

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0606

September 21, 2016

Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Dear Inspector General Missal,

I am writing to follow-up on the April 6, 2016 letter Representative Kathleen Rice and I sent your predecessor requesting a review by the Department of Veterans Affairs Office of the Inspector General (VAOIG) to determine whether any criminal referrals are appropriate with regards to the hospital debacle in Aurora, Colorado. In that letter, we requested a particular review of "false or misleading statements" concerning the project made to the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

I am disappointed that VAOIG's review of the Aurora construction project released earlier today does not address the matter of criminal referrals.

After reviewing the report, I was particularly struck by your office's conclusions concerning the congressional testimony of former VA executive Glenn Haggstrom. After recounting numerous internal warnings Haggstrom received about the cost-escalation in Aurora, as well as Haggstrom's testimony before Congress in May 2013 and April 2014, VAOIG generously concluded Haggstrom "did not share [the] information with Congress."

A less generous assessment is that Haggstrom intentionally misled Congress – he *lied*. As the report details, Haggstrom was a party to extensive internal communications concerning the likely need for significant additional funding for the project. One intriguing email exchange reproduced in the report with the subject line "*Bad News – Denver 3rd Party estimate*" implies Haggstrom was concerned about too many people knowing about the likely cost escalation of the project.¹ Despite these numerous internal warnings, Haggstrom asserted in an April 2014 field hearing held by the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations in Aurora, that "based on all pertinent information currently available to us today, VA has the funds necessary to complete this project." He made similar statements under oath in May 2013.

¹ In an email from Haggstrom to then Director, CFM, Western Region Leonardo Flor – "Leo ... ok, but this is very sensitive and it goes no further than [former Denver Medical Center Director Lynette Roff] at this time please ... thx." p.18, VAOIG Report #15-03706-330.

In fact, I believe the Department and its various congressional witnesses knowingly painted an inaccurate picture of the Aurora project in its representations to Congress in an effort to avoid criticism, embarrassment, and ultimately, accountability.

Accordingly, I insist you review your office's investigation, as well as my letter from April 6, and address whether criminal referrals to the Department of Justice for any VA officials are appropriate. This review should specifically include, but not be limited to, any of the senior officials listed on the VA organizational chart found in the VAOIG report. I note that other senior VA officials have testified before Congress on the Aurora construction debacle, generally providing testimony similar to Haggstrom's. If you conclude that no criminal referrals are appropriate, please clearly explain why. Please provide a response by Wednesday, October 12, 2016.

Sincerely,



MIKE COFFMAN

Member of Congress

6th District of Colorado