

**DECISION**



**THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
OF THE UNITED STATES**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

*Letter*

**FILE:** B-221709.4 **DATE:** May 20, 1986

**MATTER OF:** Instrument Technology, Inc.

**DIGEST:**

Procuring officials enjoy a reasonable degree of discretion in the evaluation of proposals, and an evaluation will not be disturbed unless shown to be arbitrary or in violation of the procurement laws and regulations. A mere disagreement between the protester and the agency over a technical evaluation is not sufficient, in itself, to show that the agency's judgment was unreasonable.

Instrument Technology, Inc. (ITI) protests the acceptability of the product offered by Olympus Corporation (Olympus) under request for proposals (RFP) No. F41608-86-R-3198, issued by the Department of the Air Force for borescope kits to inspect for defects in the F-100 aircraft engine. We deny the protest.

When the RFP was issued, ITI, United Technologies, and Kollmorgen Corporation were the only sources approved by the Air Force to supply the borescope kits. The RFP, however, mentioned only United Technologies as an approved source and, instead of specifying the characteristics required of the kits, just referred to that company's part number.

Offers in response to the RFP were received from Kollmorgen, ITI, and Olympus, which was not an approved source. In accordance with the terms of the RFP allowing any offeror to compete if its borescope kits were determined to be acceptable, Olympus, the apparent low offeror, was given permission to submit components of its proposed kits for field testing by using activities at several Air Force bases. Based on these tests, the Air Force concluded that the Olympus kits performed all the functions necessary to detect any cracks, dents, or nicks in the F-100 engine. By amendment of the RFP, Olympus, Kollmorgen and ITI were formally added to the list of approved sources, and a closing date was set for the submission of revised offers.

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During the procurement, ITI filed a protest with our Office against the acceptance of the Olympus kits, alleging that they did not meet certain requirements in the Air Force's technical manual for borescopes. ITI withdrew the protest upon learning that the Air Force intended to amend the RFP further to describe specific salient physical and functional characteristics that the borescope kits had to meet, rather than merely having a listing of the approved manufacturers' part numbers for such kits.

The Air Force amended the RFP to add a list of nine physical characteristics for the borescopes, and a "functional requirement" that the offered item must "satisfactorily perform the inspections detailed in Borescope Inspection Work Packages of T.O. [technical order] 2J-F100-26-5." The amendment also stated that the Kollmorgen, ITI, and Olympus kits met the physical and functional requirements, and that those companies would not have to submit to any further evaluation testing.

ITI contends that the Olympus borescope kits do not meet the functional requirements in the Air Force's technical order noted in the amendment. In particular, ITI asserts that the Olympus borescopes cannot meet visual resolution requirements, and that the Olympus kit's reticle adapter components cannot determine the exact distance from the tip of the borescope probe to the object being viewed. ITI further asserts that the Olympus borescope is incapable of meeting the technical order's requirements with regard to detecting extremely small cracks, dents, and nicks at a distance of 20 inches from the borescope probe. In ITI's view, Olympus' kits include general purpose borescopes that will not perform the type of inspection intended for the F-100 engine, while those of ITI and Kollmorgen are high performance kits designed specifically for inspecting that engine.

The Air Force reports that the Olympus kits have been determined acceptable through actual service tests by users of the kits at several Air Force bases. The Air Force states that these tests showed that the Olympus kits perform all the functions of defect measurement identified in the technical order for borescopes, and that the visual resolution of the Olympus borescopes is satisfactory. With specific regard to the requirement that the borescope be able to measure extremely small defects at a probe distance of 20 inches, the Air Force states that the Olympus borescopes do not use the

same resolution techniques that the boresopes of Kollmorgen and ITI use--those of Olympus use a "scale model" technique to determine the size of an engine crack, dent, or nick--and that the actual testing has established that the Olympus technique meets the functional requirements for resolution as specified in the technical order.

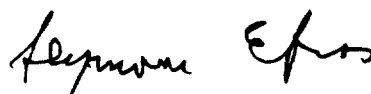
The determination of the technical merits of a proposal is primarily the responsibility of the contracting agency, which enjoys a reasonable degree of discretion in its evaluation. Our Office, therefore, will not disturb such a determination unless the protester shows the decision to be arbitrary or in violation of the procurement laws and regulations. Litton Systems, Inc., Electron Tube Division, 63 Comp. Gen. 585 (1984), 84-2 C.P.D. ¶ 317.

ITI has furnished no substantive evidence to support its allegation that the Olympus borescope kits fail to meet the functional requirements of the Air Force's technical order. As stated above, Air Force using activities have tested the Olympus kits and have found that the kits satisfactorily perform the technical order's requirements. ITI's disagreement with the agency's judgment is not sufficient to show that the agency's technical evaluation was unreasonable. See Dynalelectron Corp., B-199741, July 31, 1981, 81-2 C.P.D. ¶ 70.

ITI also contends that the Olympus kits do not comply with the requirement in the RFP's Precision Optics clause that all precision optical components of a contractor's borescope be procured from domestic sources. ITI alleges that the Olympus borescopes contain optical components that were not made in the United States.

The Air Force advises that the requirement in issue is based on an internal Air Force policy, and it recently has informed our Office that it has amended the solicitation to delete the clause and invite revised offers. The protest on this issue therefore is academic.

The protest is denied.

*for*   
Harry R. Van Cleve  
General Counsel