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OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

2021-0011-INVI-P – J. Brett Blanton, Architect of the Capitol, Abused His Authority, Misused Government Property and Wasted Taxpayer Money, Among Other Substantiated Violations

Suspected Violations include Architect of the Capitol (AOC) Standards of Conduct, Government Ethics, Fleet Management, Authority and Responsibilities of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) and Cooperation of AOC Employees Policies and Title 18 U.S.C. §1001, Statements or Entries Generally. **Substantiated.**

Executive Summary

On March 7, 2021, the AOC OIG received a hotline complaint from a private citizen concerning the misuse of an AOC vehicle. The AOC vehicle was observed being driven recklessly in a parking garage at a high rate of speed, and the driver reportedly was observed making obscene gestures. During the OIG's initial review, it was discovered that a previous complaint had been made with the General Services Administration (GSA) referencing the same vehicle in December 2020.¹ An investigation was initiated that revealed the AOC vehicle was assigned to Mr. James Brett Blanton, SR-00, Architect of the Capitol. The driver and passenger during the March 2021 incident were identified as Blanton's children. Further investigation confirmed that unauthorized use of government resources occurred within the Washington, D.C., metro area as well as West Virginia, South Carolina and Florida. Evidence and testimony confirmed that AOC vehicles intended for Home to Work (HTW) transportation by Blanton were consistently used as personal vehicles by both Blanton and his family for weekend trips to a craft brewery, out-of-town trips and general family use. The OIG's investigation identified a significant amount of administrative, ethical and policy violations as well as evidence of criminal violations, including misrepresentation as law enforcement and providing false information to investigators.

On February 13, 2023, The President of the United States terminated Blanton's appointment as the Architect of the Capitol.

By May 1, 2023, the AOC had recovered funds in the amount of \$1,409.80 for an accident involving the AOC vehicle that took place at a brewery and withheld \$12,516.76 from Blanton's final annual leave payment.

On September 7, 2023, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a legal decision stating that the AOC violated the Antideficiency Act when it obligated appropriations for the purchase of a passenger motor vehicle in excess of the fiscal year 2021 statutory price limitation and the AOC violated the purpose statute when it obligated appropriations for expenses incurred in relation to the use of AOC vehicles by the then-Architect's family members; however, AOC did not violate the purpose statute when it obligated appropriations for the purchase and installation

¹ The previous complaint received from the GSA was then provided to at least 17 AOC employees (including senior management), but it was never provided to the AOC OIG for review. The AOC OIG issued a Management Advisory addressing the concern. 2023-0002-INVM-P-Management-Advisory.pdf (oversight.gov)



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of motor vehicle accessories on a vehicle for the then-Architect's use. [Architect of the Capitol—Purchase and Use of Motor Vehicles | U.S. GAO](#)

The 2021 fiscal year price limitation (set by the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act) to buy a passenger motor vehicle was not to exceed \$19,947.00. Because the AOC obligated \$49,033.64 against its Capital Construction and Operations appropriation for the purchase of a passenger motor vehicle for use by Blanton, the OIG has identified \$29,086.64 as Funds for Better Use.²

Investigation

Unauthorized Vehicle Use

Per Public Law 117-103, Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, funds are available for purchase or exchange, maintenance and operation of a passenger motor vehicle. It does not mention the intended usage of the vehicle. Prior to and throughout the OIG investigation, Blanton consistently contradicted his vehicle-use authority. The Office of General Counsel (OGC), OCSO and Blanton stated he is authorized a vehicle for continuity of operations (COOP) or emergency response to the U.S. Capitol, as necessary. Blanton also claimed that he was “tethered” to the vehicle — a term no one had heard of or previously used. The AOC OIG found overwhelming evidence that Blanton and his family continually misused AOC vehicles intended for home-to-work (HTW) use. AOC policy applies to all AOC employees who operate and use AOC and GSA motor vehicles and fleet cars. The policy defines HTW transportation as “the use of an AOC motor vehicle to transport employees between their home and place of work. This includes the use of an AOC motor vehicle solely for the purpose of supplementing part of or all of an employee’s commute.” The policy continues to state that the Architect of the Capitol (person) or their designee has the authority to determine if a compelling operational condition exists that would benefit AOC operations by using a motor vehicle for HTW use. If an authorized user is on leave or otherwise absent for three or more consecutive days, the policy notes that the vehicle must be housed on AOC property and further states this is governed by the rules outlined in Federal Management Regulation 102.5, HTW Transportation. Only the Architect and Chief Operating Officer are authorized to grant an exception to components of this policy if determined to be in the best interests of the AOC due to security considerations. Such exceptions must be provided in writing to the Personal Property

