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OSC TRANSMITS VA REPORT CONFIRMING HOSPITAL FAILED TO INSPECT MEDICAL EQUIPMENT BEFORE USE ON PATIENTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, DC / April 20, 2010 – Today, the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) transmitted to the President and Congress the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) response to a whistleblower's allegations that employees at the VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, Biloxi VA Medical Center (Medical Center), Biloxi, Mississippi, failed to inspect and maintain medical equipment used on patients and attempted to conceal the lack of inspections.

The VA report substantiated allegations that the medical equipment inventory was inaccurate and not all medical equipment was inspected as required, prior to use on patients. Three employees were found to have intentionally mislabeled medical equipment to hide the fact that it had not been inspected.

To correct the deficiencies, the VA is conducting a full inventory of its medical equipment at the Medical Center with a target completion date of June 30, 2010. A Biomedical Engineer has been temporarily detailed to the Medical Center to help address the deficiencies, and the agency is hiring a full-time onsite Biomedical Engineer. Life support equipment has already been identified and inspected. The three employees found to have acted intentionally to cover-up the failures have been disciplined.

OSC determined that the agency's reports contain all the information required by statute and the findings appear reasonable. A copy of the transmittal to the President has been placed in OSC's public file and is now available online at www.osc.gov.

The U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) is an independent investigative and prosecutorial agency and operates a secure channel for disclosures of whistleblower complaints. Its primary mission is to safeguard the merit system in federal employment by protecting federal employees and applicants from prohibited personnel practices, especially retaliation for whistleblowing. OSC also has jurisdiction over the Hatch Act and limited jurisdiction over the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. For more information please visit our web site at www.osc.gov or call (800) 872-9855.