the ONA received a proposal from the Hudson Institute titled "Civilization and Barbarism in Future World Politics." One of the CAMAs wrote the following comment in his evaluation of the proposal: "I read this five times and I'm still not sure the purpose or focal point of the study....I would dread having to read this report if written in a similar fashion as the ramblings from this proposal, yet smarter people within the office may find utility in it – I would hide it from the majority of the Department." This CAMA rated the proposal "Marginal" for Factor 1 (Potential Contribution to the Mission), and "Outstanding" for Factor 2 (Past Performance). The second CAMA rated the proposal "Acceptable" and "Outstanding" respectively. The ONA awarded this contract for \$648,728.02.

(U) In March 2020, the ONA received a proposal from Strate Various Inc. titled "Perception of Reality in the Middle East Future Geopolitics, Strategies, and WMD." One of the CAMAs stated that the proposal was missing how the offeror would conduct the work and included questions such as what they would read and who they would interview. This proposal was awarded for \$148,362. The CAMA still rated the proposal "Acceptable" based on the rating criteria for Potential Contribution to the Mission; however, answers to the questions could have resulted in a higher or lower rating based on how the CAMA viewed the approach to conducting the work. The second CAMA rated the proposal "Good" and "Outstanding" respectively.

(U) ONA Leadership Did Not Always Follow Rating Process Guidelines

(U) Although the BAA SOP includes rating process guidelines, ONA leadership did not always adhere to the rating process guidelines when selecting external proposals to fund. When asked why the two proposals discussed in the section above were funded with marginal ratings, the ONA Director and Chief of Staff were unfamiliar with the proposals and unsure why they were funded. However, the ONA Director stated that he does have the ability to override proposal ratings in certain instances such as when he has more knowledge than the CAMAs on some topics. The ONA Director was not sure if that was the case with the specific proposals and acknowledged that the rating process guidelines do not include this exception.

(U) We also noted that for the two factors used for ONA Technical Evaluations, Potential Contribution to the Mission is weighted higher than Past Performance in the evaluation process. This puts contractors that have not previously worked for the ONA at a disadvantage, because they receive a low score for the Past Performance factor.

(U) The rating process guidelines are clear about how to rate research proposals that the ONA receives. However, final decisions about which proposals to fund rests with the ONA Director and Research Director, and there is at least one proposal that was rated "Marginal" by consensus but still funded, in violation of the ONA's own policy. If

(U) exceptions to the ONA rating process guidelines listed in the BAA SOP exist, the ONA should update the ONA BAA SOP to include those exceptions or stop the use of them.

(U) ONA Has Increased Risk of Not Selecting Impactful Topics

(U) The inconsistent application of the Technical Evaluation process for external research has increased the risk that the ONA is not selecting the most impactful topics. For example, in 59 of the 189 Technical Evaluations for the 95 proposals that were not selected for award, the evaluation checklists had questions posed by the CAMAs. It is unclear whether these were rhetorical questions meant to highlight shortcomings in the proposals or genuine requests for clarification which, if answered by the vendor, could have resulted in a higher rating for the proposal and a positive funding decision. The ONA currently has no procedure for asking clarifying questions to a potential vendor. If the CAMA does not receive answers to questions raised for a proposal it may affect the rating that he or she provides which may result in selecting or not selecting a proposal for funding based on an un-informed rating. Allowing the CAMAs to obtain answers to questions they have on research proposals may result in more-informed ratings for ONA leadership to base their funding decisions for proposals. During our interviews of ONA personnel, one individual stated that he had posed several questions during his last Technical Evaluation but did not know "when or if, he would receive any answers." By funding a proposal that multiple CAMAs, the ONA subject matter experts, have rated marginal or have unanswered questions on, the ONA is increasing the risk of receiving an inadequate product.

(U) ONA Needs to Establish a Defined Distribution Process for ONA Products

(U) The ONA does not have a defined distribution process or a way for DoD senior leaders and agencies to determine whether the ONA's ongoing or completed studies and products could be beneficial to the senior leaders or avoid duplication of effort.

(U) All five of the DoD senior leaders we interviewed stated that they understood the ONA's desire to limit the distribution of its products but wished there was a way for customers to "query" the ONA to see if it had any studies or assessments on topics of particular interest to them. For example, one DoD senior leader told us that, to his knowledge, he receives all of the assessments and other products the ONA produces; however, he emphasized that "you don't know what you don't know." Likewise, another DoD senior leader told us that the ONA recommends some of its products to him based on the topics. He said the ONA's historical products have been useful because they allowed him to consider what has happened in the past to help form positions about what might happen in the future. The senior leader added that, for example, his organization was poised to conduct a specific study with Chinese Strategic Plans, but he discovered that the ONA had already done something that covered what his office

(U) needed. He said his office was able to use the ONA study and save money by not launching a new study. The senior leader told us that he believes there should be some way for organizations such as his to query the ONA to determine if there are products that would be beneficial to their needs.

(U) The five DoD senior leaders we interviewed said they were generally happy with the ONA products they received and believed that the ONA served a useful purpose as an honest broker outside the DoD bureaucracy. These senior leaders also said they would like a way to know what other products the ONA has produced that could prove beneficial to their organization. However, they agreed that merely posting a full list of products would be inappropriate and understood the challenges with making a list available, such as sensitivity or classification of certain topics.

~~(S//NF)~~ ONA Restricts Access to ONA Products

~~(S//NF)~~ The ONA Director said he does not see value in distributing the ONA's products to a wide audience and therefore restricts access based on his assessment of the DoD offices' needs and what he believes will be useful to each office. OSD/JS, (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED]

(U) While this method of distribution enables the ONA to control the dissemination of its products, it is very difficult for one person to learn all of the needs of every DoD organization. This methodology potentially hinders the sharing of information with other DoD senior leaders and agencies that might benefit from access to the ONA's products. The user community would benefit from the ability to query the ONA to see if it has produced (or is in the process of producing) studies or assessments of interest thereby also reducing duplication of effort.

~~(U)~~ Limited Availability of ONA Studies Could Hinder Added Benefits to DoD Senior Leaders

(U) The lack of a defined distribution process for the ONA's products and no tool that allows DoD senior leaders to look up ONA product titles may limit the availability of ONA studies and products to DoD senior leaders and agencies. ONA leaders provide their individually selected research studies and products to some DoD senior leaders

(U) and agencies and not others based on the ONA's discretion and perceived needs of DoD senior leaders. As stated it is not feasible for one person to maintain the knowledge of all DoD needs and plans at all times. The example with the DoD organization about to pay for its own study, but was able to use one of the ONA studies, illustrates how beneficial the knowledge of work that the ONA has performed or is performing could be to an organization in terms of future planning and monetary savings.

(U) One DoD senior leader suggested that the ONA review its process for determining who receives the ONA's products. The senior leader stated that the controlled distribution of the ONA's products limits the availability of information they and others could use in formulating decisions that could benefit the SECDEF or Services. Developing a tool that allows DoD senior leaders to look up ONA products on the appropriate system, such as Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System, could provide a much greater benefit to DoD organizations than simply having the Director selectively push information to organizations as he deems appropriate.

(S//NF)

OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(S//NF)

OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) DoD Manual 5200.45 requires Original Classification Authorities to:

- (U) issue and disseminate security classification guidance for each system, plan, program, project, or mission involving classified information under their jurisdiction;
- (U) review security classification guidance issued under their authority once every 5 years to ensure currency and accuracy, or sooner when necessitated by significant changes in policy or in the system, plan, program, project, or mission, and update the guides as required; and
- (U) revise, whenever necessary, for effective derivative classification, the security classification guides issued under their authority.

(U) DoD Manual 5200.45 also illustrates some format variations for the development of a security classification guide. Specifically, the security classification guide should

(U) precisely state the specific information elements to be protected. The guide should use clear precise language or statements to describe which items of information require classification. The guide also should identify the classification levels and any dissemination control markings or special handling caveats that may apply to each element of information. Lastly, the guide should identify the reason for classification, specify the duration of classification for each element of information, and include any amplifying comments whenever appropriate to explain the exact application of classification.

(U) The ONA Security Classification Guide states in the table in Section II that the ONA Director determines the classification of all ONA products. The ONA Security Classification Guide states that "ONA deliverables, briefing materials, or studies and surveys analysis are classified SECRET to TOP SECRET," but "may be classified at a higher level. Refer to Organizational or Operational SCG [Security Classification Guide] for guidance." Additionally, all ONA products have a distribution caveat of "ORCON," meaning that any distribution must be approved by the ONA Director. The ONA Director is designated as an Original Classification Authority, giving him the authority to make those decisions.

