

JEFF FLAKE

ARIZONA

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COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0305

STATE OFFICES:

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6840 NORTH ORACLE ROAD
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TUCSON, AZ 85704
(520) 575-8633

July 14, 2015

The Honorable Brad Carson
Acting Under Secretary of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Acting Under Secretary of Defense Carson,

I write to you to express deep concern about your July 9th response to my May 11th letter requesting information about Department of Defense contracts related to marketing, advertising, and promotion activities with professional sports teams associated with paid salutes for armed service members.

The answers provided were unfortunately insufficient and wholly unsatisfactory. It is troubling, given that this topic has been the subject of considerable attention nationwide, that nearly two months after the original request for information, the Department of Defense finally responded and yet provided no additional information beyond what was already uncovered and available in the public domain. In fact, through a mere search of government websites, my office was able to uncover contract information far more detailed than the overall budget numbers that you provided.

Notwithstanding any unrelated or additional oversight investigations that may be on-going related to these practices, I reiterate the request to be provided copies of Department of Defense contracts with professional sports teams. I request that your office provide copies of all Department of Defense contracts that relate to sports marketing, advertising, and promotion with professional sports teams. Further, I request that such contracts be made available as they are received by the Department as a result of this specific inquiry.

Additionally, I request a meeting with Acting Under Secretary of Defense Carson to discuss the response to this request for information. Given the prominence of this issue, I ask that this meeting happen as soon as possible.

Thank you for attention and prompt response to my request, in strict compliance with all ethical rules, regulations, and guidelines.

Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
U.S. Senator



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUL - 9 2015

The Honorable Jeff Flake
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-0305

Dear Senator Flake:

Thank you for your recent letter to the Secretary of Defense, regarding marketing, advertising, and promotion contracts between the Department of Defense and professional sports organizations. I have been asked to respond.

The issues raised in your letter are concerning. The Department agrees that using valuable recruiting resources to pay outside entities to honor our brave Service men and women is a concerning practice that requires scrutiny. In response to you having raised this issue, General Frank Grass, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, directed a review of all state-level sports marketing and advertising contracts for the National Guard; I directed the Services to complete a similar review. These reviews will provide the information necessary to shape appropriate policy and guidance on the proper means of administration of such contracts. My office has been notified that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) is also reviewing marketing and advertising activities for the Department (Engagement code 352046).

We are unable at this time to provide all of the data that you requested. However, the enclosed document provides some context on our sports marketing program and its overall value and importance to the Department's recruiting mission. As noted above, both the Services and the National Guard are conducting a review on these recruiting contracts, and the Department will be working with the GAO to assist in its review. These reviews are projected to be completed in March of 2016. Once the data from these reviews are collected and analyzed, we will provide you with additional information in order to respond more fully to the questions you posed in your letter.

We appreciate your support and share your concern regarding this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Carson".

Brad Carson
Acting

Enclosure:
As stated

Marketing, Advertising, and Promotion Contracts between the Department of Defense and Professional Sports

Q1. The total amount your Service spent on paid interactions with service members at professional and collegiate sporting events and how much has the Department of Defense paid professional teams for such activities since FY 2009, including a breakdown of how much each Service branch paid.

A1. Today's recruiting environment is becoming more challenging as lower unemployment and increased opportunities for continued education provide youth with more options; for many, this has made military service less attractive. To ensure continued recruiting success, the Services must employ an integrated marketing approach to meet immediate recruiting mission, maintain a dialogue with the American public and shape perceptions for future long-term recruiting success. Sporting events are an important component of this process and provide a neutral environment where potential applicants and/or influencers have an opportunity to engage Service representatives on their own terms. These direct one-on-one engagements have proven to be a cost-effective means of engaging and encouraging target markets to consider military service.

At this time, we can provide totals spent on sports-related marketing including motorsports.

Sports-related marketing activities, including motorsports:

All Components

FY2014: \$88.5M

FY2015: \$41.7M

Q2. The statements of work for all contracts with professional sporting teams or their associations for each financial year since FY 2009. If the statement of work offers vague descriptions of how federal dollars were actually spent, please provide a detailed description of each activity on which money was expended. Please provide contract numbers and bids related to such interactions with professional sports teams.

Documentation - including but not limited to statements of work, contracts, and marketing plans - detailing the overall cost and the specific activities and services purchased under each individual marketing contract between your Service and professional or collegiate sports team or organization since FY 2009.

