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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3603

February 4, 2014

Mr. Scott Levins
Director
National Personnel Records Center
1 Archives Drive
St Louis, MO 63138

Dear Director Levins:

As the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, a strong supporter of our veteran community and a veteran, I am deeply disturbed to hear of the criminal destruction of more than 1,800 personnel records of U.S. veterans by at least two of your employees at the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC). I seek (1) an immediate explanation of how this could occur, and (2) what steps you are taking to ensure that this does not happen again.

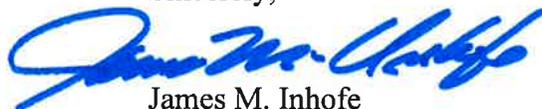
As you know, proper maintenance of a veteran's record is vital. Without adequate records, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to receive much needed and well deserved benefits. In addition, families of deceased veterans are not able to obtain proof of service.

Your own NPRC website says "The National Archives values the privacy of our veterans very highly and we actively protect their files stored here from disclosure to unauthorized individuals." However, names and Social Security numbers of 300 veterans were found on 241 documents in the woods near your center. It is my understanding that your employees are paid for speed in handling these documents which evidently led some to intentionally misfile, and "stash and trash" records to finish more quickly.

In light of these significant shortfalls in policy and standards, I seek your full explanation into how this breach could have occurred and what steps you are taking to ensure that this does not happen again.

The men and women in uniform who put their lives at risk defending our freedoms deserve at the very least to be free from worries that their military records are intentionally destroyed and their privacy jeopardized. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe
United States Senator