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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

November 17, 2017

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Robert M. Lightfoot, Jr.  
Acting Administrator  
National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
300 E. Street SW, Suite 5R30  
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Mr. Lightfoot:

I write to request information regarding information security at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In May 2016, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report identifying weaknesses in information security controls at NASA and several other agencies.<sup>1</sup> GAO recently reported that several of the recommendations made in that report remain open.<sup>2</sup>

In its 2016 report, GAO noted several deficiencies in information security at NASA. The report found that 25 of 36 individuals with significant security responsibilities had not completed specialized security training required by NASA's May 2015 training handbook. GAO also found that while NASA had plans in place for assessing its security controls, those plans did not specify the tests that should be performed and left the test procedures to the unreviewed discretion of the assessor. With respect to NASA's remedial action plans, GAO found that the plans did not identify the organizations responsible for the remedial action for high-impact systems, estimate the amount of funding required for the remedial action and the source of that funding, or set out clear milestones and completion dates. GAO also found that, although NASA had a strategy for monitoring threats to information security, it had not identified specific metrics to be used as part of the monitoring process. NASA concurred with all of GAO's recommendations.<sup>3</sup>

According to a July 3, 2017, letter from GAO to NASA, the re-evaluation of security control assessments is planned to be completed by January 15, 2018, and NASA has yet to provide GAO with evidence of the results of security assessment plans. GAO also noted in its

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<sup>1</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Information Security: Agencies Need to Improve Controls over Selected High-Impact Systems* (GAO-16-501) (May 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Comptroller General Gene L. Dodaro, Governmental Accountability Office, to Acting Administrator Robert M. Lightfoot, Jr., National Aeronautics and Space Administration (July 3, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Government Accountability Office, *Information Security: Agencies Need to Improve Controls over Selected High-Impact Systems* (GAO-16-501) (May 2016).

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letter that NASA has not provided examples of remedial action plans which incorporate the elements that NASA agreed were missing in 2016. Moreover, GAO reported that NASA has still not identified specific metrics to be used as part of its continuous monitoring of information security threats.<sup>4</sup>

In order to better understand how NASA plans to implement GAO's recommendations, please provide a written response to the following questions no later than December 8, 2017:

1. Has NASA completed the implementation of its plan to implement and track training requirements for individuals with significant security responsibilities? If not, please describe the timeline for completion.
2. Does NASA intend to provide GAO with results of security assessment plans for high-impact systems? If so, when will the results be provided? If not, why not?
3. NASA concurred with GAO's recommendation that its security assessment tests be updated. Please describe the timetable for the completion of this process.
4. NASA's remedial action plans for high-impact systems do not identify the responsible organizations, estimate the amount or source of funding required, or set out clear milestones and completion dates. Does NASA intend to update its plans to include this information? If so, what is the timeline for completion? If not, why not?
5. NASA's updated strategy for continuous monitoring does not include specific metrics to be used as part of its monitoring efforts. Does NASA intend to use such metrics? If so, what is the timeline for developing a plan which includes them? If not, why not?

If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Michael Broome with my staff at (202) 224-9142. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to [Lucy\\_Balczak@hsgac.senate.gov](mailto:Lucy_Balczak@hsgac.senate.gov).

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill  
Ranking Member

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<sup>4</sup> Letter from Comptroller General Gene L. Dodaro, Government Accountability Office, to Acting Administrator Robert M. Lightfoot, Jr., National Aeronautics and Space Administration (July 3, 2017).

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cc: Ron Johnson  
Chairman