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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

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April 24, 2017

**VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

David Harlow  
Acting Director  
U.S. Marshals Service  
Washington, D.C. 20530-00001

Dear Acting Director Harlow:

As you know, the Committee continues to examine allegations of wasteful spending by the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS). Additional allegations suggest that the USMS may have wasted significant funds for certain contracts that are unnecessary and may pose conflicts of interest.

First, my office has received information indicating that the USMS has been paying for an outside speechwriter and management consultant since 2010. The original five-year contract was worth more than half a million dollars, and a second four-year contract was recently awarded at a value of more than \$825,000. The speechwriter reportedly works from her home in Longton, Kansas, even though she has a desk and a telephone number in USMS headquarters in Arlington, VA. Public information shows that the contractor previously had a five-year contract with the Office of the Federal Detention Trustee for more than \$900,000, at a time when former Director Stacia Hylton served as the Trustee, and has likely known Ms. Hylton since at least 1995.

Second, according to public information, the USMS issued an RFI for a Beechcraft King Air 350 Aircraft Lease.<sup>1</sup> The USMS Technical Operations Group (TOG) reportedly plans to use the aircraft as an air surveillance platform for its Mexico operations. According to information received by my office, TOG and USMS leadership have been in discussions to acquire not simply a larger air surveillance platform, but this specific aircraft model, for some time. However, the lease allegedly would impose an unnecessarily high cost and would not, as the USMS RFI suggests, “fulfill . . . unique mission objectives.”

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<sup>1</sup> Solicitation Number DJM-17-A41-R-0026

<https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=0633678a15e5fa8d27ff2440b34a82e6&tab=core&cvview=0>.

For example, the USMS currently has seven planes, five pilots, and at least one hanger that has sat empty for more than two years in Morristown, New Jersey, with no planes and no pilots. Most of the planes are smaller and flown domestically, but, according to information received by my office, domestic flights are not frequent. The larger plane, a Cessna, is currently used by the USMS in Mexico.

That particular model reportedly is more suited to TOG's operations. It is not, like the King Air, a loud, multi-engine aircraft with a low wing that allegedly interferes with the cellular tracking equipment on board. It is also apparently much less expensive, to the point that the USMS could acquire or lease another platform like it and spend about half as much money. Further, no current TOG pilot is licensed to fly a King Air. Accordingly, leasing that particular aircraft will impose further costs required to train and certify pilots. The King Air's internal space restrictions also pose problems in physically reaching the tracking equipment if it malfunctions during an operation. Finally, the King Air allegedly poses added safety risks because it is more complex to operate.

Whistleblowers allege that pilots rated on multi-engine aircraft are more eligible to compete for work in the private sector upon government retirement. It has also been suggested that a former USMS employee has a business relationship with a vendor for this aircraft. Based on the information I have received, it is unclear why the King Air is necessary, or what purpose it serves. In the absence of reasonable and transparent justification, the RFI fuels a perception of conflicts of interest.

Please respond to the following questions by May 8, 2017, and number your answers according to the corresponding questions.

1. Were any of the contracts awarded to the contractor located in Kansas competed?
2. Please describe in detail the services provided by the contractor, and explain why speechwriting and management services could not be performed by existing USMS employees.
3. How much has the USMS paid the contractor to date?
4. Has the USMS paid for any of the contractor's travel since 2010?
5. Why is there a physical work space for the contractor in Virginia if the contractor is located in Kansas?
6. Why is the USMS seeking to lease King Air? What benefits does it have over the plane currently used in Mexico for TOG?
7. Please provide a detailed estimated cost analysis of leasing a King Air versus leasing a second model like the large platform the USMS currently operates in Mexico. Does the USMS currently employ individuals capable of performing the maintenance on its current model?
8. How much would it cost to train and certify TOG pilots to fly a King Air?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
Ranking Member

The Honorable Jeff Sessions  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice

The Honorable Michael Horowitz  
Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice