

VETERANS AFFAIRS SPENDING PROBED



John Sepulveda was the assistance secretary for the human resources department for the Veterans Affairs but chose to resign a day before the Inspector General was due to release a report on the conferences and the amount of money spent on those conferences. The reason behind his resignation is because Sepulveda knew that the report from the Inspector General would pinpoint some very crucial information about inexcusable spending of taxpayer's money on different gifts and even a parody video at the conferences. The conference, which was held in the Orlando area, cost a total of about \$6 million. Even though he chose to resign, the Inspector General still released the report, which was a total of 150 pages long. In the report, the Inspector General stated that excessive spending took place for the conferences and much of the spending was unnecessary. Sepulveda is not the only one to resign, as the General Services Administration Chief, Martha Johnson, also chose to resign from her position after a report was provided on a Vegas Conference that was held in 2010 and cost the taxpayers a total of nearly \$800,000. The conferences for Veterans Affairs ended up costing far more than this and the Inspector General stated that the conferences were simply dysfunctional to say the least. The report from the Inspector General also claims that Sepulveda lied to investigators and that several Veterans Affairs employees were breaking the law and was not following policies in the way in which they should because they accepted gifts while the conferences were taking place. A number of unnecessary expenses were put toward the conferences, including a video parody of the Oscar-winning movie, Patton. The movie was not authorized and money should never have been spent on the creation of such a parody video. In total, around \$762,000 spent on the conferences was considered wasteful, including the Patton video and the awards that a number of staffers received. While the total cost of the conferences was at \$6.1 million, it is believed that the official price tag for these conferences could be higher than expected. Representative Jeff Miller, the chairman for the House Committee of the Veterans Affairs, believes a lack of leadership is to blame for this inexcusable spending. Miller said, "It is blatantly clear that VA does not know how much it spends on conference. This sort of funny money accounting must stop, and will no longer be tolerated, especially in today's tight fiscal climate." As a respond to the Inspector General's report and the investigation, the Veterans Affairs claims that a number of department changes are expected to come.