² **Funds for Better Use:** As defined in the Section 5 (f)(4) of the IG Act, the term “recommendation that funds be put to better use” means a recommendation by the Office that funds could be used more efficiently if management of an establishment took actions to implement and complete the recommendation, including—

- (A) reductions in outlays;
- (B) deobligation of funds from programs or operations;
- (C) withdrawal of interest subsidy costs on loans or loan guarantees, insurance, or bonds;
- (D) costs not incurred by implementing recommended improvements related to the operations of the establishment, a contractor or grantee;
- (E) avoidance of unnecessary expenditures noted in preaward reviews of contract or grant agreements;
- (F) any other savings which are specifically identified;

Note: if the recommendation includes “disallowed funds” it means that funds should not have been charged to the applicable program. Therefore, these should be considered “funds for better use.”



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Management Office. At the time of the investigation, no such memorandums or requests had been submitted. Blanton has not authorized any other AOC employee a HTW vehicle for their personal use on a consistent basis, and he has abused his authority by continually approving his own HTW vehicle use as well as misusing the AOC vehicle appropriated to the Architect of the Capitol.

Additional evidence and testimony confirmed the AOC vehicles intended for HTW transportation by Blanton were consistently used as personal vehicles by both Blanton and his family for weekend trips to a craft brewery, out-of-town trips and general family use. The AOC vehicles were driven by his spouse, Michelle Blanton (M. Blanton), and adult daughter, Reilly Blanton (R. Blanton), on a regular basis without him in the vehicle. R. Blanton advised the OIG that her father had given her permission. She had transported both her friends and boyfriend in the vehicle and referred to using the AOC's fuel as "free gas." Allowing multiple family members to drive the vehicles without him negates his need to be "tethered" (a term used by Blanton) to the vehicle and traveling outside the immediate area negates the ability to respond to emergencies at the U.S. Capitol in a timely manner for COOP or otherwise.

The OIG collected data pertaining to the three AOC vehicles assigned to Blanton from January 16, 2020 (the day Blanton was sworn in as the 12th Architect of the Capitol), to February 28, 2022. A comparison of telework days, obtained from the AOC's online Time and Attendance System (WebTA™), to vehicle mileage logs showed that, during his tenure as the Architect of the Capitol, Blanton should have driven approximately 10,438 miles using AOC vehicles.³ Instead, a total of 29,291 miles were recorded during that time frame. While the AOC OGC and applicable law and policy allow for some incidental use during travel to and from work, Blanton and his family used AOC vehicles for an additional 18,853 miles. Evaluation of the additional mileage added to the AOC vehicles, wear and tear, and extra maintenance in accordance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) policies for 2020 and 2021 amounted to a total of no less than \$12,434.00 in unreported, taxable noncash fringe benefits to Blanton.

In addition to the added mileage, wear and tear, and fuel, the AOC paid \$1,409.80 because of an accident that took place at a craft brewery on Saturday, May 30, 2020. Immediately following the AOC vehicle's return from a Blanton family vacation in August 2020, it was taken for an oil change that cost \$82.76. Although an oil change is regularly scheduled maintenance, 2,679 miles were added to the vehicle during the time frame Blanton was on vacation.

The OIG identified no less than \$13,926.56 as net questioned costs⁴ associated with Blanton's use of AOC vehicles. Although applicable government rates were used to determine the questioned

³ Round-trip mileage from Blanton's residence to the U.S. Capitol is 34 miles. While some minor incidental use of government vehicles to and from work is generally permitted by both the AOC OGC and Federal Management Regulation 102-5, HTW Transportation, the OIG does not concur that use constitutes an additional 18,853 miles.

⁴ Net questioned costs, as defined in Section 5(f)(1) of the Inspector General Act, means a cost that is questioned by the OIG because of "(a) an alleged violation of a provision of a law, regulation, contract, grant, cooperative agreement, or other agreement or document governing the expenditure of funds; (b) a finding that, at the time of the audit, such cost is not supported by adequate documentation; or (c) a finding that the expenditure of funds for the intended purpose is unnecessary or unreasonable."



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costs associated with improper vehicle use, the frequency of inappropriate use, multiple vehicles involved, fuel added by Blanton that was not accounted for on AOC records, and additional miles added between each fueling made it impractical to differentiate between legitimate gallons of fuel added by the AOC; therefore, the AOC's direct loss of funds associated with gallons of fuel added to the vehicles was not included.

During the time frame of the investigation, Blanton used three different vehicles belonging to the U.S. Government.

