

February 26, 2013

Dr. Ashton B. Carter  
Deputy Secretary of Defense  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Dr. Carter:

Thank you for your service to our nation as the Deputy Secretary of Defense. Like the rest of the federal government, including Congress, the Department of Defense (DOD) will be required to make financial decisions to reduce spending as a result of sequestration. While there is no greater role for the federal government than to defend our nation, our citizens, and our rights and liberties, I believe Pentagon spending can be trimmed in a responsible manner without putting our nation at danger or leaving troops unprepared.

Some have suggested sequestration will require furloughing DOD civilian employees supporting our troops in combat or halting all training for units not deploying to a combat zone. Before any of these more drastic actions are taken there are a number of ways the Pentagon could achieve savings that do not harm our national security readiness or our troops or DOD personnel performing vital military functions.

Rather than furloughing essential personnel, DOD could eliminate other unnecessary jobs that have little if anything to do with defense. For example, there are at least eight Pentagon employees who serve on the Board of Geographic Names, which names streams, mountains, hills, and plains across the United States. The Pentagon has also joined the cooking show craze by partnering with the Department of Agriculture to produce a reality cooking show called Grill It Safe featuring two Grill Sergeants showing off their own "delicious recipes suitable for cooking outdoors" in a 46-minute video. While Navy is reducing training in four air wings, the Pentagon recently spent more than \$1 million dreaming up plans on how to send a space ship to another solar system. We can no longer afford such out of this world spending if we hope to ensure our national security needs.

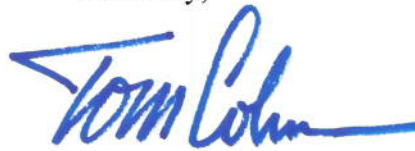
More than \$67.9 billion could be saved over ten years by cutting these and some other non-defense defense spending outlined in an oversight report I recently issued entitled *Department of Everything: Department of Defense Spending That Has Little To Do With National Security*. This report, which is attached, highlights how the Pentagon has spent taxpayer money on non-defense programs and activities since the Budget Control Act, which created sequestration, was signed into law. The Pentagon, for example, paid \$1.5 million to procure beef jerky advancements from France. DOD also spent more than \$6 billion on questionable, duplicative and unnecessary research through its various research agencies. This included \$5.2 million to determine what lessons about democracy and social decision-making could be learned from fish as well as a grant which resulted in an iPhone app to alert users when to take a coffee break.

In addition, the report identifies DOD programs and missions with a tenuous connection to national security, such as the billions of dollars spent subsidizing grocery stores here in the United States, running elementary schools costing four times as much as local schools but with no better educational outcomes, and duplicating tuition assistance programs already provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Instead of modernizing our military's aging weapon systems, these initiatives have siphoned resources away from real defense needs while duplicating other government programs. Before furloughing essential personnel who support our troops or compromising our readiness, I would encourage you to consider eliminating or at least reducing spending on these non-defense related activities that are in the defense budget.

I look forward to your thoughts regarding the findings and recommendations of this oversight report on non-defense spending and any areas where you can take action today or in the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request toward this end. If I can ever be of assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.  
United States Senator

Enclosure:  
*Department of Everything* oversight report