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52D DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EARLY CHILDHOOD, ELEMENTARY AND
SECONDARY EDUCATION

COMMITTEE ON
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U.S. House of Representatives
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The Honorable Darrell Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Chairman Chaffetz:

America's military men and women in Afghanistan continue to face a dangerous enemy with unconventional tactics. Above all, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) remain the single greatest threat to our military and its Afghan mission. There has been significant progress in developing and fielding counter-IED infrastructure, but there is still room for advancement as evidenced by the existing IED threat. Not only do advancements in this area save lives, but they ensure we are preparing for the future given that IEDs will surely remain a serious threat throughout Afghanistan and likely utilized against the U.S. military in any potential future ground combat operation.

More so in recent years, a variety of organic resources within the services and commercial off-the-shelf products have been incorporated into the military's counter-IED strategy. With resources available, it is critical that our service branches and ground combat units have access to the tools they need to be effective while providing maximum protection to the warfighter. Though this has not been the case for one counter-IED resource in particular, which has met strong and needless bureaucratic resistance within the U.S. Army, and I am concerned that lives have been endangered as a result.

Currently, the Army utilizes the Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS-A), which, among other things, provides a common infrastructure for data storage and analysis that is applicable to countering the IED threat. Comparable software technology, Palantir, has been

highly sought after and acquired by other branches of the military, even though the Army has all but shut the door on this alternative platform. Most concerning is that several Army ground combat units have, in fact, requested the use of Palantir through their chains-of-command, only for these requests to be denied by mid-level bureaucrats within the Pentagon.

In one instance this year, it came to my attention that the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan had made several urgent need requests for Palantir, but were denied access to the platform for reasons that were not clear. In fact, data available at the time indicated that, with the use of Palantir, find-and-clear rates for IEDs improved by 12 percent. Yet the Army continued to show resistance. The initial request by the 82nd Airborne was made in November 2011 and finally approved at the end of February 2012. Only after direct intervention by the Army Chief of Staff, General Raymond Odierno, was the use of Palantir granted for a ground combat unit that had been requesting the system for months. In one email exchange, an officer with the 82nd Airborne wrote, “The chain of command believes they need to have this capability in the fight and that it will save soldiers lives and limbs. Bottom line, there is a significant capability gap in DCGS-A within the [MFWS] and [TED] that Palantir greatly exceeds, and with extremely high stakes in a very violent environment, today we need the capability advantage that Palantir provides.”

General Odierno, upon approving the 82nd Airborne request, then ordered a U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) report on Palantir. Information that I can provide shows that an original version of the ATEC report, which ultimately recommended installing more Palantir servers in Afghanistan, was ordered rescinded and destroyed. An updated ATEC report was issued and favorable references to Palantir, including the recommendation to acquire additional servers, were removed from the report.

Soon after, I was informed that the Army initiated its own investigation into the ATEC report and issues pertaining to Palantir. It also came to my attention that other Army ground combat units have made *multiple urgent need requests* for Palantir, only to have these requests denied by the Army. These requests have yet to be fulfilled—even months after initial requests were made.

The idea that ground combat units in Afghanistan are being denied intelligence tools that are requested and readily available is unsettling and underscores a major failure in a process that is intended to deliver resources to the warfighter as quickly as possible. This is evidently a systemic problem that cannot go unaddressed.

My recommendation is that the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform initiate an investigation of its own into the details involving the ATEC report and other issues involving obstructed intelligence tools for combat units in Afghanistan. It is necessary that Congress obtain a full accounting of why the ATEC report was altered and who recommended and authorized such changes. Also, it is important to ascertain the actual number of urgent need requests for Palantir that have been denied, as well as, more broadly, all other urgent need requests from ground combat units with immediate intelligence needs.

I greatly appreciate your attention to this request, and I look forward to working with you on a matter that is critical to the safety and effectiveness of our military men and women.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Duncan Hunter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "H".

Duncan Hunter
Member of Congress