

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

GABRIELLE D'ADAMO SINGER, STAFF DIRECTOR
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September 10, 2019

Glenn A. Fine
Principal Deputy Inspector General Performing the Duties of the Inspector General
Department of Defense
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350-1500

Dear Principal Deputy Inspector General Fine:

I am writing to request a review of the Air Force's use of Prestwick Airport in Scotland, related travel expenses at the nearby Trump Turnberry golf resort owned by President Trump, and the Defense Department's reported negotiation of a new contract to continue refueling stops at the airport through 2024.

According to recent reporting, in early spring, an Air National Guard C-17 military transport delivering supplies to Kuwait stopped at Prestwick Airport, where military members then stayed at the Trump Turnberry golf resort, located approximately 20 miles away. This stop was notable, according to one source, because this route typically involved stopovers at U.S. air bases located in Germany or Spain.¹

I am disturbed by the growing number of those in government willing to engage in questionable taxpayer funded travel to and lodging at properties owned by the President - properties from which President Trump can draw income at any time.² Just last week, I wrote Vice President Pence regarding the potential conflicts of interest arising from his decision to stay at another Trump-owned resort in Ireland at the President's "suggestion."³ I am particularly troubled by such spending by our military services. Prestwick Airport, located in Glasgow, Scotland, is the closest airport to Trump Turnberry, another Trump-owned golf resort. Rates at the resort average \$380 a night, though the Air Force and the Trump Organization have provided differing accounts of between \$100 and \$136 per night to justify claims that lodging for the crew members' stay at the Trump resort fell within the Air Force's allowable expenses.⁴

¹ Natasha Bertrand and Bryan Bender, *Air Force crew made an odd stop on a routine trip: Trump's Scottish resort*, Politico (September 6, 2019) (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/06/air-force-trump-scottish-retreat-1484337>).

² Derek Kravitz and Al Shaw, *Trump Lawyer Confirms President Can Pull Money From His Businesses Whenever He Wants*, Pro Publica (April 4, 2017) (<https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-pull-money-his-businesses-when-ever-he-wants-without-telling-us>).

³ Letter from Senator Gary Peters to Vice President Mike Pence (September 5, 2019).

⁴ Eric Lipton, *Military Stopover at Scottish Airport Includes a Stay at a Trump Resort*, The New York Times (Sept. 7, 2019) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/us/politics/military-stopover-trump-turnberry.html>).

Information provided to my office by the Air Force shows that, since President Trump took office, overnight stops at Prestwick have increased threefold. In 2016, Air Mobility Command had 75 overnight stops at Prestwick Airport. That number increased to over 200 in 2018. During the first eight months of 2019 alone, that number has now risen to 220 overnight stops. I am troubled that this information was not provided until news reports revealed the Air Force's approvals of stays at Trump Turnberry. These numbers have since been publicly reported, and I find it hard to believe the Air Force was capable of citing the exact number of trips to Prestwick Airport, down to how many occurred as temporary stays and how many involved overnight stays, but, according to the Deputy Head of Air Mobility Command, the Air Force "could not report how many of these overnights may have been at Trump Turnberry."⁵ News reports now confirm that over 60 Air Force service members have stayed at the Trump-owned golf course on at least four occasions.⁶

The Armed Forces are charged with the critical duty of defending our nation. They protect our most important values and they are charged with representing them as well. Potentially unnecessary spending by the military at a for-profit business owned by the President raises serious concerns about conflicts of interest and threatens the trust that the American people have placed in our military. Taxpayers should never be forced to wonder whether our Armed Forces are making decisions based on operational concerns or to curry favor by prioritizing the President's business interests.

Since news reports revealed the initial stay by Air Force personnel at the Trump golf resort, new revelations have surfaced that other air crews "occasionally stayed at President Donald Trump's Scotland resort." Acting Air Force Secretary Matthew Donovan and Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein have now ordered the Air Force to conduct a review. The excuse provided for this review by Air Force Brig. Gen. Ed Thomas is that "lodging at higher-end accommodations, even if within government rates, might be allowable but not advisable." I find the timing, justification, and scope of this review wholly inadequate and self-serving, especially in light of the fact that the Defense Department has refused to produce a single document since Members of Congress first requested information almost six months ago.⁷

⁵ C-17 Prestwick Notification, e-mail communication from United States Air Force to Office of Senator Gary Peters (September 9, 2019); Bryan Bender and Natasha Bertrand, *Air Force leaders order probe of Trump resort stays*, Politico (September 8, 2019) (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/08/trump-resort-air-force-probe-1485447>).

⁶ Natasha Bertrand and Connor O'Brien, *Air Force crews have lodged at Trump's Scottish resort at least 4 times*, Politico (September 9, 2019) (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/09/air-force-lodged-trump-turnberry-1487662>).

⁷ Bryan Bender and Natasha Bertrand, *Air Force leaders order probe of Trump resort stays*, Politico (September 8, 2019) (<https://www.politico.com/story/2019/09/08/trump-resort-air-force-probe-1485447>); Eric Lipton, *Military Stopover at Scottish Airport Includes a Stay at a Trump Resort*, The New York Times (Sept. 7, 2019) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/us/politics/military-stopover-trump-turnberry.html>).

The American people deserve an independent inquiry into the Air Force's increasingly frequent visits to Prestwick Airport, as well as answers to how many of those visits involved stays at Trump Turnberry by military personnel. To that end, I request that you review these trips and their adherence to all relevant laws, regulations, and policies, including those pertaining to travel expenses, contracting and procurement, and ethical guidelines and requirements.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gary C. Peters". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs