

that that was what they would get, instead of allowing a \$600 million cost overrun. Hiring screeners may have been an administrative headache, but it is not rocket science. Thousands of companies around the country could have done a better job at much less cost to our taxpayers. Most Federal contracts are sweetheart insider deals in one way or the other, but this one is the most ridiculous I have ever heard of.

Then they hired far too many people. One aviation official told me that TSA now stands for "thousands standing around." I am sure that almost all of the people who have been hired are good, honest, patriotic people, but the TSA has simply hired many thousands more than they need.

I know it is impossible to ever convince any government agency that they have hired even enough people, much less too many. Yet before 9/11, we had about 28,000 or 29,000 screeners. We were told beforehand, before the legislation passed, that we would need to hire about 33,000.

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Right after passage, they said they would need about 40,000. Then, a few months later, they went to the staff of an appropriations subcommittee requesting 72,000 employees. There was such an outcry they quickly backed off to 67,000, and then the Committee on Appropriations put a cap on them of 45,000 that they have arrogantly ignored by hiring thousands of temporary employees. So I am told they now have about 66,000 screeners.

I had a screener come to see me at Constituent Day in my district a few weeks ago, and he will have to remain unnamed because I do not want to get him in trouble; but he told me that they have so many screeners at the Knoxville Airport and so many radios that when I walk in the airport, they radio ahead and say Congressman DUNCAN is in the airport, stand up, look busy. It was on the front page of the Knoxville News Sentinel that they were going from about 70 screeners to about 160. I am told one major airport went from about 170 screeners to over 700.

Then two members of the other body have uncovered the worst abuse of all. Apparently, 20 TSA recruiters spent nearly 2 months at a luxury resort in Colorado, a 7-week junket, that resulted in the hiring of just 50 screeners. Rates at this hotel run from a low in the high \$200s to well over \$300 a night for just an average room. The company that ripped the taxpayers off on the screeners' contract, NCS Pearson, has been replaced by the TSA after the obscene cost overrun, but according to Ms. Malkin, the firm still holds several lucrative Federal contracts.

Mr. Speaker, I find it hard to understand how anyone could be in favor of big government when we see, day in and day out, so much waste, fraud, abuse, and simple inefficiency in the Federal Government.

I realize that the government keeps growing, despite the horrendous waste, because so many big businesses are making huge profits from federal contracts and so many bureaucrats are drawing salaries and benefits on average far higher than in the private sector.

So while I have read and heard about so much waste and exorbitant spending by the Federal Government that it is hard to surprise me anymore, even I have been shocked and amazed by the spending of the new Transportation Security Administration.

Apparently I am not the only one shocked by this new Agency. Michelle Malkin, a nationally-syndicated columnist, wrote in a column carried in yesterday's Washington Times, these words: "The Transportation Security Administration is a fiscal black hole, and fiscal conservatives ought to be enraged. . . ."

She said the TSA is "sucking down tax dollars like a bagless Dyson Cyclone vacuum gone berserk."

Ms. Malkin reports that "already, the one-year-old agency has amassed a \$3.3 billion budget deficit and is demanding upward of \$6 billion for the current fiscal year."

She wrote in this column: "Never has a single government entity spent so much for so little in such a short time."

It is almost unbelievable to me that any federal agency could lose three billion, three hundred million in its first year in operation.

This has to be one for the record books.

A few weeks ago, I read in the Washington Post a report of the testimony by Kenneth Mead, Inspector General of the Transportation Department.

He said the TSA had budgeted \$107 million to hire airport screeners, but they ended up paying over \$700 million to the contractor.

The only contact I had with this contractor was when they ran an ad saying that they would take applications at a mall in my District, and then no one from the company showed up.

I received several calls from angry constituents who showed up at 7 a.m., as the ad had directed, and had driven long distances to get there.

If the TSA had budgeted \$107 million, they should have told this company that was what they would get instead of allowing a \$600 million cost overrun.

Hiring screeners may have been an administrative headache, but it is not rocket science. Thousands of companies around the country could have done a better job at much less cost to our taxpayers.

Most federal contracts are sweetheart, insider deals in one way or the other, but this one is about the most ridiculous I have ever heard of.

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Yet, before 9/11 we had about 28,000 or 29,000 screeners. We were told beforehand we would need to have about 33,000. After passage, they said they would need about 40,000—then a couple of months later, they went to the staff of an appropriations subcommittee requesting 72,000.

There was such an outcry, they quickly backed off to 67,000. Then the appropriations Committee put a cap on them of 45,000 that they have arrogantly ignored by hiring thousands of temporary employees, so I am told they now have about 65,000 screeners.

I am told one major airport went from about 170 screeners to over 700.

Then two members of the other body have uncovered the worst abuse of all. Apparently twenty TSA recruiters spent nearly two months at a luxury resort in Colorado—a seven-week junket that resulted in the hiring of just 50 screeners. Rates at this hotel run from a low in the high \$200s to well over \$300 a night for just an average room.

The company that ripped the taxpayers off on the screeners contract, NCS Pearson, has been replaced by TSA, after the obscene cost overrun, but according to Ms. Malkin, "the firm still holds several lucrative federal contracts. These contracts total more than \$500 million—including a \$140 million deal to manage and operate three national customer-service call centers for federal immigration services."

As Ms. Malkin said: "Deeper into the homeland security money pit we go. Where the traditional watchdogs for limited government are, nobody knows."

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take the time of the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR).

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BONNER). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

ALTERNATIVES TO WAR SHOULD BE DEBATED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, many times, many of us are not aware of the very special talents and the very diverse backgrounds Members have in this House. I was moved to listen more than I ever have to the words of the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS). For those Members who need to be refreshed in their memories, of course, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) is one of the valiant soldiers of the civil rights movement, one of the leaders of the civil rights movement, and one of those very privileged persons who had the opportunity to work directly with Dr. Martin Luther King. His words were particularly potent this evening, because he has just led a pilgrimage to Selma, Alabama, to acknowledge the Selma-to-Montgomery march. The march of March 7, 2003, was to acknowledge the march of March 7, 1965, when Congressman LEWIS's attempt to walk across the bridge for civil rights and the right to vote was stopped by the bloody actions of those in Selma, Alabama. Today we are seeking healing, and he is proudly one that leads a