(S//NF) OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[REDACTED]

(U) Paragraph 4 of the ONA Security Classification Guide states:

- (U) The dissemination marking "NOFORN" is an intelligence control marking used to identify intelligence which an originator has determined meets the criteria established in Intelligence Community Directive 710 and will not be provided in any form to foreign governments (including coalition partners), international organizations, foreign nationals, or immigrant aliens without the originator's approval.
- (U) Within DoD, NOFORN is authorized for use only on intelligence and intelligence-related information and products under the purview of the DNI [Director of National Intelligence], in accordance with DNI policy.

(U) The ONA's use of the NOFORN classification marking does not meet the ICD 710 requirement or the ONA's Security Classification Guide requirement. Not only did the ONA classify descriptions for its outlines and papers that do not contain intelligence information as NOFORN, the ONA also used the NOFORN classification for groupings of unclassified titles produced for them. For example, the ONA provided us a list of the unclassified titles of external products; however, the ONA classified the list as SECRET//NOFORN citing the compilation of titles.

(U) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.7(e)

(S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

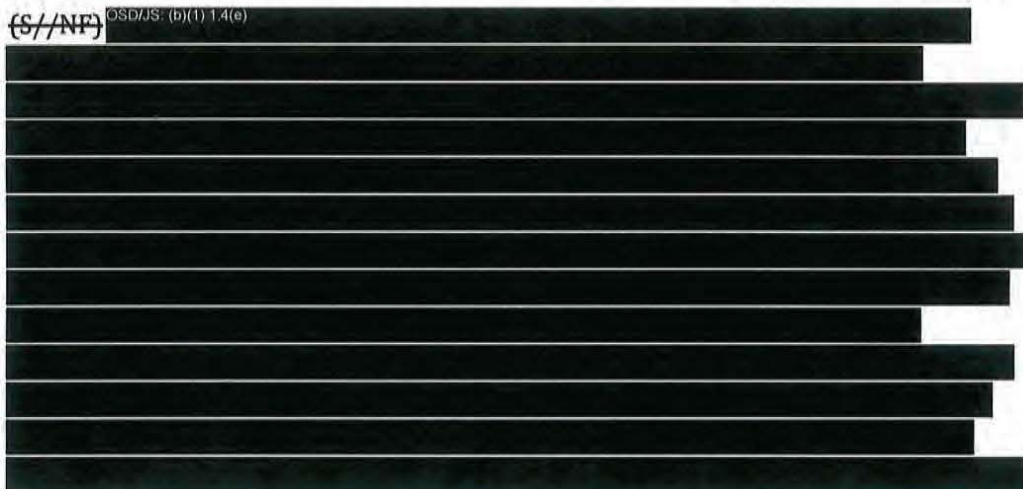
(S//NF) The Director, as the Original Classification Authority for the ONA, relies on a contracted ONA security manager OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e). The Security staff for the ONA consists of one individual, a contractor from Azimuth Corporation. According to the Statement of Work in her contract, the security services provided include the following:¹⁵

- (U) manages daily office operations and security of Sensitive Compartmented Information programs;
- (U) responsible for the overall administration of Special Security functions, including personnel, physical, government contracts, computer, and Sensitive Compartmented Information security matters in accordance with applicable Director of Central Intelligence and DoD Directives;
- (U) acts as the Information Security Officer;

¹⁵ (U) Contract number HQ003419C0142, signed on September 13, 2019.

- (U) acts as the Communications Security Responsible Officer, accountable for the protection of communications security materials;
- (U) acts as the Operations Security (OPSEC) Officer, designated to provide overall climate of OPSEC awareness in the component as well as identifying critical information and applying countermeasures to protect critical information;
- (U) acts as the Information Systems Security Officer, responsible for certifying that personnel conform to the requirements and conditions as established in the DoD Intelligence Information System Site Security Concepts of Operations for the National Capital Region;
- (U) provides security advice and guidance to program managers and provides policy guidance to both Government and office contractors;
- (U) acts as liaison between the DIA, Washington Headquarters Services, and industry contract special security officers to coordinate security issues of mutual interest;
- (U) manages all certification issues and periodic inspections of the Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility; and
- (U) prepares and coordinates DD Form 254 for contracts initiated by the ONA.¹⁶

(S//NF) OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)



¹⁶ (U) DoD Form 254, "Contract Security Classification Specification," is a contractual contract document providing the contractor or subcontractor with security requirements and classification guidance that is necessary to execute a specific classified contract.

(S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

~~(S//NF)~~ OSD/JS (b)(1) 14(e)

(S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 14(e)

(S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

~~(S//NF)~~ OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[REDACTED]

(U) Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response

(U) The ONA Director provided comments on the finding. The ONA Director noted 12 general inaccuracies, 1 point of disagreement, and 2 requests for clarification. See Appendix F for a summary of the ONA Director's comments on the finding and our responses.

(U) Recommendation 1

(U) We recommend that the Office of Net Assessment Director:

- a. (U) Establish written policies and procedures for selecting, producing, reviewing, and validating internal products.**

(U) ONA Director Comments

(U) The ONA Director disagreed with the recommendation. Specifically, the ONA Director stated that the ONA mission outlined in DoD Directive 5111.11, the satisfaction of consumers of ONA material, and the Director's judgment indicate satisfactory procedures for outlining the ONA internal research program. The ONA Director stated that the ONA does not believe that good intellectual work is the product of more elaborate written regulations or that the cost of developing, implementing and monitoring that work using more elaborate written regulations would be worth the benefit. The ONA Director also stated that the ONA's work was well respected, cited, and widely read by DoD senior leaders.

(U) Our Response

(U) The ONA Director did not agree to implement the recommendation or propose actions to address the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is unresolved. ONA policies and procedures should be officially documented. Our intent is for ONA to have policies and procedures to include things such as the ONA's expectations of documenting sources, methodology, and basis of conclusions drawn. We request the ONA Director provide additional comments in response to the final report on how ONA will establish written policies and procedures for selecting, producing, reviewing, and validating internal products.

b. (U) Revise the Technical Evaluation process for rating vendor proposals, providing a method for the Civilian Analysts and Military Analysts to have clarification discussions with potential vendors about their proposals, reconcile disparate evaluations between the Civilian Analysts and Military Analysts; and include exceptions to adhering to the evaluators' ratings to ensure that "Marginal" proposals are not selected for funding unless they meet the exception requirement or stop the use of exceptions.

(U) ONA Director Comments

(U) The ONA Director agreed with the recommendation. The ONA Director stated that the ONA will revise the BAA SOP to clarify the Technical Evaluation process. Specifically, the revision will outline exceptions to policy when the ONA Director may substitute his own judgment for "Marginal" ratings by reviewers. The ONA Director stated that this change will occur no later than 90 days after the receipt of the final report.

(U) In addition, the ONA Director stated that the ONA will revise the BAA SOP to clarify that the Acquisition and Financial Advisor will forward clarifying questions from the CAMAs to the WHS Acquisitions Directorate if the Research Director determines the question appropriate for proposal consideration. The WHS Acquisitions Directorate would then communicate these questions to the vendor. The ONA Director stated the ONA currently holds clarification discussions with potential vendors through the WHS Acquisition Directorate. The ONA Director stated that the WHS Acquisition Directorate manages the acquisition functions on behalf of the ONA and, therefore, holds Contracting Officer responsibilities for the ONA-commissioned contracts.

(U) Our Response

(U) Comments from the ONA Director partially addressed the recommendation; therefore the recommendation is unresolved. We request the ONA Director include a process in the BAA SOP to reconcile disparate evaluations between the CAMAs.

c. (U) Develop a tool with the capability for DoD senior leaders to search Office of Net Assessment ongoing and completed products.

(U) ONA Director Comments

(U) The ONA Director disagreed with the recommendation. The Director stated that he keeps DoD senior leaders updated on ONA research, and answers their questions about how the ONA's work can help them in their roles, during formal and informal calls; email exchanges; and routine encounters at senior level forums such as Joint Chiefs of Staff Tank, Secretary of Defense Senior Seminar, and Senior Leaders Conference.

(U) Our Response

(U) The Director did not agree to implement the recommendation or propose actions to address the recommendation; therefore, the recommendation is unresolved. Although the ONA Director regularly updates DoD senior leaders on ONA products, we believe, as some recipients of ONA products do, that it is unrealistic for one person to maintain knowledge of all of the DoD's needs at all times. Therefore, we believe a tool that identifies the ONA's products on an appropriate platform would only add benefit to the ONA's current process by allowing senior leaders to see what other ONA products may benefit their organization and aid their mission.

d. (S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) ONA Director Comments

(S//NF) The ONA Director agreed with the recommendation to OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e). The Director stated this change will occur no later than 90 days after the receipt of the final report.

