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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 13, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Secretary:

On August 1, 2013, the Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight held a hearing entitled, "Mismanagement of POW/MIA Accounting." The hearing reviewed the Department's financial management and oversight of its accounting mission, including the roles and responsibilities of the Joint Prisoner of War/Missing in Action Accounting Command (JPAC), the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Person Personnel Office (DPMO), the Central Identification Laboratory, and the Life Sciences Equipment Laboratory. The hearing also examined the Government Accountability Office's (GAO) recent report on accounting management¹ and a report conducted by a fellow employed by JPAC.²

The hearing revealed that the Department has never had a comprehensive plan to delineate the responsibilities and roles of the components within the accounting community. While we were encouraged to hear that DPMO and JPAC have finally begun work on the long overdue plan, we were concerned to hear that the plan was still in "coordination." We were also troubled to learn that the Department's approach to accounting may be doing families more harm than good by failing to provide them with a realistic assessment of the possibility of identifying missing service members.

We understand that the Department has mostly concurred with GAO's recommendations to improve its organizational structure and address communication deficiencies among components. If implemented, these recommendations may substantially improve the management and oversight of the accounting mission. We therefore request that the Department provide detailed information about its plan for implementation of the recommendations, to include dates that the recommendations are expected to be fully implemented. We are particularly concerned about the need for a unified chain of command for the entire community and request that the Department provide detailed information about plans for reorganization. We also request that the Department provide a justification for any GAO recommendation that the Department does not plan to implement.

¹ Government Accountability Office, *DOD's POW/MIA Mission: Top-Level Leadership Attention Needed to Resolve Longstanding Challenges in Accounting for Missing Persons from Past Conflicts* (July 17, 2013) (GAO-13-619).

² Paul Cole, *JPAC's Information Value Chain Report* (Jan. 19, 2012).

In addition, the Subcommittee has heard from numerous current and former employees from within the accounting community who described the accounting components as hostile work environments, rife with allegations of retaliation and discrimination against employees who reported problems. The Subcommittee takes whistleblower complaints seriously and will be urging the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General to review these matters. We are also seeking your assurance that you will ensure that these allegations are investigated, and that if claims of whistleblower retaliation are substantiated that the Department will take appropriate action.

Congress has devoted substantial additional resources in recent years to the accounting community, and we expect the accounting community to use these resources responsibly and efficiently to achieve measurable progress toward the accounting goals.

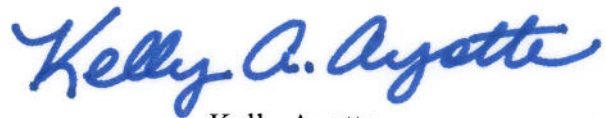
The jurisdiction of the Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight is set forth in Senate Rule XXV clause 1(k); Senate Resolution 445 section 101 (108th Congress); and Senate Resolution 64 (113th Congress).

Please contact Sarah Garcia with Senator McCaskill's Subcommittee staff at (202) 224-5602 or Brad Bowman with Senator Ayotte's staff at (202) 224-3324 with any questions. Please send any correspondence relating to this request to the Subcommittee's clerk at Kelsey_Stroud@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Subcommittee on Financial and
Contracting Oversight



Kelly Ayotte
Member
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