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United States Senate

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

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November 17, 2017

Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection
1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Mr. McAleenan:

I write requesting detailed information from Customs and Border Protection (CBP) on its contract with VF Imagewear.

Border Patrol agents are allotted \$800 annually by CBP to purchase their uniforms and gear. Agents must purchase these uniforms from the uniform supplier for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), VF Imagewear. VF Imagewear has performed this role since 2014, when it was awarded a DHS Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract. The strategically-sourced contract is valued at more than \$400 million.¹ The contract designated CBP as the Executive Agent on behalf of DHS.²

Based on information received from the National Border Patrol Council (NBPC), my staff compared the prices listed on VF Imagewear's online portal for over 20 Border Patrol uniform items with what comparable items would cost through a private retailer, in this case Amazon. Every uniform item was more expensive through VF Imagewear than a comparable alternative found on Amazon. For example, a pair of marine boat shoes was sold by VF Imagewear for \$168.47. Amazon sold a comparable pair of shoes for just \$39.90. In other words, VF Imagewear's shoes costs the government 322% more than a market retailer's would. In another case, VF Imagewear sold a tactical duty belt for \$64.13. Amazon had a comparable tactical duty belt for \$10.69, representing a markup of 499%.³

The respective prices for VF Imagewear's and Amazon's uniform items can be found in the attachment. The price markups for the reviewed items ranged from \$6.39 to \$133.21; the

¹ Federal Procurement Data System-NG
(www.fpds.gov/DataCollection/contracts/jsp/idvBaseController.jsp) (accessed Oct. 16, 2017).

² GovTribe, DHS Uniform Program – Strategic Sourcing Effort
(www.govtribe.com/project/dhs-uniform-program-strategic-sourcing-effort/activity) (accessed Oct. 16, 2017).

³ Email from Catherine Edmonson, Representative for NBPC, to HSGAC Minority Staff (Nov. 2, 2017).

percentage increases in pricing for the reviewed items ranged from 9.1% to 1035.4%. Based on a very conservative estimate, the federal government could be wasting more than \$1.3 million annually on VF Imagewear's marked up prices for Border Patrol uniforms.⁴

Given that VF Imagewear is the primary uniform supplier for all components of DHS, the federal government could be wasting many more millions of dollars on uniforms through VF Imagewear.

In 2015, NBPC conducted a survey of nearly 1,500 Border Patrol agents to assess their level of satisfaction with VF Imagewear and the products they receive through the contractor. In the survey, 97% of respondents stated that VF Imagewear does not offer uniform items at fair prices. Additionally, 87% of respondents stated that VF Imagewear usually does not have items in stock when they are ordered.⁵

In order to better understand CBP's management of the uniform services contract with VF Imagewear, please provide the following information and answers to the following questions no later than December 8, 2017:

1. The final contract and all modifications;
2. The Independent Government Cost Estimate;
3. Business case memo or similar document;
4. Final proposal, both technical and cost, which led to the award of the contract;
5. The memoranda which documented the justification for the award including:
 - a. any trade-offs made during the source selection process
 - b. the negotiations with VF Imagewear
 - c. the responsibility determination
 - d. the determination of price of reasonableness;
6. Plans detailing how VF Imagewear's performance would be monitored;

⁴ Email from Catherine Edmonson, Representative for NBPC, to HSGAC Minority Staff (Nov. 2, 2017).

⁵ *Survey Regarding VF Solutions as CBP's Uniform Vendor*, NBPC (2015); Email from Andy Quinn, Representative for NBPC, to HSGAC Minority Staff (Oct. 16, 2017).

7. A list of the full line of gear and equipment that VF Imagewear offers to CBP personnel;
8. If a Border Patrol agent does not use the entirety of their \$800 stipend allotted per year, what happens to the remaining balance?
9. How much of the \$800 stipend allotted per year does the average Border Patrol agent use?

In addition to the requested information above, I request that relevant officials from CBP brief my staff on this contract with VF Imagewear and what CBP is doing to ensure that Border Patrol agents have the uniforms that they need in the most efficient manner possible. Please provide this briefing no later than December 8, 2017.

Should you have any questions please contact Hannah Berner with my staff at (202) 224-5065. Please send any official correspondence related to this request to Lucy Balcezak at Lucy_Balcezak@hsgac.senate.gov. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,






Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman





Enclosure



Price Comparison – Uniforms for U.S. Customs and Border Protection Supplied by VF Imagewear

Item	Photo	VF Imagewear Price	Amazon Price for Comparable Item	Markup (in dollars)	Markup (percentage)
U Black Work Glove #7455		\$38.11	\$19.99	+\$18.12	+90.6%
Slash Resistant Glove #7951		\$33.95	\$2.99	+\$30.96	+1035.4%
Unisex OD Green S/S Lv1 Base Layer T-Shirt #1175		\$22.05	\$8.86	+\$13.19	+148.8%

V-Neck, Moisture Management T-Shirt #5180		\$19.50	\$12.98	+\$6.52	+50.23%
Men's Plain Toe Military Shoe #45		\$102.30	\$49.99	+\$52.31	+104.6%
Men's Plain Toe Clarino Shoe #6025		\$89.45	\$39.99	+\$49.46	+123.6%
Women's Plain Toe Clarino Shoe #105		\$89.45	\$37.99	+\$51.46	+135.4%

Men's Western Boot #3040		\$163.65	\$116.40	+\$47.25	+40.6%
Women's Western Boot #3041		\$163.65	\$149.95	+\$13.70	+9.1%
Unisex Marine Boat Shoe #7267		\$168.47	\$39.90	+\$128.57	+322.2%
Unisex Black Low Quarter Shoe #6001		\$85.00	\$74.96	+\$10.04	+13.4%
Unisex 8" Black Tactical Boot #6032		\$265.40	\$132.19	+\$133.21	+100.8%

Unisex 8" Tan Tactical Boot #6011		\$228.38	\$109.00	+\$119.38	+109.5%
Unisex Light Tactical Crew Socks #7351		\$19.13	\$12.74	+\$6.39	+50.2%
Unisex Black Summer Crew Socks #7352		\$18.00	\$6.99	+\$11.01	+157.5%
Border Patrol Raincoat #3155		\$174.10	\$64.99	+\$109.11	+167.89%

<p>Rain and Wind Bib #3224</p>		<p>\$153.25</p>	<p>\$58.46</p>	<p>+\$94.79</p>	<p>+162.1%</p>
<p>Unisex Base Layer Pants #1178</p>		<p>\$24.25</p>	<p>\$9.80</p>	<p>+\$14.45</p>	<p>+147.5%</p>
<p>Cold Weather Base Layer Pants #2004</p>		<p>\$50.06</p>	<p>\$9.80</p>	<p>+\$40.26</p>	<p>+410.8%</p>
<p>Fleece Watch Cap #7963</p>		<p>\$20.10</p>	<p>\$9.69</p>	<p>+\$10.41</p>	<p>+107.4%</p>

Unisex Fur Cap #7804		\$143.00	\$27.99	+\$115.01	+410.9%
Nylon Duty Belt #7061		\$64.13	\$10.69	+\$53.44	+499.9%

Source: Email from Catherine Edmonson, Representative for NBPC, to HSGAC Minority Staff (Nov. 2, 2017).