(U) Our Response

(S//NF) Comments provided by the ONA Director addressed the recommendation; therefore the recommendation is resolved but will remain open. We will close the recommendation once the ONA OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e).

e. (S//NF) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) ONA Director Comments

(U) The ONA Director requested clarification for this recommendation. OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) Our Response

(S//NF) Comments provided by the ONA Director did not address the recommendation; therefore the recommendation is unresolved. OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(S//NF) [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. We will consider this recommendation closed once the

ONA [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

f. (S//NF) [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

(U) ONA Director Comments

(S//NF) The ONA Director agreed to the recommendation. [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

(U) Our Response

(S//NF) Comments from the ONA Director addressed the recommendation; therefore the recommendation is resolved but will remain open. We will close the recommendation once the ONA [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

g. (S//NF) [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

(U) ONA Director Comments

(S//NF) The ONA Director agreed with the recommendation. [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

(U) Our Response

(S//NF) Comments from the ONA Director addressed the recommendation; therefore the recommendation is resolved but will remain open. We will close the recommendation once the ONA [REDACTED] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

[REDACTED].

(U) Recommendation 2

~~(S//NF)~~

OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) Management Comments Received Late

~~(S//NF)~~ The Defense Intelligence Agency Director provided comments too late to be included in the final report. Unless the Defense Intelligence Agency Director provides additional comments on the final report after it is issued, we will consider the late draft report comments as management's response to the final report.


(U) Appendix A

(U) Scope and Methodology

(U) We conducted this evaluation from October 2020 through December 2021, in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation," published in January 2012 by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that we meet project objectives and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

(U) This report was reviewed by the DoD Component(s) associated with this oversight project to identify whether any of their reported information, including legacy FOUO information, should be safeguarded and marked in accordance with the DoD CUI Program. In preparing and marking this report, we considered any comments submitted by the DoD Component(s) about the CUI treatment of their information. If the DoD Component(s) failed to provide any or sufficient comments about the CUI treatment of their information, we marked the report based on our assessment of the available information.

(S//NF) To determine whether the ONA has developed and implemented policies and procedures to conduct its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, "Director of Net Assessment," ^{OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)}



(U) We also reviewed the ONA Mission Crosswalk that matched the 12 DoD Directive 5111.11 requirements with a list of completed products the ONA believed met those requirements. We matched examples of some of the products they produced with each of the requirements in DoD Directive 5111.11. Some of the products we selected were also listed in the ONA Mission Crosswalk and for those we verified they met the listed requirement. Specifically, the 14 internal and 15 external products that we selected and reviewed met requirements of DoD Directive 5111.11. We also obtained and reviewed the 2020 ONA Annual Report to Congress which contained summaries of products and actions that met requirements of DoD Directive 5111.11. In addition, we reviewed and

(U) confirmed that the ONA developed products that met requirements of the FY 2015 NDAA and 2015, 2017, and 2019 SECDEF memorandums that tasked the ONA to conduct independent net assessments of the standing trends and future prospects of the military and potential of the United States in comparison with the military capabilities and potential of other countries.

(U) To determine whether the ONA's requirements are being met and how its products are used within the DoD, we non-statistically selected five of the ONA's DoD customers to determine whether they are satisfied with the ONA's products. We conducted interviews with each customer to determine how they obtained the ONA product(s), whether the product was useful to the customer's mission, and their overall ability to access ONA products if needed.

(U) To determine how the ONA conducts its assessments, we reviewed the ONA BAA, the BAA SOP, and the ONA Evaluations Rating Guide. In addition, we interviewed ONA acquisition officials, ONA senior leaders, an ONA Executive Support Officer, and the WHS contracting personnel.

(U) To determine how the ONA selects research proposals to fund, we requested and reviewed a non-statistical sample of 127 proposals that the ONA received from 2014 to 2020, and the 250 technical evaluations that the ONA CAMAs performed on those 127 proposals.¹⁸ The DoD OIG Audit team provided us the funded proposals and technical evaluations we reviewed since the team had already obtained contracting files for that time period. The ONA Chief of Staff provided us the proposals that were not funded in order to review the comments and ratings provided by the CAMAs on each. Of the 127 proposals we reviewed, 32 resulted in funded projects and 95 proposals were not selected for contract awards. However, we did not review how the ONA contract actions are performed because all ONA contract actions are performed by the WHS Contracting Officer.

(U) To determine how the ONA conducts security reviews for its assessments, we reviewed the ONA Security Classification Guide and compared it to DoD Manual 5200.45 requirements. We also interviewed the ONA Security Manager to discuss her roles and responsibilities.

(U) To obtain examples of procedures other government agencies implement to ensure analytical integrity of products in which multiple sources are used, we reviewed two Intelligence Community Directives. Specifically, we reviewed ICD 203, "Analytical Standards," and ICD 206, "Sourcing Requirements for Disseminated Analytical Products." To obtain a better understanding of BAAs, we reviewed FAR Part 35,

¹⁸ (U) ONA leadership could not provide an exact number of proposals the ONA received from 2014 to 2020 because it does not maintain records of all proposals that are not funded.

(U) "Research and Development Contracting," Section 35.016, "Broad Agency Announcement,"

(U) Use of Computer-Processed Data

(U) We did not use computer-processed data for this evaluation.

(U) Prior and Ongoing Coverage

(U) In 2019, the DoD OIG conducted an audit of the ONA, titled "DoD OIG Research Project on DoD Office of Net Assessment Contract Management." The report highlighted issues with the ONA's contract oversight and resulted in the ONA publishing its BAA SOP in December 2019.

(U) In 2021, the DoD OIG conducted an audit of ONA contracting practices, titled "Audit of the Office of Net Assessment's Contracting Administration Procedures" (Report No. DODIG-2022-057, January 25, 2022.)

(U) Appendix B

(U) Description of ONA Internal Products

(U) The ONA produces eight different types of products. The ONA's description of each product is below.

~~(S//NF)~~ Mature Net Assessment: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ Preliminary Net Assessment: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ Outline: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ Terms of Reference/Prospectus: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ Assessment: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

~~(S//NF)~~ Red Assessment: ~~OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)~~

[REDACTED]

(S//NF) [redacted] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[redacted]
[redacted]

(S//NF) Component: [redacted] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

(S//NF) Paper: [redacted] OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]

