

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 17, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Since January 2016, the Committee has been conducting oversight of firearm inventory controls throughout the federal government. As part of this effort, the Committee held a hearing on July 6, 2016 regarding inventory control practices at three federal agencies.<sup>1</sup> The hearing highlighted agencies' challenges in this area. For example, at one agency 289 total firearms were lost during a six-year period, while another agency did not have accurate records of the ammunition stored in its armories.<sup>2</sup>

At the hearing, the Committee took testimony about a report issued by the nonpartisan Open the Books organization. The report found between fiscal year 2006 and fiscal year 2014, nonmilitary federal agencies spent \$1.48 billion on firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment.<sup>3</sup> "Administrative" agencies accounted for approximately 23 percent of that amount—more than \$330 million.<sup>4</sup> For example, the Department of Health and Human Services spent more than \$120 million on firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the group determined agencies were failing to accurately account for, and report on, the initial procurement of firearms and related equipment.<sup>6</sup> A review of publicly available contract coding data showed that agencies are erroneously reporting non-firearm items, such as food and ping-pong balls, as firearms or ammunition purchases.<sup>7</sup>

The revelation that agencies spent so much on firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment, and are derelict in their responsibility to accurately account for such purchases, raises a number of questions. In order to ensure agencies are acting as good stewards of taxpayer dollars in their purchases of firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment, we request that GAO conduct a review to determine the following:

1. The annual purchases of firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment for federal use by type and quantity since 2010 for federal agencies with 250 or more law enforcement officers;

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<sup>1</sup> *Firearms and Munitions at Risk: Examining Inadequate Safeguards: Hearing before the H. Comm. on Oversight and Gov't Reform*, 114th Cong. (July 6, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Open the Books, *The Militarization of America: Non-Military Federal Agencies Purchase of guns, Ammo, and Military-Style Equipment* (July 5, 2016) at 1, *available at* [https://www.openthebooks.com/assets/1/7/Oversight\\_TheMilitarizationOfAmerica\\_06102016.pdf](https://www.openthebooks.com/assets/1/7/Oversight_TheMilitarizationOfAmerica_06102016.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 47.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro

October 17, 2016

Page 2

2. The law enforcement roles, responsibilities, and missions for these agencies;
3. Trends in firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment purchases at each agency since 2010; and
4. Agency use of firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment codes to accurately account for purchases since 2010.

In addition, for the Department of Health and Human Services, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Internal Revenue Service, we request that GAO review:

1. The current inventory of firearms, ammunition, and tactical/military-style equipment at each agency; and
2. The inventory controls and procedures in place at each agency, and the extent to which such procedures are followed.

We look forward to your report as soon as is practicable. In developing your report, we suggest that you work with our respective staff. If you or your staff have any questions or comments, please contact staff from the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform at (202) 225-5074 or Rep. Hartzler's office at (202) 225-2876. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz  
Chairman  
Committee on Oversight  
and Government Reform



Vicky Hartzler  
Member of Congress



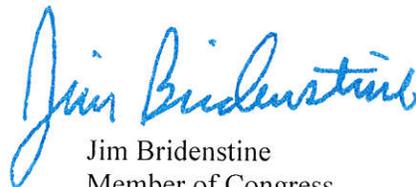
Mark Meadows  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations



James M. Inhofe  
Senator



Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress



Jim Bridenstine  
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Cynthia M. Lummis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on the Interior



Ron DeSantis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security