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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–6250

October 25, 2013

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to you regarding a recent news report about the Department of Defense's staging of "arrival" ceremonies for the recovered remains of our missing service members. These ceremonies, which have been held numerous times over the past seven years, reportedly represented to veterans and families that the remains had been recently recovered and were arriving in the United States for the first time. Instead, the remains used in the ceremonies had already been at the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Acting Accounting Command (JPAC) Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii for months awaiting identification. It appears that the Department of Defense even towed planes to the ceremonies to create the impression that the remains had just arrived from the recovery location.[1]

As you know, on September 9, 2013, I sent a letter to you requesting information about the Department's plans to address the longstanding mismanagement of accounting for service members who were prisoners of war or missing in action. In addition to the information and documents requested in that letter, I request that the Department provide additional information about the "arrival" ceremonies staged by JPAC. This information should include the dates of all arrival ceremonies, the recovery location of remains presented at each ceremony, and the actual date the remains arrived at JPAC. I also request that you provide information about how many of the remains presented at the ceremonies have actually been identified to date. I also request that you provide any communications from the Department to the media, families, and veterans organizations regarding the ceremonies. In addition, I request that you provide any guidance or policy issued by JPAC or the Department about the ceremonies. Finally, I request that you provide a breakdown of the cost, per ceremony, including the provision of aircraft. I request that you provide this information to the Subcommittee on or before November 1, 2013.

I also request that your staff provide a briefing to Subcommittee staff about the status of the Department's response to the Subcommittee's initial request letter by October 31, 2013.

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[1] NBC News, *Pentagon Unit Held 'Phony' Ceremonies for MIAs, Using Planes That Can't Fly* (Oct. 10, 2013) (available at http://investigations.nbcnews.com/_news/2013/10/10/20889368-pentagon-unit-held-phony-ceremonies-for-mias-using-planes-that-cant-fly?chromedomain=usnews&lite).

The jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Contracting Oversight is set forth in Senate Rule XXV clause 1(k); Senate Resolution 445 section 101 (108th Congress); and Senate Resolution 64 (113th Congress).

Please contact Sarah Garcia with the Subcommittee staff at (202) 224-5602 with any questions. Please send any correspondence relating to this request to Kelsey_Stroud@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,

Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial and
Contracting Oversight

cc: James N. Miller
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
U.S Department of Defense

Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Financial and
Contracting Oversight