ars

benefits within
temporal boundaries

1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, 2031, 2032, 2033, 2034, 2035, 2036, 2037, 2038, 2039, 2040, 2041, 2042, 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046, 2047, 2048, 2049, 2050, 2051, 2052, 2053, 2054, 2055, 2056, 2057, 2058, 2059, 2060, 2061, 2062, 2063, 2064, 2065, 2066, 2067, 2068, 2069, 2070, 2071, 2072, 2073, 2074, 2075, 2076, 2077, 2078, 2079, 2080, 2081, 2082, 2083, 2084, 2085, 2086, 2087, 2088, 2089, 2090, 2091, 2092, 2093, 2094, 2095, 2096, 2097, 2098, 2099, 2100, 2101, 2102, 2103, 2104, 2105, 2106, 2107, 2108, 2109, 2110, 2111, 2112, 2113, 2114, 2115, 2116, 2117, 2118, 2119, 2120, 2121, 2122, 2123, 2124, 2125, 2126, 2127, 2128, 2129, 2130, 2131, 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135, 2136, 2137, 2138, 2139, 2140, 2141, 2142, 2143, 2144, 2145, 2146, 2147, 2148, 2149, 2150, 2151, 2152, 2153, 2154, 2155, 2156, 2157, 2158, 2159, 2160, 2161, 2162, 2163, 2164, 2165, 2166, 2167, 2168, 2169, 2170, 2171, 2172, 2173, 2174, 2175, 2176, 2177, 2178, 2179, 2180, 2181, 2182, 2183, 2184, 2185, 2186, 2187, 2188, 2189, 2190, 2191, 2192, 2193, 2194, 2195, 2196, 2197, 2198, 2199, 2200, 2201, 2202, 2203, 2204, 2205, 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209, 2210, 2211, 2212, 2213, 2214, 2215, 2216, 2217, 2218, 2219, 2220, 2221, 2222, 2223, 2224, 2225, 2226, 2227, 2228, 2229, 2230, 2231, 2232, 2233, 2234, 2235, 2236, 2237, 2238, 2239, 2240, 2241, 2242, 2243, 2244, 2245, 2246, 2247, 2248, 2249, 2250, 2251, 2252, 2253, 2254, 2255, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2264, 2265, 2266, 2267, 2268, 2269, 2270, 2271, 2272, 2273, 2274, 2275, 2276, 2277, 2278, 2279, 2280, 2281, 2282, 2283, 2284, 2285, 2286, 2287, 2288, 2289, 2290, 2291, 2292, 2293, 2294, 2295, 2296, 2297, 2298, 2299, 2300, 2301, 2302, 2303, 2304, 2305, 2306, 2307, 2308, 2309, 2310, 2311, 2312, 2313, 2314, 2315, 2316, 2317, 2318, 2319, 2320, 2321, 2322, 2323, 2324, 2325, 2326, 2327, 2328, 2329, 2330, 2331, 2332, 2333, 2334, 2335, 2336, 2337, 2338, 2339, 2340, 2341, 2342, 2343, 2344, 2345, 2346, 2347, 2348, 2349, 2350, 2351, 2352, 2353, 2354, 2355, 2356, 2357, 2358, 2359, 2360, 2361, 2362, 2363, 2364, 2365, 2366, 2367, 2368, 2369, 2370, 2371, 2372, 2373, 2374, 2375, 2376, 2377, 2378, 2379, 2380, 2381, 2382, 2383, 2384, 2385, 2386, 2387, 2388, 2389, 2390, 2391, 2392, 2393, 2394, 2395, 2396, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400, 2401, 2402, 2403, 2404, 2405, 2406, 2407, 2408, 2409, 2410, 2411, 2412, 2413, 2414, 2415, 2416, 2417, 2418, 2419, 2420, 2421, 2422, 2423, 2424, 2425, 2426, 2427, 2428, 2429, 2430, 2431, 2432, 2433, 2434, 2435, 2436, 2437, 2438, 2439, 2440, 2441, 2442, 2443, 2444, 2445, 2446, 2447, 2448, 2449, 2450, 2451, 2452, 2453, 2454, 2455, 2456, 2457, 2458, 2459, 2460, 2461, 2462, 2463, 2464, 2465, 2466, 2467, 2468, 2469, 2470, 2471, 2472, 2473, 2474, 2475, 2476, 2477, 2478, 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483, 2484, 2485, 2486, 2487, 2488, 2489, 2490, 2491, 2492, 2493, 2494, 2495, 2496, 2497, 2498, 2499, 2500, 2501, 2502, 2503, 2504, 2505, 2506, 2507, 2508, 2509, 2510, 2511, 2512, 2513, 2514, 2515, 2516, 2517, 2518, 2519, 2520, 2521, 2522, 2523, 2524, 2525, 2526, 2527, 2528, 2529, 2530, 2531, 2532, 2533, 2534, 2535, 2536, 2537, 2538, 2539, 2540, 2541, 2542, 2543, 2544, 2545, 2546, 2547, 2548, 2549, 2550, 2551, 2552, 2553, 2554, 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2560, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2568, 2569, 2570, 2571, 2572, 2573, 2574, 2575, 2576, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2580, 2581, 2582, 2583, 2584, 2585, 2586, 2587, 2588, 2589, 2590, 2591, 2592, 2593, 2594, 2595, 2596, 2597, 2598, 2599, 2600, 2601, 2602, 2603, 2604, 2605, 2606, 2607, 2608, 2609, 2610, 2611, 2612, 2613, 2614, 2615, 2616, 2617, 2618, 2619, 2620, 2621, 2622, 2623, 2624, 2625, 2626, 2627, 2628, 2629, 2630, 2631, 2632, 2633, 2634, 2635, 2636, 2637, 2638, 2639, 2640, 2641, 2642, 2643, 2644, 2645, 2646, 2647, 2648, 2649, 2650, 2651, 2652, 2653, 2654, 2655, 2656, 2657, 2658, 2659, 2660, 2661, 2662, 2663, 2664, 2665, 2666, 2667, 2668, 2669, 2670, 2671, 2672, 2673, 2674, 2675, 2676, 2677, 2678, 2679, 2680, 26

Date _____

2020, the ONA had

100

OSD/JS (b)(1) 1 7(e)

(U) ONA Products Issued in 2020

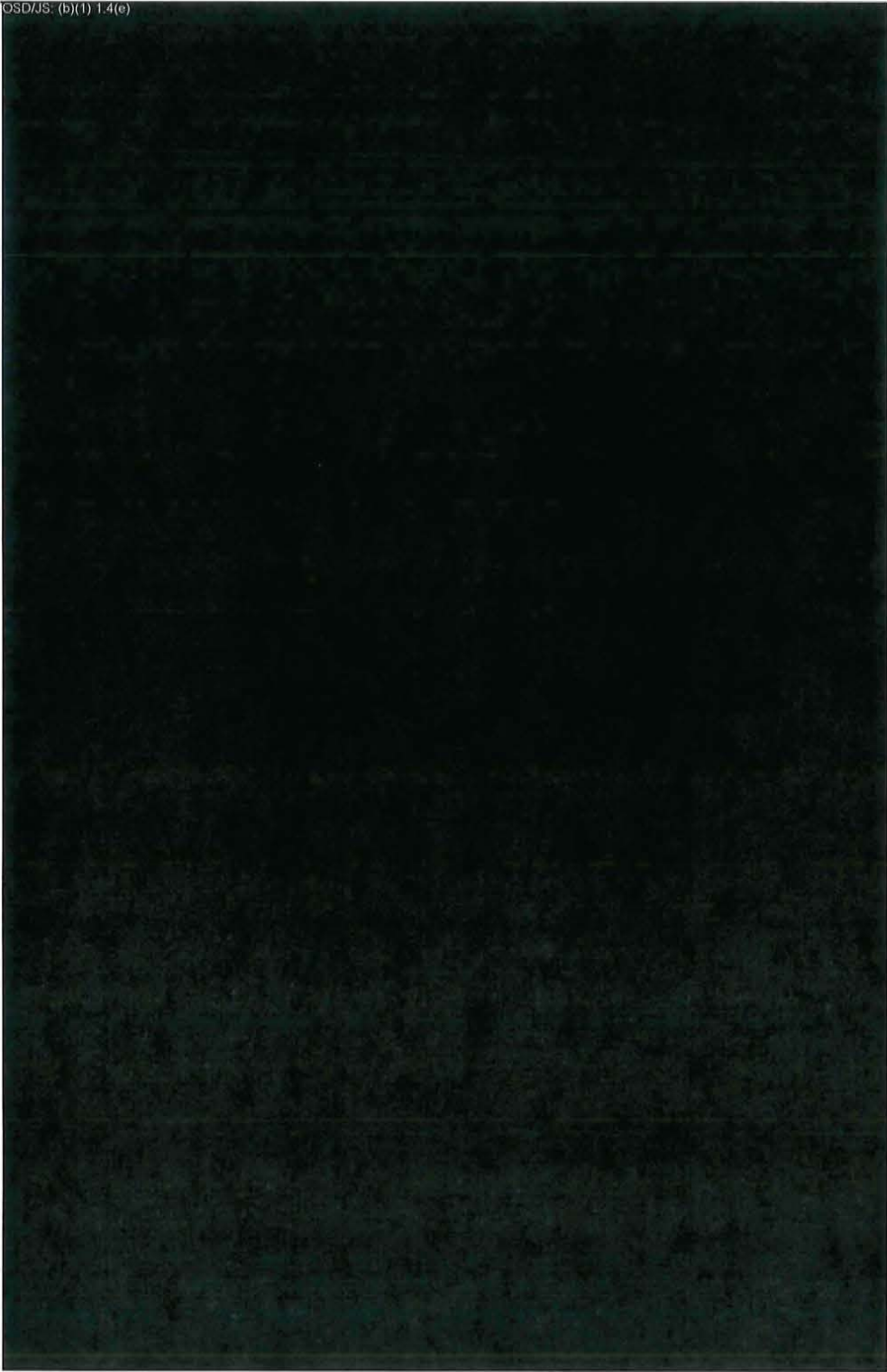
(U) Internally Produced Work

(U) Source: The ONA

(U) Externally Commissioned Work

(SECRET//NOFORN)	
Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)	
[REDACTED]	

OSD/JS. (b)(1) 1.4(e)



OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)



OSD/JS. (b)(1) 1.4(e)



~~(SECRET//NOFORN)~~

(U) Source: The ONA

(U) Appendix E

(U) Response to Questions from Senator Grassley's December 2020 Letter to the Acting Inspector General

(U) On December 18, 2020, Senator Charles Grassley, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance, sent a letter to the DoD Acting Inspector General in response to our announcement of this evaluation. Senator Grassley asked us to expand our evaluation to answer nine questions. The questions and our responses are listed below. This report answers Questions 1, 2, 4, 8, and 9. A report by the DoD OIG Audit Directorate provided answers to Questions 5, 6, and 7. Question 3 was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

(U) Question 1: Why has the ONA failed to perform net assessments since 2007?

(U) Response: We found that the ONA performs preliminary and mature net assessments, in addition to producing special products throughout each fiscal year. We obtained 2 lists that included more than 500 products the ONA produced since 2007, including 71 internal and 303 external products the ONA produced since 2016. We reviewed 14 internal and 15 external ONA products, 4 of which were labeled net assessments.

