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U.S. Office of Special Counsel  
ATTN: Mr. Jacob Briem  
1730 M Street N.W., Suite 218  
Washington, D.C. 20036-4505

Re: OSC File N. DI-06-0354

Dear Mr. Briem:

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to comment on this matter. Though it may not cause a legal recourse, I feel it does provide important issues that need to be understood by the bureaucracy of the federal government.

I spent the first 28 years of my career within the Department of Defense (DOD), first, as a combat arms branch soldier, with active forces, and later, as a logistician with the 416<sup>th</sup> Engineer Command of Chicago, IL.

My very first day at Marfa Sector, U.S. Border Patrol, I met with the sector chief. He told me that in the eyes of the bureaucracy we were not considered to be of any concern for them, and we were basically a "hindrance" to their activity. I thought this a strange comment from a person wearing the stars of a Major General, but it did not take me long to find this out for myself.

Having said that, I will address the evidence:

- Sierra Blanca. The \$300K cost figure was what I was told at a physical security inspection done by an inspector from the Dallas, TX logistics office. CPA Simon Garza refused to accept this facility, and I believe that his reasoning was sound. The reason he refused to accept the station was based upon the fact that the construction standards were poor. My first visit to the station, I walked around the building, and pulled on every access door. Each came open with a sharp pull on the handle. All were locked. The building could not be locked securely and safely in accordance with fire code. Much of the repairs that were done to make this facility usable were done by the

sector maintenance team of which I was supervisor. The costs of these repairs and modifications were not captured, because with three mechanics and such a large area to cover, I did not have time to do so.

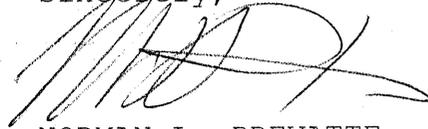
- Checkpoint repair and alteration project. It is important to note that this project is the primary reason I wrote to you people. I was asked by my supervisor to attend a COTR meeting concerning this project. I was never allowed to be involved in COTR activity until this time. It was here that I discovered a scope of work that was only a "wish list" written by an agent to outline the project requirements. There were no technical specifications for the installation of cameras, quality of concrete work, standards of construction, etc. For example, they were removing a septic tank, and had a potential contractor to install a new system. I immediately took over this part of the project. I told the agent in charge, "This is wrong! The reason for the odor here is quite obvious, Sir. Shit does not flow up hill!" The contractor agreed with my assessment. There are many other issues with respect to this project, and you already have the documentation for most of it.
  
- Logistics. Originally, I thought this was a local problem. Then, along comes Hurricane Katrina. I was appalled as I watched this disaster unfold. Logistically, I believe this organization is totally incompetent. This is why: first, you have to have what we called in the combat engineers, "boots on the ground". This organization has no concept of what that means. I work at the Department of Justice now, and I do not believe that any federal agency outside of DOD understands what that means. I mean the very, very basic things. Second, when I first arrived at Marfa Sector, U.S. Border Patrol, there was no process of documentation, and no standard operating procedures (SOP). I immediately installed a Facility Work Request system to document the activity of the section. After observing our activity for a year, I developed an internal Standard Operating Procedure for the maintenance team. Its significance was instrumental when we were given a group of National Guard soldiers

to help. I provided each soldier a copy of this document, and they immediately joined our efforts with great efficiency.

- Logistics failed? I know what a Statement of Work (SOW) is. In the 99<sup>th</sup> Regional Support Command (RSC), Coraopolis, PA, I was responsible for maintaining, and writing SOW's for the Deputy Chief of Staff Engineer for over 180 U.S. Army Reserve Facilities. At Marfa Sector, I never was allowed to talk to a Contract Officer at this logistics office in Dallas, never saw one, never consulted one, and was told by my supervisor that it was not part of my job. However, this is a prime responsibility of a Facility Management Officer (GS-1640-12), and it was part of my position description. The job I did there was more in line with a Wage Leader. Going to COTR school is not the only part of certification for that job. There are many other parts to the responsibility of a COTR. In DOD I performed this function in the Middle East, and the United States. This is a major failing of this organization. There is no training, no SOP, and no command information. Based upon my observations, I do not think these people have a clue.
  
- United States Army Corps of Engineers, Albuquerque District. Having served with the 416<sup>th</sup> Engineer Command for over 6 years, including 14 months in combat operations in the Middle East, I must say that I am very ashamed of this organization. Never in my career have I seen such an inadequate organization. At my level I was provided the full range of lies, and half-truths. I have experienced this before serving with the 99<sup>th</sup> RSC. When constructing our new facility there, our commanding general refused the services of the Baltimore, and Pittsburgh Districts for the same reasons. Marfa Sector did not have that luxury, and was forced to take this substandard performance. This will never change without competent oversight. I know from discussions with my supervisor that any negative comment about USACE was met with stern reprimand.

Minus a great deal of profanity, this is my professional assessment of this issue. I am neither an expert nor an engineer, but I know a bad deal when I see it. I could say much more, but it is already documented. But, as my First Sergeant used to tell me, "It's like teaching a pig to sing, it's a waste of time, and it irritates the pig." Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Prevatte', written in a cursive style.

NORMAN L. PREVATTE