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LOGISTICS AND COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

JAN 22 1974

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The Honorable H. R. Gross
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Gross:

Your October 15, 1973, letter to the Comptroller General requested that we furnish you certain information about the General Services Administration's (GSA) obtaining of expert and consultant services for forecasting local weather conditions in the Baltimore, Md., and Washington, D.C., areas.

GSA has contracted for detailed weather forecasts (especially of snow and ice conditions) for these two areas each year since November 1967. The annual contracts cover the period from November 1 to the following April 15 and, including the current contract, will have cost the Government \$20,600 through April 1974. We were told that GSA does not contract for local weather forecasts in any other areas.

The current contract was awarded to Northeast Weather ⁰²³⁵² Services, Inc., on October 24 for \$3,600 and covers the period November 1, 1973, to April 15, 1974. In addition to the announcement in the October 12 issue of the Commerce Business Daily, which you called to our attention, GSA sent invitations for bids to six firms offering weather forecasting services; Northeast's was the only bid received.

GSA seeks forecasts that are timely and accurate predictions of snow accumulations in Baltimore and Washington so that it can order its snow removal crews and equipment to stand by to remove snow from the many Government building complexes in these cities. GSA believes that the specialized forecasts that it receives from its contractors are more accurate than the general forecasts of snow and ice conditions made by the United States Weather Bureau.

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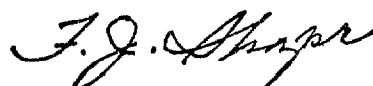
GSA requires its contractor to phone in his forecasts four times daily, seven days a week. Additional forecasts are required anytime conditions are expected to vary appreciably from the last forecast. When a snow or ice storm is expected, the detailed forecasts are to include such data as approximate hour the storm is expected to begin, approximate hour one to three inches of snow will have accumulated, total accumulation expected, duration of the storm, approximate hour the snow or ice will change to rain, wind velocities and direction, temperature information, and weather conditions after the storm.

A Weather Bureau official told us that, although the Bureau approves and recommends the use of private forecasters by private firms and other non-Federal organizations who need these specialized weather forecasts for specific areas, the Bureau believes that Federal agencies who need such forecasts should first make their needs known to the Bureau so that it can consider whether it can provide such additional resources as may be required. GSA employees informed us that, several years ago when they discussed this matter with the District Forecaster at the U.S. Weather Bureau at Suitland, Md., they were told that his area of responsibility covered several thousand square miles and that he could not spare the personnel to make the frequent specialized forecasts that GSA was seeking. GSA employees we interviewed did not recall making further inquiries of the Bureau in recent years. They expressed doubt that, because of the general restrictions on hiring new personnel throughout the Government, the availability of specialized Weather Bureau forecasts has improved. However, at our suggestion, they agreed to discuss forecasts with the Weather Bureau again before contracting for the 1974-75 weather forecasting services.

We have not asked GSA or the Weather Bureau to comment on this report nor have we sent copies to these agencies.

We plan to make no further distribution of this report unless copies are specifically requested, and then we shall make distribution only after your agreement has been obtained or public announcement has been made by you concerning the contents of the report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "F. J. Shafer".

F. J. Shafer
Director