(U) Question 2: Are other offices within the DoD performing net assessments separate from the ONA? If so, please provide a complete list of those offices and the total cost of those assessments for each office for each of the past 5 years.

(U) Response: We did not identify any other DoD offices that perform net assessments of the scope or range of those performed by the ONA. The outlook for ONA assessments reaches out 30 years and can take 6 to 8 years to complete.

(U) Question 3: Are other offices within the DoD performing generic research as described in the new DoD Directive 5111.11? If so, please provide a complete list of those offices and the total cost that research for each office for each of the past 5 years.

(U) Response: This question is beyond the scope of our evaluation and would take a considerable amount of time beyond the milestones of this evaluation. This evaluation focused on the ONA's operations. However, at least one DoD senior leader we interviewed indicated that his office was about to begin a particular study but learned from, a study the ONA Director shared with him, that the ONA had conducted a similar study which the senior leader was able to use instead of launching a new one.

(U) **Question 4:** Since the ONA no longer performs net assessments, is the ONA's existence duplicative and wasteful in light of other DoD offices performing the same work?

(U) **Response:** We found that the ONA continues to perform net assessments and produce other products for the SECDEF, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other select senior DoD leaders. We also found that the ONA's products differ in scope from products by other DoD offices. For example, the Executive Support Officer (Defense Intelligence Agency Liaison), whose responsibility is to serve as a liaison between the Intelligence Community and the ONA, told us that the ONA and Intelligence Community likely would never duplicate efforts. He stated that this is because the Intelligence Community cannot perform the breadth of assessments that the ONA does with a long range outlook spanning 30 years or more into the future.

(U) **Question 5:** A description and assessment of the extent to which the ONA has failed to comply with laws and regulations in contracting for research projects during the 5 year period ending on September 30, 2020.

(U) **Response:** This question was addressed in the DoD OIG Audit Directorate's report.

(U) **Question 6:** An assessment to determine whether all supporting documentation for the ONA's contracting comports with the Statement of Work agreed to between the contractors and the DoD during the five year period ending on September 30, 2020.

(U) **Response:** This question was addressed in the DoD OIG Audit Directorate's report.

(U) **Question 7:** The steps the ONA must take to ensure that all contract documents are collected and recorded as required by all relevant law and regulation.

(U) **Response:** This question was addressed in the DoD OIG Audit Directorate's report.

(U) **Question 8:** What is the total cost to perform an annual net assessment?

(S) **Response:** The ONA does not perform an annual net assessment. Each individual net assessment is performed over several years, in addition to the ONA products that are produced in shorter time frames. Additionally, each net assessment is unique and will vary in cost based on the type and amount of time required to produce. For example, ^{OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)} [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. We reviewed products with costs ranging from approximately \$148,000 to \$1.7 million to complete.

(U) **Question 9:** An analysis as to whether or not an annual net assessment can be performed by the ONA at a cost of less than \$10 million.

(U) **Response:** The ONA's products range in costs. The scope and type of assessment the ONA performs are determining factors in the cost. As previously discussed, we reviewed products with costs ranging from approximately \$148,000 to \$1.7 million to complete.

(U) Appendix F

(U) Management Comments on the Finding and Our Response

(U) ONA Director Comments on Section Headings and the Finding Paragraph

(U) The ONA Director stated that the heading of our finding “ONA Conducted Its Assessment Mission but Could Improve in Certain Areas” weighs the ONA’s accomplishments and shortcomings equally. The Director stated that the first sentence of our finding section, “The ONA has conducted its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, ‘Director of Net Assessment,’” states the overarching finding. The Director also noted that statements in the Internal Controls section should be clarified. The Director stated that he believes the ONA has reasonable assurance of the efficacy of its internal controls, and he does not agree that written procedures specifying how to produce ONA studies have merit. Lastly, the Director stated the report does not reference classified guidance for how the ONA makes these decisions.

(U) The ONA Director stated that the effects, as stated in each of the first three bullets in the finding paragraph, are generally inaccurate. Specifically, the Director stated that our statement that a lack of a satisfactory “documented process for how internal research products are managed” generates “increased risk that the ONA may not consistently execute its assigned net assessment mission” is generally inaccurate because the ONA has satisfied many SECDEFs and other stakeholders since it was established in 1973. The Director stated that our statement that “inconsistent application of the Technical Evaluation process for external research has increased the risk that the ONA is not selecting the most impactful topics” is generally inaccurate because the evaluations from the ONA analysts contribute to, but do not form the sole basis of, decisions on whether to fund a proposal. Lastly, the Director stated that the statement regarding the lack of a distribution process and tool for DoD senior leaders to search ONA product titles is generally inaccurate because no query tool would provide DoD senior leaders with an accurate window into the ONA’s activities. The Director stated that the ONA commits one employee to maintain internally-managed databases. The databases enable the ONA to deliver relevant analysis to DoD senior leaders and maintain a battle rhythm which includes a monthly deliverables review. The Director stated that the ONA’s personal interactions with senior leaders across the DoD and U.S. government provide a more accurate picture of the ONA’s work.

(U) Our Response

(U) We acknowledge that the finding gives equal weight to the ONA's accomplishments and shortcomings. The heading, like the full finding, is a balanced title which highlights that the ONA is accomplishing its mission but also informs the reader that the ONA has areas in which it can improve. The report describes the ONA's procedures as well as the documents we reviewed that reflect how the ONA produces its studies. However, we consider not having those processes and procedures in an official document such as an SOP, a signed guidance memorandum, or something of that nature, constitutes a lack of an internal control which must be noted in the Internal Control section of the report.

(U) Regarding the risks we describe, the statements in the first two bullets that the lacking items increased risk does not mean an incident has occurred, but instead that if these areas are not improved, there is a greater chance that an incident could occur. As previously stated, although the ONA Director regularly updates DoD senior leaders on ONA products, we believe it is unrealistic for one person to know all of the DoD's needs at all times. Therefore, we believe that a tool identifying the ONA's products on the appropriate platform would enhance the ONA's current process by allowing senior leaders to see what other ONA products may benefit their organizations and their mission.

(U) ONA Director Comments on the Report Finding Section

(U) The ONA Director pointed out multiple areas in the finding section he thought reflected general inaccuracies. Specifically, the ONA Director disagreed with the statement that the ONA does not conduct any type of review to verify the CAMA's documentation or interview notes for the sources from which they obtained information. The Director stated that the ONA has several methods for evaluating the soundness of a CAMA's judgement, such as progress reviews every 6 to 8 months during which the Director and others probe CAMA's analytical judgements and query the basis of those judgements. The Director also emphasized that the CAMAs are subject matter experts in their research areas. Lastly, the Director stated that ONA analysis is fundamentally different from IC analysis and therefore restrictive standards that govern the IC are not applicable to development of net assessments.

(U) The ONA Director stated the report might lead a reader to conclude that the ONA processes BAAs without the involvement of the WHS Acquisition Directorate. The Director also stated that the heading stating that the "ONA Leadership Did Not Follow Rating Process Guidelines," will be misconstrued, and he emphasized that 125 of the 127 proposals we reviewed adhered to the BAA SOP.

(U) The ONA Director stated that for the section "ONA Needs to Establish a Defined Distribution Process for ONA Products," we interviewed only five DoD senior leaders and not any of the personal staff assistants to the SECDEF, 4-star military officers or

(U) Assistant Secretaries with whom he routinely meets. The Director stated that he gains insight into what is on the minds of the senior leaders and shares ONA work.

(S//NF) OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e) [REDACTED]

(U) Our Response

(U) We described the ONA's progress reviews, titled "Monthly Research Reviews" in the report. Our review of the documents the ONA provided and interviews with ONA officials verified what occurs during these reviews. As we state in the finding, the ONA did not provide any documentation to indicate that it conducts any type of review to verify that the CAMAs have interview notes or other documentation for their sources. We also state in the finding that the ONA should develop standards such as the IC has developed for its work. We place emphasis on the fact that IC standards and procedures provide analytical integrity and that the ONA should develop standards and procedures that provide the same.

(U) We include a description of the BAA process and include WHS participation in that process in the Background section. The heading of the mentioned section is "ONA Leadership Did Not Always Follow Rating Process Guidelines." We do not believe it will be misconstrued as we include the word "Always" and include details regarding how many proposals we reviewed and how many did not comply with the process.

(U) The DoD senior leaders we interviewed all expressed satisfaction with the ONA's work; however, some stated that they would benefit from knowing whether other ONA products might relate to their mission. Interviews with the individuals the ONA Director mentioned would not change the fact that a tool that lists ONA products could provide additional benefit to DoD senior leaders.

