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June 6, 2018

Mr. Glenn A. Fine
Principal Deputy Inspector General
Department of Defense
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350

Dear Mr. Fine:

I am writing to raise questions about a potential spare parts rip-off of major proportions.

You may remember the spare parts rip-off issue that surfaced during the Reagan military buildup in the 1980's. The \$640.00 C-5 toilet seat, along with the \$435.00 hammer, were the main exhibits and rallying cry for acquisition reform. Those disclosures, in turn, had a major impact on Department of Defense (DoD) policies and programs. The \$640.00 toilet seat got so much bad press that it became a permanent part of former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger's wardrobe as portrayed in political cartoons at the time [examples attached]. The toilet seat was usually draped around his neck. It was a disgrace.

Well, thanks to Dr. Will Roper, the current Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, we now have, some 30 years later, an on-the-record updated price for a new airborne toilet-related item -- \$10,000.00, *and that's just for the cover*. After citing the lid's high cost, Dr. Roper appears to use convoluted reasoning to justify it. Here's what he said:

"Roper scanned his office looking for a 3D-printed toilet seat cover used in a C-17 cargo plane. "I guess I gave it away again," he said. The cover costs about \$300 to print, he said, but the price to buy a new one is \$10,000. **How that's possible? "Because we don't need many of them," he said. "You'll think: there's no way it costs that," Roper said. "No, it doesn't, but you're asking a company to produce it and they're producing something else. And for them to produce this part for us, they have to quit producing" what they're making now. "They're losing revenue and profit. So although it looks like it's a certain price in the GSA [Government Services Administration] catalog, the business case is what drives it up. "I don't think that company wants to stop building what they're building" and restart the toilet-seat line, he continues.**"

The above quote was taken from an article written by Marcus Weisgerber that appeared at DefenseOne.com on May 29, 2018.

If Dr. Roper's information is accurate, I would be very discouraged, indeed. It would tell me that we have not made much progress in the war on waste. In fact, it would tell me that we may be losing ground. Moreover, the DoD should view this revelation with alarm, because it could be used to cut the defense budget – as it was in the 1980's.

It seems to me that there is no way to justify a \$10,000.00 price tag for a toilet seat lid. It's just not credible. It needs scrutiny.

That the Air Force has been paying such an outrageous price for toilet seat lids over a long period of time without notice or question makes me wonder whether the DoD Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is asleep at the switch. Why isn't the OIG conducting aggressive oversight of wasteful spending? If the DoD OIG is unaware of this issue, then maybe it is looking for waste in the wrong places and needs to redirect that effort into more productive areas. The \$10,000.00 toilet seat cover could be just the tip of the iceberg.

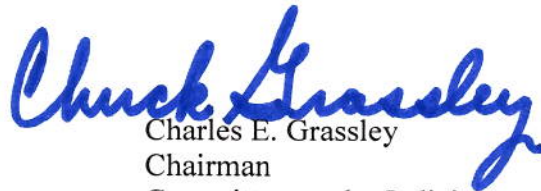
To address my concerns, I need answers to the following questions:

- 1) Has the OIG done any recent investigations or audits on spare parts overpricing? Did that work shed any light on the price tag for the C-17 toilet seat cover? Has the OIG made appropriate recommendations for corrective action?
- 2) Has the OIG uncovered any other comparable examples of gross overpricing? If so, what was found? Provide examples.
- 3) Is the Air Force actually paying \$10,000.00 for this item?
- 4) Provide a breakdown of the cost for the whole C-17 commode, including seat and lid?
- 5) Could the OIG please provide supporting documentation that verifies the cost of the C-17 toilet seat lid?
- 6) Given the production line issues cited by Dr. Roper, why not shift this work to a commercial manufacturer, where it could be produced to Air Force specifications at a reasonable price?

A response to my questions is requested by Friday, June 22, 2018.

Your continuing support of my oversight work is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Charles E. Grassley
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary

ROAD TO REFORM

"I THINK YOU GENTLEMEN ARE ALL ACQUAINTED"

