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March 24, 2016

The Honorable Mac Thornberry  
Chairman  
House Armed Services Committee  
2216 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Thornberry:

I write today to bring your attention to a gross mistreatment of members of the United States Army through the former Tactical Explosive Detector Dog (TEDD) program. My office has witnessed how this mismanaged program has abandoned several veterans who have honorably served our nation. It is for the reasons outlined in this letter that I request the House Armed Services Committee launch a formal inquiry into all of the adoptions which were conducted by the Office of Provost Marshal General (OPMG) under contract W911-SR-10-D-0021.

The TEDD program began in 2010 in response to a request for special 'sniffer dogs' to help with improvised explosive device (IED) detection. These Military Working Dogs (MWDs) are often used to lead patrols through areas thought to contain IEDs.

My involvement with this program began after a *New York Post* article<sup>1</sup> highlighted the efforts of Spc. Brent Grommet in attempting to adopt Matty, his MWD. At the time the program concluded, the Department of Defense was not required to contact the MWD's previous handlers before the MWD was retired or adopted, which resulted in the adoption of approximately 150 TEDD MWDs to civilian families, who had at best minimal prior knowledge of the TEDD program or the trials these MWDs faced.

Matty and many other TEDD MWDs were trained at K2 Solutions, Inc. (K2), a subcontractor located in Southern Pines, N.C. The majority of TEDD MWDs were also physically located at K2 during the adoption process although OPMG, and not K2, oversaw the placement of these MWDs. Through the cooperation of various outside entities, we were able to locate and reunite Matty with Spc. Grommet. However, their situation is not an isolated case but appears to be a common trend with TEDD handlers and their now separated MWDs.

In response to this gross oversight, Rep. Frank LoBiondo and I worked to include language within the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 114-92), and we appreciate your help in these efforts. Section 342 of the FY 16 NDAA now requires the Department of Defense to contact the former handlers and offer them the preference in adoption of the retired MWD, however, it is clear that more needs to be done to rectify this situation.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://nypost.com/2014/11/09/soldiers-hero-dog-stolen-by-military/>

Additionally TEDD handlers have also come forward, and it is through these experiences that it has become evident that there was a clear mismanagement of the adoption of these MWD after the program concluded. Although handlers were allowed to file for the adoption of their MWD, every handler that has spoken with our offices claims to have submitted their paperwork, yet the Army claims to have no records. Many of these veterans continue to search in vain for their MWD partners, and with no help from the Army or from former staff of the TEDD program. All of them are turned away without answers, and without their MWD partners whom they selflessly served with overseas and attempted to adopt.

There is reason to believe that the details behind the TEDD program's mismanagement, and the improper treatment of TEDD handlers and their MWD partners, starts with Richard A. Vargus. Through our experiences while working with TEDD handlers, Mr. Vargus, HQDA MWD Program Manager, has confirmed to my office that he had oversight of the TEDD program and currently has oversight of the Army's MWD program. It is my sincere hope that the Committee investigates this issue to ensure that our veterans and their MWD partners are given the proper respect they deserve.

Sincerely,



Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress

Enclosure: letter from K2 Solutions, Inc.