(S//NF) OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e) [REDACTED]

(U) Director of Net Assessment



December 23, 2021

SUBJECT: (U) Response to the Draft for DoDIG Evaluation of the Office of Net Assessment

(U) Your evaluators found that ONA continues to perform our mission in accordance with DoD Directive (DoDD) 5111.11, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), and Secretary of Defense guidance; and that the staff of senior leaders across the Department are satisfied with our work.

(U) I dispute the report's conclusion that because there is a risk of "inconsistent performance" or "inconsistent ONA internal processes are suspect. Neither risk has been realized. ONA will continue to maintain internal controls to mitigate them. All organizations mitigate the kinds of risks outlined in the draft, and no organization can reasonably, responsibly, or cost effectively conduct its mission with no risk. Your evaluators observed the measures ONA takes to carry out its mission, with minimal risk. Those measures, large and small, were the basis of your central finding that *ONA carries out its mission to the satisfaction of senior U.S. government leaders and other senior stakeholders*

(U) The evaluation affirms that ONA carries out its mission to the satisfaction of senior U.S. government leaders and other senior stakeholders. However, some sections of the report leave the reader with the inaccurate impression that ONA is underperforming or misperforming, based on extraordinarily infrequent or minor errors, or on risks that have not materialized. As a result, I believe the report could unjustly mislead a reader. As the present DoDIG evaluation culminates more than ten other IG inquiries into ONA in just four years, I believe this concern is warranted.

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

Attachments:

1. (U) Review of factual and general inaccuracies (attachment is classified SECRET//NOFORN)
2. (U) Internal Process Revisions Since 2016 (attachment is UNCLASSIFIED)
3. (U) Response to DODIG Recommendations (attachment is UNCLASSIFIED)
4. (U) Classification Markings for Appendices C & D of Discussion Draft (attachment is SECRET//NOFORN)

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

~~SECRET~~ ~~NOFORN~~
~~SECRET~~ ~~NOFORN~~
Attachment 1. (U) Review of factual and general inaccuracies

(U) The Office of Net Assessment (ONA) submits the following summary and rationale for the general and factual inaccuracies contained in the December 9, 2021 draft for DoDIG Project Number D2021-DEVOA-001.000.

(U) General inaccuracy, pages vi and 7, Table of Content (p. vi) and Page/Section Header (p. 7), "ONA Conducting Assessment Mission but Could Improve in Certain Areas."

(U) This header weights equally the themes of mission accomplishment and shortcomings. It leaves the reader with an impression that ONA is underperforming. DoDIG evaluators found that ONA is accomplishing its missions to the satisfaction of DoDD mandate and senior leaders. They also identified areas for process improvement, most with which ONA agrees, most of which would help any organization build efficiencies. However, this header risks misinterpretation. Readers unwilling to contemplate the entirety of the report or who willfully apply the header out of context could have the impression that ONA is underperforming. This risk has repeatedly manifested itself through some media outlets, as well as unjustified administrative proceedings, often inspired by similar language.

(U) The first sentence of the section states the overarching finding of the Evaluation: "The ONA has conducted its assessment mission in accordance with DoD Directive 5111.11, 'Director of Net Assessment,' which enabled the ONA Director to advise the SECDEF and to facilitate support to Congress, the President, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

(U) General inaccuracy, page 6, "Review of Internal Controls" paragraph.

(U) There are a number of statements in this paragraph we would like to clarify.

(U) ONA has reasonable assurance of the efficacy of our internal controls. DoDIG evaluators observed that ONA meets our DoDD 5111.11 requirements. DoDIG evaluators observed that ONA satisfied its customers.

(U) The idea that written procedures should specify precisely how to produce our studies has no merit. Each ONA study topic has its own unique production procedure. ONA provided the written, classified guidance, which is not referenced by the DoDIG report, for how we make these decisions.

(U) ONA will explore the benefits of implementing a more explicit policy about keeping research records, so that for any internal product, we have a list of sources and subject-matter experts to draw on in the future, if not already cited directly in the study.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 7, first sub-paragraph of the second paragraph.

(U) The draft states that a lack of satisfactory "documented process for how internal research products are managed" generates "increased risk that the ONA may not consistently execute its assigned net assessment mission." Yet ONA has satisfied many Secretaries of Defense and other senior stakeholders, operating throughout with the same mission, a small staff, and a commitment to research excellence, since its establishment in 1973. Forty-nine years of continuous operation through multiple Administrations while gaining a reputation for analytic prowess and strong anticipatory work suggests consistent execution of our assigned net assessment mission.

(U) The nature of net assessment and the peculiarities of research topics require creativity from the analyst. There are a number of external factors that could hinder internal research efforts—access to data, drastic changes to the security environment in the midst of research (collapse of the Soviet Union,

advent of the "Global War on Terror," for example). ONA was more concerned in the context of the paragraph with the applied creativity of our Civilian Advisors & Military Advisors (CAMA).

(U) General inaccuracy, page 7, second sub-paragraph of the second paragraph

(U) The draft states that an "inconsistent application of the Technical Evaluation process for external research has increased the risk that the ONA is not selecting the most impactful topics." The Technical Evaluations produced during the evaluation process are an inherent part of the BAA selection process and are consistently integrated into decision making. The questions posed to vendors in the Technical Evaluations are forwarded to WHS AD, which has sole responsibility for communicating with vendors in the negotiation phase. When WHS AD notifies ONA of the results of those negotiations, both the questions and answers are included in ONA's decision-making process as outlined above and in accordance with ONA's established SOP. The evaluations from ONA analysts contribute to, but do not form the sole basis of decisions to fund or not fund a proposal. Those decisions are made by the Director and Research Director, in concert with the Acquisition & Financial Advisor, based upon the evaluations, associated questions and answers from the evaluation process, the analytic priorities established and recorded in ONA's written Research Plan, the anticipated needs of senior DoD leaders, the cost of the proposed project, and other factors. This process combines established ONA research priorities with ONA's sense of senior leaders' needs, to ensure that ONA selects those projects most impactful to the Department. ONA will revise its Technical Evaluation process to address the identified inconsistencies. A revision to the ONA BAA SOP will reflect these changes to the process.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 7, third sub-paragraph of the second paragraph

(U) The draft states that the "lack of a defined distribution process of the ONA's products and no tool that allows DoD senior leaders to look up the ONA product titles may limit the availability of the ONA studies and products to DoD senior leaders and agencies that could use them." ONA commits nearly one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee to the implied task of maintaining internally-managed databases that enable ONA to proactively deliver relevant analysis to senior leaders and stakeholders. ONA carries out this task by a defined and practiced process. That process is captured in the ONA battle rhythm. The ONA battle rhythm includes a monthly deliverables review to highlight the best-written and/or most timely studies on topics of interest to senior leaders; a monthly research review to synchronize the internal research of CAMA, the external research program, and to connect ONA's work with demand signals from senior leaders, and a monthly research update to provide detailed updates on the progress of individual CAMA.

(U) ONA has for five decades been "ahead" of the Department on themes important to the Secretary of Defense—weaknesses in the Soviet system; the Revolution in Military Affairs; broadly, the advent of the long-range precision strike regime; the rise of China; and, now, other topics of pressing importance to the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chairman, and Vice Chairman. No query "tool" would have provided senior leaders with an accurate window into ONA activity. That accurate look is created by the personal interactions of ONA with senior leaders across the Department and the U.S. government and through the routine encounters of ONA staff with staff counterparts from other directorates within OSD, the Joint Staff, the Services, and Combatant Commands.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 12, second paragraph beneath the (U) "ONA Should Formally Document Processes for Managing Internal Products."

(U) The draft states that a "read file, however, is not a formal document such as an SOP which explains how a net assessment should be conducted or the process the CAMA should follow when

conducting the assessment.” A net assessment is more art (the production, the conceptual inputs, the chain of logic, the application of intuition and insight) than science (the dry recital of facts or the technical inputs for Red and Blue). Each ONA assessment area or research topic will be judged on its own merits and have its own unique production “process.” ONA does not believe that good intellectual work is a result of ever more elaborate written regulations, or that the cost of developing, implementing and monitoring intellectual work using those elaborate written regulations would be worth the benefit. ONA work is well respected, cited, and widely read by the senior leaders of the Department of Defense and the U.S. government.

