

Press Release

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Former U.S. NRC Contractor Pleads Guilty to Theft of Government Laptops

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ROCKVILLE, MD – As part of a joint effort between the Nuclear Regulatory Commission Office of the Inspector General (NRC OIG) and local law enforcement, a former agency contractor pleaded guilty in the Circuit Court for Montgomery County, Maryland, before the Honorable Eric M. Johnson, today to misappropriation by fiduciary/embezzlement for the theft of 33 laptops belonging to the NRC, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of 5 years in prison.

The contractor, Justin Padua, 31, of Silver Spring, Maryland, worked for Leidos, and provided IT services in the Office of the Chief Information Officer. Leidos is an American defense, aviation, information technology, and biomedical research company headquartered in Reston, Virginia, that provides technical services.

The theft was first discovered in September 2019 during a routine inventory that identified 63 missing laptops. The OIG was able to recover three of the laptops through communication with buyers on Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace.

The report of the theft then resulted in an extensive investigation led by NRC OIG Senior Special Agent Edwin Donato, Assistant Special Agent In Charge Erika Keyes, and the Montgomery County, Maryland, Police Department. The joint investigation included computer forensics, suspect interviews, and the execution of search warrants.

As part of the plea agreement, Padua paid \$54,384 in restitution to the NRC. His access to NRC buildings had been terminated immediately after being interviewed by the OIG, and he was subsequently fired by the contractor.

“While the joint efforts of the NRC OIG special agents and our law enforcement partners yielded an appropriate and just result in this case, it is important to remember that we must all remain vigilant, watch for activity that looks suspicious, and report it promptly,” said NRC Inspector General Robert J. Feitel. “By working together, we can prevent theft, deter fraud, waste, and abuse, and keep our workplace safe and efficient.”

The OIG has a responsibility to independently and objectively conduct audits and investigations to help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of NRC’s programs and operations.