

New Leadership in Department of the Navy's Battle Against Fraud

The Honorable Robert J. Sander, the General Counsel of the Department of the Navy (DON) recently selected new leaders for the Acquisition Integrity Office (AIO). AIO is a component of the DON Office of the General Counsel (OGC).

Mr. Kerry Hotopp was selected as Assistant General Counsel (AIO) while Ms. Valencia Mouzon began her post as Deputy Assistant General Counsel (AIO).

"These are critical positions in the Department of the Navy's efforts to combat acquisition fraud," said Sander. "Kerry and Valencia have the experience and skill set to continue to move this program forward deterring and addressing fraudulent activity against the Department of the Navy."

Hotopp will also serve as the DON's Suspension and Debarment Official (SDO) in addition to his duties leading AIO.

"I'm excited to take on this role as head of the Navy's acquisition anti-fraud efforts," said Hotopp. "I will do everything I can to protect taxpayer dollars from fraud. This in turn helps ensure the Navy can meet its mission."

AIO is responsible for coordination of all anti-fraud efforts with organizations both inside and outside the DON, including Navy commands, criminal investigative organizations, inspector general offices, audit services, and the Department of Justice.

Mouzon steps into the role of Deputy Assistant General Counsel for AIO. "I started working in the OGC more than 20 years ago as a staff attorney," Mouzon said. "The AIO has done great work fighting acquisition fraud and maintaining acquisition integrity within the Navy and I'm eager to rejoin the team in this new role."

As the central point of contact for coordinating the DON's acquisition integrity efforts, AIO's responsibilities include: coordination of criminal, civil, contractual, and administrative remedies; taking administrative action like suspension and debarment; training the DON's acquisition workforce on identifying and preventing fraud; and outreach with other government agencies and industry.

"A lot of people, even in the Navy, are unaware of the scope of work that our office does," said Mouzon. "Through our efforts, we are present in all Navy acquisitions and are actively working to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse."

When an instance of fraud is identified, AIO actively pursues administrative, civil, criminal and contractual remedies. AIO may then use appropriate administrative action to protect government interests from future abuse.

Key initiatives in the AIO toolkit include a robust acquisition fraud training program and coordination outreach efforts within each major Navy command.

"Cooperation is key. We work with industry to ensure that their processes to prevent fraud are robust and we train Navy employees in recognizing and detecting fraud," said Hotopp. "When

fraud does occur, we work with other organizations throughout the Navy and the federal government to make sure it doesn't happen again.”

AIO engages in a Secretary of the Navy-mandated outreach program with industry, where AIO learns about contractors' compliance programs and helps them emphasize ethical compliance throughout the DON acquisition process.

AIO has 14 attorneys and professional support staff.

Providing legal advice to Navy and Marine Corps members since 1941, the Department of the Navy's Office of General Counsel is one of the largest U.S. government legal offices with more than 1,100 attorneys and professional support staff employees located in over 140 offices throughout the world.