NSA Re-awards Secret $10 Billion Contract to Amazon

By **FRANK KONKEL** // **APRIL 27, 2022**

Amazon Web Services beat out Microsoft for the contract after a bid protest battle.

INTELLIGENCE   **CLOUD**   **INDUSTRY**

The National Security Agency has re-awarded a once-secret cloud computing contract worth up to $10 billion to Amazon Web Services, an NSA official confirmed to *Nextgov* Wednesday.

Codenamed "Wild and Stormy," the contract was first awarded to AWS in July 2021 and subsequently protested by tech giant Microsoft, which also competed for the contract. While the Government Accountability Office sided with Microsoft on its protest in October and recommended the NSA reevaluate proposals from both companies, the NSA ultimately selected AWS again.

"NSA recently awarded a contract to Amazon Web Services that delivers cloud computing services to support the agency's mission," an NSA spokesperson told *Nextgov.* "This contract is a continuation of NSA's Hybrid Compute Initiative to modernize and address the robust processing and analytical requirements of the agency."

The NSA spokesperson added that, consistent with GAO's decision, the agency "reevaluated the proposals and made a new best value decision" in selecting AWS.

"We're honored that after thorough review, the NSA selected AWS as the cloud provider for the Hybrid Compute Initiative, and we're ready to help deliver this critical national security capability," an AWS spokesperson told Nextgov in a statement.

For almost ten years, the NSA has moved its data, including signals intelligence and other foreign surveillance and intelligence information it ingests from multiple repositories around the globe, into this internally operated data lake, against which analysts from the NSA and other IC agencies can run queries and perform analytics.

The Wild and Stormy contract is part of the NSA's years-long modernization of its Hybrid Compute Initiative, which aims to move some of NSA's crown jewel intelligence data from internal servers to those operated by a cloud service provider—in this case, AWS.

AWS, the most profitable business unit within Amazon, has won several major cloud computing contracts in the defense and intelligence communities, dating back almost a decade. AWS first inked a $600 million cloud contract with the CIA called C2S in 2013, through which it provided cloud services to the CIA and sister intelligence agencies, including the NSA. Last year, AWS secured at least a portion of the CIA's multibillion-follow-on C2E contract. AWS was also one of four companies—including Google, Microsoft and Oracle—that were named by the Pentagon as contenders for the DOD's $9 billion Joint Warfighting Cloud Capability contract. Those companies have been asked to submit proposals for the contract.

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National Transportation Safety Board Wants To Expand Drone Operations

In this photo taken Feb. 25, 2019, NTSB investigators launch a drone to survey debris field of the Feb. 23, 2019, cargo jet crash in Texas. NTSB PHOTO

By **ALEXANDRA KELLEY** // **APRIL 26, 2022**

The transit agency has been using drones to analyze and recreate accidents across all transportation industries.

DRONES   **TRANSPORTATION**   **AUTOMATION**

Federal agencies plan to continue incorporating drone technology into their business operations, with government pilots currently focusing on threading the needle between automation and safety, with the surveillance aircraft.

One agency looking to capitalize on improved drone technology is the National Transportation Safety Board, which has been employing drones to capture footage from accidents among maritime, aircraft and auto transportation systems since 2016.

"We're looking to expand to have more pilots in the agency and more drones, so that we can respond to more of our accident scenes," Catherine Gagne, an unmanned aircraft system operator within the National Transportation Safety Board's Office of Aviation Safety said Tuesday.

Speaking during a panel discussion via the Advanced Technology Academic Research Center, Gagne discussed the agency's core mission of investigating transit accidents and how drones have been part of site documentation for the last six years.

Using photogrammetry software to process photos, video imagery and orthomosaics, drone footage has been a reliable way for investigators to probe an unsafe or treacherous accident site. In other use cases, drones have been able to use existing data from transit methods like helicopters to replicate conditions that led to an aircraft accident and better understand what caused the crash.

Gagne said that her office continues to find new uses for drones, and currently have five pilots to man seven drone aircraft devices.

Since the drones are technically classified as aircraft, Gagne also noted that NTSB has been working to abide by privacy laws that other flight operators have to abide by.

"Anything we gather with the drone is in our public docket anyway and available," she said. "But you know, we're very careful about what we shoot due to privacy concerns."

Amid security precautions, the NTSB has been practicing its automated app to program and control the drones, and additionally work on ensuring pilots can easily regain control of an automated drone.

Given the success of the program so far, Gagne said that the NTSB is looking for more drone pilots.
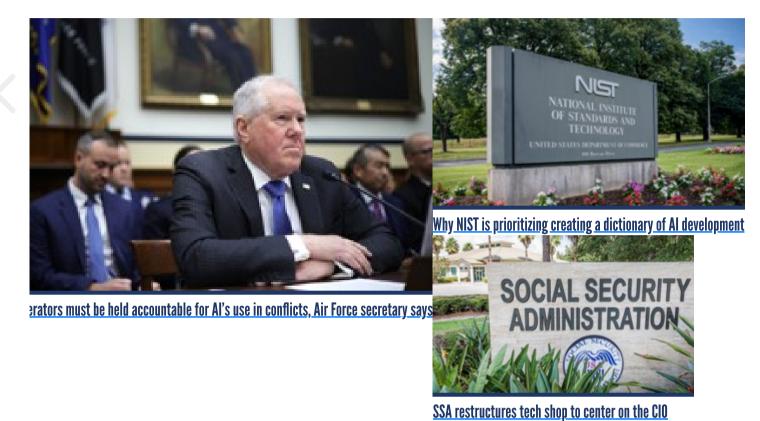
"The program has proven its worth and we're looking to expand it," she said.

The NTSB is one of the agencies that has employed drones across various work areas. Aside from common use cases seen with the Department of Defense, government bodies, including The U.S. Postal Service, have toyed with innovative ideas on how to expedite package deliveries with drone technology.

Amid the broad interest, the General Services Administration recently restricted the procurement of drones by federal agencies aside from a group of previously approved devices, citing national security concerns. N

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