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RELEASED

COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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Dear Mr. Moss:

In reply to your September 28, 1971, letter about Mr. Patrick J. Schiavo's suggestion to remove fairings from combat helicopters and his appeal for an incentive award, we are of the opinion that the Army was justified in turning down the suggestion and in denying payment. There are two basic reasons for this conclusion, either of which supports the Army's position--Mr. Schiavo was not the originator of the idea of operating OH-6A helicopters with fairings removed, and the Army repeatedly disapproved the idea because tests show that removal of fairings degrades performance of the aircraft. There is no approved modification program on record to provide for the operation of OH-6A helicopters with all fairings removed.

In a message dated December 20, 1967, the Research and Development Division at the U.S. Army Aviation Command, St. Louis, Missouri, directed the U.S. Army Aviation Test Activity, Edwards Air Force Base, California, to prepare a test plan to evaluate "the OH-6A with all fairings simultaneously removed and individually removed." This was an attempt by the Army to resolve recurring technical and maintenance problems with OH-6A fairings. The test plan was published in April 1968, and test results were reported in July 1969.

The 1967 message and the 1968 test plan both predated Mr. Schiavo's suggestion, but the 1969 test results did not. This fact could have been confusing to both Mr. Schiavo and the Army, particularly since neither he nor the administrative personnel handling his suggestion appeared to have knowledge of the Army's prior concern with OH-6A fairings. Also Mr. Schiavo submitted both an engineering proposal and an incentive award suggestion at about the same time through different channels. This probably led to some confusion, since a reply to one did not necessarily constitute a reply to the other.

The test results showed that it was feasible to operate OH-6A helicopters with fairings removed but that they operated at decreased speed and range and at increased fuel consumption.

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The project manager in St. Louis, not the test activity at Edwards Air Force Base, was responsible for making a decision, and he would not approve a proposal which would adversely affect performance of the aircraft.

Although Mr. Schiavo apparently believes strongly that the helicopters could operate more efficiently with fairings removed, we found no basis to question the project manager's technical decision. Also a combat helicopter pilot told us that he had, on occasion, flown in combat with fairings removed and that aircraft performance had been reduced. According to the pilot fairings were repaired and replaced whenever possible.

We agree that Mr. Schiavo should have been informed at the outset that the substance of his suggestion was already under consideration. The chronology of events, the number of Army organizations involved, and the difficulty of processing a technical matter through administrative incentive award channels, however, resulted in some confusion on both sides.

We are returning your file as requested. We shall be pleased to discuss any of these matters with you in more detail.

Sincerely yours,



Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States

Enclosure

The Honorable John E. Moss  
House of Representatives