

March 21, 2011

U.S. Office of Special Counsel
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These are my comments regarding OSC File No. DI-10-1226

First I would like to thank the Office of Special Counsel for considering and submitting this case. I would like to thank the Department of Veterans Affairs for conducting their investigation into this matter.

I have read their response many times since receiving it and still feel that the agency, GSA, and GM unnecessarily placed my life and the lives of others that drive this vehicle in danger.

The agency maintains that my assertions are unsustainable and only the assertion that VA failed to notify the other field examiners regarding the recall information in a timely manner once the recall information was brought to its attention is sustained.

It is my opinion that research should be done prior to an employee being assigned a vehicle. I have no say so in what kind of car I receive. I am simply told to be at a certain place, on a certain day, and a vehicle will be given to me.

Doesn't the agency have a responsibility to find out the safety of the vehicle before they make the deal with the dealer? I certainly research any vehicle before I purchase it.

Ms. Anna Vanderhazen, GSA Fleet management representative, stated that "GSA does not conduct extensive inspections on vehicles, unless the Agency is obtaining a state license plate." Perhaps GSA should be required to perform at least random inspections on the vehicles they are purchasing/leasing on behalf of the Federal government. A report on the vehicle's possible safety issues should be required before a contract is signed.

Then there is the statement from Mr. Burns, Chief of VBA's Administration division regarding his contact with Mr. Todd Blitstein, repair technician, at Suss Buick-Pontiac-GMC. Mr. Blitstein stated, "that the repairs resulting in the "sudden stoppage" incident were in no way related to the vehicle recall."

Then why did the vehicle stop? Will this happen again? The problem was not and has not been explained to me. Since it was apparently explained to someone in VBA, doesn't someone in VBA have a responsibility to explain, get that information out to the operators of these vehicles.

GM's own policy states that, "All unsold new vehicles in dealers' possession and subject to recall must be held and inspected/repared per service procedure of the recall bulletin before customers take possession of these vehicles."

So who makes sure that this is accomplished prior to GSA taking possession of the vehicles? Doesn't GSA have a responsibility to ensure the vehicles they take possession of have the proper inspections and that the recalls are accomplished before taking possession?

I am not a mechanic. I don't make any claims to know anything about transmissions. VA did not hire me to know about transmissions. I do know that if there is any problem with the transmission of a vehicle that problem could be possibly dangerous and costly. I only know that I expected that the agency would care enough to ensure that the vehicle they mandated that I drive in the performance of my duties would be safe.

It seems that this whole incident is being blamed on GM and maybe rightly so. However, doesn't the VA also share a portion of the blame in that they contracted with GSA for the vehicle and as it appears never did their homework on what the safety and mechanical issues might be with the vehicle they signed a contract to acquire. Also, I can appreciate the actions that VA took to ensure this doesn't happen again, but I feel it may have been avoided had the agency simply done their homework before making the deal.

Finally for me, there is the issue that the Federal government had / was in the process of bailing out GM from their financial problems, around the same period of this incident. Then as an American taxpayer and a federal employee, my life was put in danger by the very company my tax dollars went out to help. What, if any action has been taken to have GM accountable?

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