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November 17, 2015

Via Electronic Transmission

The Honorable Ashton B. Carter
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter:

I am following up on a new development related to my inquiry about the \$43 million in tax dollars the Department of Defense (DoD) reportedly spent for the construction of a compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station in Afghanistan.¹ The cost of this project remains unexplained, unjustified, and undocumented and is in need of congressional and administration oversight and scrutiny.

During the course of my ongoing oversight review of this costly project, I was contacted by Army Colonel John C. Hope. He served as the Director of Operations in Afghanistan for the DOD Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) from June 2014 to its shut-down in March 2015. The TFBSO was responsible for the CNG filling station that is the focus of a recent Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report. In a letter to me dated November 10, 2015, and during related discussions, Colonel Hope alleged he “has been singled out for retaliation and retribution” for “speaking truth” about “a lack of accountability” at TFBSO. Shortly after Colonel Hope submitted his highly critical After Action Report (AAR) on TFBSO Afghanistan Operations, dated February 20, 2015 (Attachment), he was informed by his assignment officer that the Army was in receipt of “negative feedback” on his job performance at TFBSO. The Army was told “his TFBSO tour did not go well.” This unfavorable evaluation stands in sharp contrast to four previous Officer Evaluation Reports (OER) that recommended he be “selected for brigadier general.”

The alleged retaliation, Colonel Hope states, is reflected in the way his pending OER is being handled. He reports that it is “late.” Being long overdue, it has placed his next assignment in jeopardy, leaving him in limbo. He alleges he is being deliberately “slow rolled” by his “raters.”

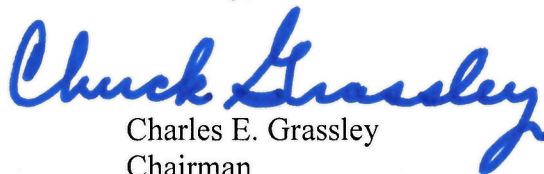
¹ DOD’s Compressed Natural Gas Filling Station in Afghanistan: An Ill-Conceived \$43 million Project, October 2015, SIGAR-16-2-SP;

Colonel Hope prepared and submitted his pending OER form in accordance with regulations in late January 2015. It was due for completion by March 31, 2015 – eight months ago. Mr. Joe Catalino, the former acting Director for TFBSO, is the first rater who is supposed to sign it. The senior rater is Mr. Brian McKeon, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. Neither has reportedly signed the OER and both would have received Colonel Hope's highly critical AAR about a total "lack of accountability" at TFBSO. Colonel Hope tells me that he has repeatedly queried both Mr. Catalino and Mr. McKeon about his delinquent OER but to no avail.

Both Mr. McKeon and Mr. Catalino have a responsibility to Colonel Hope to complete that report. Failing to do so is not an option. Would you please look into this and find out why Colonel Hope's OER has not been completed? I respectfully ask that you provide a deadline for completing that task and providing Colonel Hope with a new set of orders for his next assignment. Your assistance is necessary in this case.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Janet Drew of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee

Cc: The Honorable Jon T. Rymer
Inspector General
Department of Defense

Attachment