(U) The draft states that “ONA does not conduct any type of review to verify that the CAMA has documentation or interview notes for the sources from which they obtained the information in their research or assessments.” ONA disagrees with this statement. Net Assessments are valuable in large part because they offer preliminary judgements for problems of uneven and incomplete information. ONA has several methods for evaluating the soundness of an analyst’s judgements and the basis for them. In-progress reviews for each analyst are held every 6-8 months. In these sessions the Director and others rigorously probe and test analytic judgements and query the substantive basis for those judgements. Assessments nearing completion are subjected to comprehensive review by the Director and others to validate or defend conclusions and the basis for judgements reached. The combination of originality and analytic soundness of ONA’s products speaks to the success of these processes. Additionally, ONA hires analysts based on their demonstrated research skills and subject matter expertise captured in performance reviews of other senior leaders and described in a lengthy and highly-involved interview process. The Director and Research Director assign these analysts to assessment areas based on the mastery of the subject matter. CAMAs are the subject matter experts in their research areas.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 13, paragraph beneath the header, (U) “ONA Leadership Relies on Oral Feedback and Informal Instructions for ONA Products.”

(U) This paragraph of the draft does not capture the flow of individualized guidance memorandums and periodic In-Progress Reviews (IPR) conducted by each CAMA every 6-8 months. While each assessment area is unique and demands the specific expertise offered by the individual CAMA working on a particular assessment area, the series of IPRs, of which a CAMA on a three-year assignment will conduct five to seven, is the venue for the two-way exchange of ideas among the individual CAMA, the Chief of Staff, Deputy Director, Research Director, and Director. The results of IPRs are captured in tasks, notes, marginalia on draft work, and minutes.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 14, paragraph under the header “ONA Has Increased Risk for Inconsistent Performance of Net Assessment Mission.”

(U) The draft states that “(a)nalytic controls for the purpose of ensuring the quality and credibility of sources are of great significance to U.S. vital interests because the ONA’s analytical conclusions inform strategic decisions and future acquisition decisions at the highest levels.” The final draft includes a short clarification under footnote number 14, but the process we are describing warrants additional explanation. The portion of this statement indicating that ONA’s analytical conclusions inform strategic decisions and future acquisition decisions at the highest levels” is generally accurate if the reader were to emphasize the word “inform.” The inaccuracy of the statement is the implication that ONA’s “analytical conclusions” would be based on one single study, such as the one cited in this particular paragraph of the draft. The list of studies ONA provided to your evaluators showed multiple—often, dozens—of studies on any single topic, including the topic of the report cited by your evaluators. The variety of methodologies, sources, and analytic styles, among other characteristics, all contribute to what the

Director judges to be a thorough exploration of specific topics that would generate conclusions relevant to the strategic decisions and future acquisition decisions at the highest levels.

(U) Disagreement with assertion, page 14, paragraph under the header "ONA Has Increased Risk for Inconsistent Performance of Net Assessment Mission."

(U) The draft states that "standards that establish procedures for the work produced like the ICD 203 that the Intelligence Community uses would help to address questions like the ones identified in the 2019 audit of the ONA." ONA analysis is fundamentally different from analysis presented by the Intelligence Community. Such restrictive standards that govern the Intelligence Community are not applicable to development of net assessments, which require a higher degree of judgement of the relative value of a diverse collection of information pertaining to both the United States and its adversaries.

(U) Clarification, page 14, paragraph beneath the header, (U) "ONA Needs Consistency in the Technical Evaluation Rating Process for External Research."

(U) As written, the draft might lead the reader to conclude that ONA processes BAAs without WHS AD involvement. WHS AD receives proposals from vendors and forwards those proposals to ONA. ONA reviews every single proposal forwarded to it by WHS AD and tracks the precise number of proposals it has received. ONA has documented evidence that WHS AD did not forward all of the proposals it received during a particular BAA submission period. Also, after review of BAA proposals, ONA recommends to WHS AD an action to be taken on the proposal. It is WHS AD who awards contracts.

(U) General inaccuracy, page 16, header and the first paragraph beneath the header (U) "ONA Leadership Did Not Follow Rating Process Guidelines."

(U) In 125 of the 127 proposals the DoDIG evaluators reviewed, ONA adhered precisely to the letter of the BAA SOP. That is a compliance rate of 98.4%. To mitigate the 1.6% remainder (which adhered to the spirit of the research management process), ONA has accepted the recommendation to revise that SOP. The header of this section is misleading and will be misconstrued. Without the added context of the general theme of the report and its baseline findings that ONA is meeting its mandated mission, this header improperly suggests egregious shortcomings, if not misconduct, by ONA.

(U) General inaccuracy, pages 17-18, paragraphs beneath the header (U) "ONA Needs to Establish a Defined Distribution Process for ONA Products."

(U) ONA commits nearly one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee to the implied task of maintaining internally-managed databases that enable ONA to proactively deliver relevant analysis to senior leaders and stakeholders.

(U) The DoDIG evaluators interviewed five DoD senior leaders, but did not interview any Personal Staff Assistants (PSA) to the Secretary of Defense or 4-star rank military officers or Assistant Secretary-level officials. This is the group of senior officials with whom the Director of ONA meets on a routine basis. It is through these engagements that ONA provides principals with awareness of ONA work relevant to the decisions they are facing. In these encounters, the Director also gains insight into what is on the minds of these senior leaders.

~~(S)~~ Clarification, page 21, fourth paragraph on the page

~~(S)~~ OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

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(U) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) General inaccuracy and disagreement with assertion, page 22, first full paragraph beneath the bullet points outlining the Statement of Work for the ONA Security Manager's contract.

(U) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.7(e)

(U) General inaccuracy, page 23, header (U) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)

(U) See Attachment 4 for comments on Appendices C and D.

(U) Comment, page 43, Appendix E

(U) ONA appreciates the objective responses of an external body such as the DoDIG that validated the responses ONA had provided to the Senator on multiple occasions.

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(U) Attachment 2: A Partial Listing of Internal, Proactive Process Revisions since 2016

- 1 (U) **Management controls.** ONA has increased the degree of overall rigor in its management practices. ONA has held annual all hands to increase team cohesion and understanding of the organization's direction. ONA has held daily meetings of its leadership team. ONA has instituted a battle rhythm that connects the contract management, research management, and distribution management functions, including review and status of each of these areas. All of these measures represent increased management attention, which adds increased overhead and opportunity costs to the research management process. ONA leadership has consistently received the highest possible rating for leadership and management on annual fitness reports, across Administrations.
- 2 (U) **Research management.** ONA has added increased structure to its research agenda since 2015. ONA has authored routine and reflective memorandum assessing the prospects and future of the research agenda, and ways to improve its oversight. ONA has put in place a taxonomy of ONA net assessment product types, articulated broad areas of internal research focus, and repeatedly revised the external research program to add new assessment areas. ONA has established routine progress reviews for high risk or new entrants under commissioned work, and attends in process workshops and wargames to provide direction and improve study outcomes. ONA has written guidance for internal research, including tasks and suspenses. ONA also holds In Progress Reviews of analyst work. All of these measures represent increased management attention, which adds increased overhead and opportunity costs to the research management process. Other US agencies (including DOS, DNI, DHS, DEA, USAF, USMC, and the Joint Staff) and foreign governments (including Japan, India, and the UK) as well as NATO seek out ONA to understand and emulate our best practices in research management.
- 3 (U) **Contract management.** ONA has increased the degree of rigor in its contract management practices since 2015. ONA has established a Standard Operating Procedure for its Broad Agency Announcement, routinely documented financial, spending and other resource decisions, established monthly reviews of the acquisition/research program, and increased the number of the acquisition/finance staff. ONA has hired external detailed personnel to improve administrative responsibilities and expertise, and established more thorough contracting officer representative folders, and added kick-off meetings for research projects. All of these measures represent increased management attention, which adds increased overhead and opportunity costs to the contract management process. ONA passes the annual internal service/acquisition review based on our known, observed, expert and superior performance.
- 4 (U) **Distribution/impact management.** ONA has increased the degree of rigor in the distribution of its intellectual property since 2015. ONA has tracked every report distribution to principal leaders. ONA has developed a database to track deliverable receipt. ONA has instituted a formal method of monitoring network health and synchronizing senior leaders' interests with on-going and previous ONA internal and external studies. ONA has provided reading lists for senior leaders and their staffs, book and media selections, and routinely interacts with or interviews four star or higher leaders through the US government to ascertain and meet their intellectual or analytic requirements. All of these measures represent increased management attention, which adds increased overhead and opportunity costs to the contract management process. ONA has distributed thousands of its reports to hundreds of senior leaders and their staffs.

(U) Attachment 3. Response to DODIG Recommendations

(U) Recommendations. The Office of Net Assessment (ONA) submits the following responses to the recommendations published in the Draft for DoDIG Project Number D2021-DE V0SA-0011.000.

(U) Recommendation 1

(U) Recommendation 1a. Establish written policies and procedures for selecting, producing, reviewing, and validating internal products.

