

# **Summary: Investigation of Collusion and Deceptive Vendor Activities towards the Bureau of Land Management**

**Report Date: May 8, 2015**

OIG investigated allegations that a helicopter helmet company misled the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to believe that only one type of helicopter helmet, available only through a single vendor, was acceptable for DOI use. The complainant further alleged that the company and other vendors colluded with BLM personnel to draft an update of the “Interagency Aviation Life Support Equipment Handbook” to benefit only two companies and failed to consider other manufacturers.

We found that BLM procurement personnel properly considered the complainant’s protest letter and sought expert advice on the acceptability of the submitted helmet; however, when analyzing the helmet’s specifications, the DOI Office of Aviation Services (OAS) improperly applied helmet standards from the draft handbook, which was pending approval, rather than the standards listed in the currently approved handbook.

BLM procurement personnel relied on OAS’s technical expertise and subsequently canceled the contract. At the time of our report, OAS was actively working to establish a transparent procedure for competing companies to submit their helmets for testing by competent third-party facilities that could verify to OAS whether the helmets met the required standards.

This is a summary of an investigative report that was issued to BLM for any action deemed appropriate.