A2. This information is not currently available. We will respond to your request when the reviews currently underway are completed.

Q3. Complete details on the number of paid salutes for honoring members of the Armed Services, the amount spent on such salutes, and the teams.

A3. This is one of the areas our ongoing reviews are examining. We will respond to your request when these reviews are completed.

Q4. Any available data and conclusions from formal programmatic reviews or evaluations by federal officials that indicates the effectiveness in recruitment efforts of service member recognition events with sporting organizations for which the sporting organizations are paid by service branches.

A4. This also is one of the areas our reviews are examining. We will respond to your request when the reviews are completed.

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May 11, 2015

The Honorable Ash Carter
Secretary of Defense
1300 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

General Frank J. Grass
Chief, National Guard Bureau
111 S. George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22204

Dear Secretary Carter and General Grass,

A recent investigation by my office has uncovered a number of marketing, advertising, and promotion contracts between branches of the Department of Defense and professional sports teams in the National Football League, Major League Baseball, National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, Major League Soccer, a NASCAR speedway, and National Collegiate Athletic Association athletic departments. It is troubling to learn that taxpayer funds are being used to compensate these teams for honoring and recognizing U.S. military service members.

One well-detailed instance of this practice involves a contract between the New Jersey Army National Guard (NJARNG) and the NFL's New York Jets.

According to public documents, between 2011 and 2014, the Department of Defense and the NJARNG paid a total of \$377,000 to the New York Jets through federal contracts for patriotic salutes, charity events, and other marketing activities. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, NJARNG paid the New York Jets \$97,500 and in FY 2013 the Jets received an additional \$115,000. In FY 2014, the Jets again received \$115,000 from the NJARNG. The stated purpose of these contracts was for "advertising and promotion." According to the FY 2012 and FY 2013 statements of work, these payments to the New York Jets were for activities that included:

- *"A videoboard feature – Hometown Hero. For each of their 8 home game [sic], the Jets will recognize 1-2 NJARNG Soldiers as Home Town Heroes. Their picture will be displayed on the videoboard, their name will be announced over the loud speaker, and they will be allowed to watch the game, along with 3 friends or family members, from the Coaches Club."*
- *"Allow 10 NJARNG Soldiers to attend their Annual Kickoff Lunch in New York City. At the luncheon, the Soldiers will have the opportunity to meet and take pictures with various members of the Jets organization for promotional use for recruiting and retention purposes for the NJ Army National Guard."*
- *"Allow NJARNG to participate in the Jets Hometown Huddle charity event in which Jets players and coaches will work side by side with the Soldiers to build or refurbish a community asset. i.e., build a new playground, rehab an existing park, etc for promotional use for recruiting and retention purposes for the NJ Army National Guard."*

To date, the NJARNG has not provided a statement of work for FY 2014 contract with the New York Jets.

While it may be appropriate for the National Guard or other service branches to spend taxpayer funds on activities directly related to recruiting, giving taxpayer funds to professional sports teams for activities that are portrayed to the public as paying homage to U.S. military personnel would seem inappropriate. Such promotions conjure up feelings of patriotism and pride for most sports fans, and the revelation that these are in fact paid arrangements is disappointing.

I ask the Department of Defense for the following information:

- The total amount the Department of Defense spent on paid interactions with service members at professional and collegiate sporting events and how much has the Department of Defense paid professional sporting teams for such activities since FY 2009, including a breakdown of how much each service branch has paid.
- The statements of work for all contracts with professional sporting teams or their associations for each financial year since FY 2009. If the statement of work offers vague descriptions of how federal dollars were actually spent, please provide a detailed description of each activity on which money was expended. Please provide contract numbers and bids related to such interactions with professional sports teams. Documentation - including but not limited to statements of work, contracts, and marketing plans – detailing the overall cost and the specific activities and services purchased under each individual marketing contract between the Department of Defense and professional or collegiate sports team or organization since FY 2009.
- Complete details on the number of paid salutes for honoring members of the Armed Services, the amount spent on such salutes, and the teams.
- Any available data and conclusions from formal programmatic reviews or evaluations by federal officials that indicates the effectiveness in recruitment efforts of service member recognition events with sporting organizations for which the sporting organizations are paid by service branches.

Thank you for attention and prompt response to my request, in strict compliance with all ethical rules, regulations, and guidelines.

Sincerely,



JEFF FLAKE
U.S. Senator