(U) Disagree. ONA judges present written policies to be sufficient. ONA does not offer an alternative course of action as we do not accept the premise that our existing procedures require corrective action. Our accomplishment of missions outlined in DoD Directive 5111.11, the satisfaction of consumers of ONA material, and the Director's judgment indicate satisfactory procedures outlining our internal research program.

(U) A net assessment is more art (the production, the conceptual inputs, the chain of logic, the application of intuition and insight) than science (the dry recital of facts or the technical inputs for Red and Blue). Each ONA assessment area or research topic will be judged on its own merits and have its own unique production "process." ONA does not believe that good intellectual work is the product of ever more elaborate written regulations, or that the cost of developing, implementing and monitoring intellectual work using those elaborate written regulations would be worth the benefit. ONA work is well respected, cited, and widely read by the senior leaders of the Department of Defense and the U.S. government.

(U) Recommendation 1b. Revise the Technical Evaluation process for rating vendor proposals, providing a method for the Civilian Analysts and Military Analysts to have clarification discussions with potential vendors about their proposals, reconcile "mismatched" evaluations between the Civilian Analysts and Military Analysts, and include exceptions to adhering to the evaluators' ratings to ensure that "Marginal" proposals are not selected for funding unless they meet the exception requirement or stop the use of exceptions.

(U) Agree. ONA will revise our Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to clarify the Technical Evaluation Process. Specifically, the revision to the BAA SOP will outline exceptions to policy when the Director may substitute his own judgment for "marginal" ratings by reviewers, given the formers' access to the thinking of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Chairman, and Vice Chairman, and other senior leaders and sources of information. ONA will complete this revision no later than 90 days from receipt of the final DoDIG report.

(U) Agree, with clarifying points. ONA is not currently authorized to directly conduct "clarification discussions" with vendors, as recommended. Washington Headquarters Services (WHIS) Acquisition Directorate (AD) manages the acquisitions functions on behalf of ONA and, therefore, holds Contracting Officer responsibilities for ONA-commissioned contracts. ONA currently executes clarification discussions with potential vendors via WHIS AD. The Acquisition & Financial Advisor will forward "clarifying questions" from the evaluators to WHIS AD if the Research Director determines the question as appropriate for proposal consideration. WHIS AD then communicates these questions to the vendor. WHIS AD provides the vendors' responses to ONA. ONA will revise the SOP to identify this discretionary step in management of the external research program.

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(U) Recommendation 1c. Develop a tool with the capability for DoD senior leaders to search Office of Net Assessment ongoing and completed products.

(U) Disagree. The Director meets frequently with senior leaders from across the Department in formal and informal office calls, routine encounters at senior level forums such as the Joint Chiefs of Staff Tank, Deputy's Management Action Group (DMAG), Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC), Secretary of Defense Senior Seminar (SSS), and Senior Leaders Conference (SLC); and frequent phone calls, VTCs, and e-mail exchanges. In these encounters, the Director keeps senior leaders updated of ONA research and answers their questions about how ONA's work can help them in their roles as senior leaders. ONA commits nearly one Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee to the implied task of maintaining internally-managed databases that enable ONA to proactively deliver relevant analysis to senior leaders and stakeholders.

(U) Recommendation 1d. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]

(U) Agree. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted] ONA will complete this revision no later than 90 days from receipt of the final DoDIG report.

(U) Recommendation 1e. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]

(U) ONA seeks clarification of this recommendation. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted]

~~Recommendation 1f~~ Recommendation 1f. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)]

(U) Agree. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted]

(U) Recommendation 1g. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]

(U) Agree, with clarification. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted]

Clarifications are offered within.

(U) Recommendation 2. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted]

(U) Agree. Per recommendation 1f. [OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.7(e)]
[redacted]

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~~(S//NF)~~ Attachment 4. Classification Markings for Appendices C & D of Discussion Draft

This attachment is classified SECRET//NOFORN because the compiled listing of these ONA reports, internal and external, reveal details about ONA's classified research agenda.

~~(S//NF)~~ ONA Internal Products, listed in Appendix C, page 31.

Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)		
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)		

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

(b)(1) ONA External Products, listed in Appendix C, pages 32-33.

Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS. (b)(1) 1.4(e)		
OSD/JS. (b)(1) 1.4(e)		

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

(U) Internally Produced Work, listed in Appendix D, page 34

19. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2000; 284: 2689-2695.

Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) + 4(e)		

~~SECRET//NOFORN~~

Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)		

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Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)		

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Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 4(e)		

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OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)

Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS: (b)(1) 1.4(e)		

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Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
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Classification of the Report	Classification of the Title	Date
OSD/JS (b)(1) 1.4(e)		
		

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(U) Acronyms

(U)

BAA	Broad Agency Announcement
CAMA	Civilian Analysts/Military Analysts
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
ICD	Intelligence Community Directive
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
ONA	Office of Net Assessment
OPSEC	Operational Security
SECDEF	Secretary of Defense
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WHS	Washington Headquarters Services

(U)

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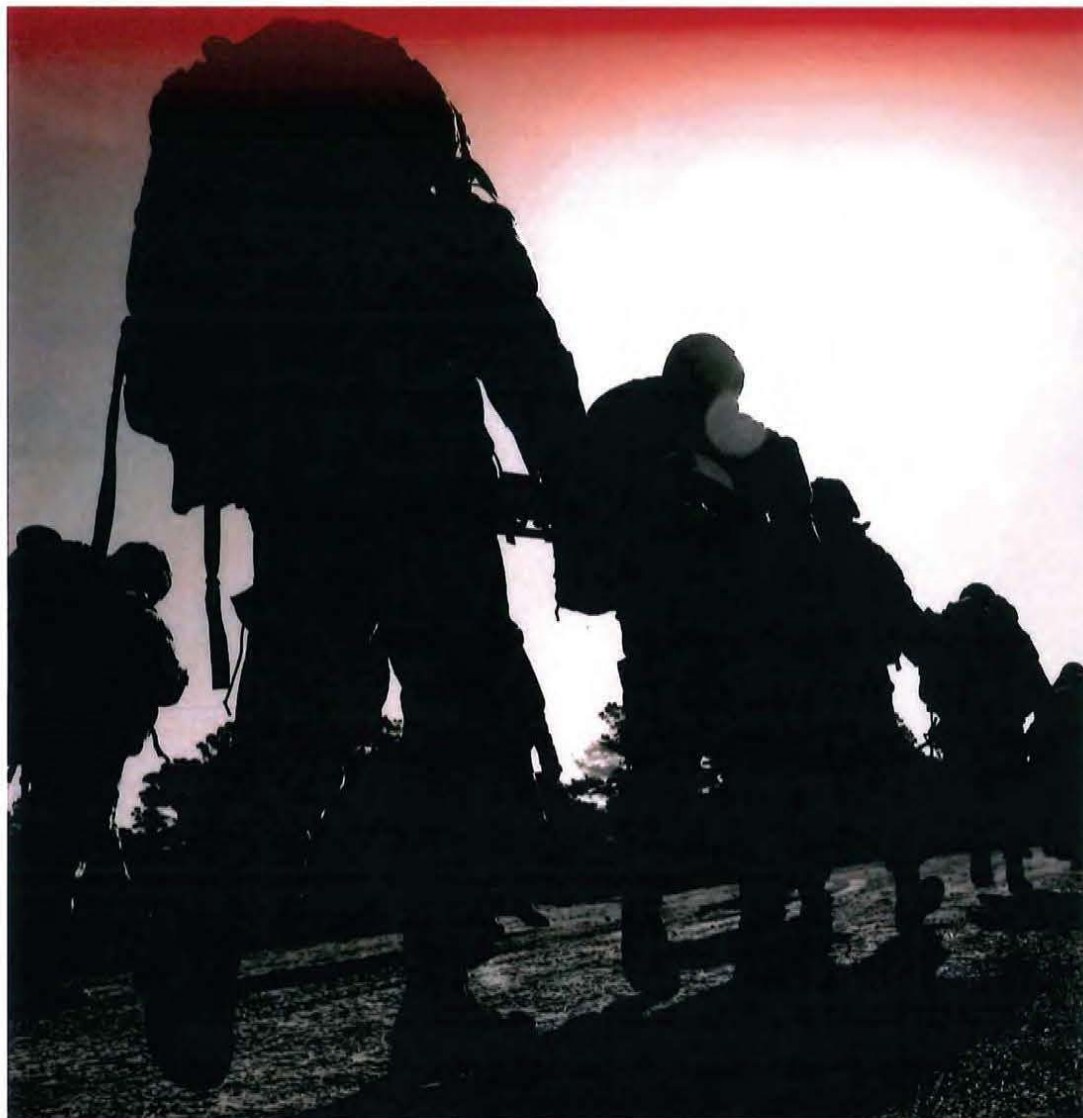
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