1. 2018 Jeep Grand Cherokee

From mid-January 2020 to mid-November 2021, Blanton drove a black 2018 Jeep Grand Cherokee privately leased by the AOC. The vehicle was equipped with emergency equipment (i.e., police lights, siren and radio) and displayed a Washington, D.C., license plate (EA 3080) and had been used by previous Architects. Digital forensic and testimonial evidence confirmed that Blanton used the Jeep Grand Cherokee for personal use on a regular basis. On Saturday, May 30, 2020, Blanton, his family and the AOC vehicle were involved in an accident at Vanish Farmwoods Brewery, 42245 Black Hops Ln., Leesburg, VA, 20176. Blanton told the other party involved that it was a government vehicle, he was an "agent" and he did not have insurance information because the government would handle the insurance claim. Photos Blanton provided his staff displayed evidence corroborating they were taken on Saturday, May 30, 2020, at a latitude and longitude that places both Blanton and the AOC vehicle at the parking lot of Vanish Farmwoods Brewery. A police report was not obtained, witness statements were not taken and other AOC accident procedures were not followed in accordance with policy.

On June 29, 2020, Blanton used the Jeep Grand Cherokee to pursue a suspect involved in a hit and run that took place near his residence. The vehicle struck belonged to the boyfriend of Blanton's daughter. The police report obtained from that incident identified Blanton as an "off-duty DC police officer," and in-car video (ICV) footage obtained from the Fairfax County Police Department depicted Blanton and a vehicle matching the Jeep Grand Cherokee belonging to the AOC parked on the street in front of the residence of the suspect. Testimony from the suspect's legal counsel corroborated the information from the police report, stating that, because of his belief that Blanton was off-duty law enforcement, he did not object to Blanton's presence at the pretrial meetings. He then described Blanton as making an affirmative action when asked if he was law enforcement during the meetings. Additional testimony obtained from multiple interviews stated that Blanton advised the witnesses he had "activated the emergency equipment" when pursuing the suspect that struck the vehicle belonging to his daughter's boyfriend.

Digital forensic and testimonial evidence obtained by the OIG confirmed the Jeep Grand Cherokee traveled to both South Carolina and Florida during the time Blanton was on annual leave in August 2020. A forensic exam of the Jeep Grand Cherokee revealed that, while Blanton was on annual leave from the AOC from August 8, 2020, to August 23, 2020, the Jeep Grand Cherokee traveled to Daniel Island, SC, and Apalachicola, FL. Photographs obtained by the OIG placed Blanton's



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family in those locations during the specific time frame, and R. Blanton corroborated that Blanton used the AOC vehicle for his family vacation. Fuel and mileage logs retained by the AOC OIG confirmed that 2,679 miles were added to the vehicle during the time frame Blanton was on vacation.

AOC policy states that the driver may be personally liable for any infractions, including traffic citations. On August 6, 2020, at 5:07 p.m. ET, a date that Blanton's certified WebTA records reflect he teleworked, the Jeep Grand Cherokee received a red-light citation at Pickett Road in Fairfax, VA. Testimony obtained by the OIG stated that Blanton was notified and provided the citation. As of September 28, 2022, the citation has still not been paid.

2. 2020 Ford Explorer ST

While on campus, AOC staff have driven the vehicle assigned to Blanton less than one mile to the AOC fuel station located at 14 E Street SE, Washington, DC, 20003, to refuel the vehicle. On November 10, 2020, AOC staff driving the Jeep Grand Cherokee struck a barricade at the U.S. Capitol. Blanton was then loaned a black 2020 Ford Explorer ST from the OCSO. The OCSO vehicle had a government license plate (AOC 053A), was equipped with emergency equipment and was the subject of multiple complaints received by the OIG.

On December 18, 2020, the GSA received a complaint stating that, on December 17, 2020, the Ford Explorer (AOC 053A) was observed around Premier Court and Roberts Parkway in Burke, VA, after 6 p.m. ET. The complainant noted that, as a taxpayer, they were concerned that a government vehicle was being used for private purposes. Blanton advised the OIG that his youngest daughter attends gymnastics in that area and he would occasionally pick her up after work; however, certified WebTA records displayed Blanton as teleworking on December 17, 2020, and evidence obtained by the OIG revealed the gym she attends was closed on December 17, 2020.

On March 7, 2021, the AOC OIG received the complaint that initiated this investigation. The complaint stated that, at approximately 1:15 p.m. ET on Saturday, March 6, 2021, the Ford Explorer (AOC 053A) was observed in the garage of the Walmart in Tyson's Corner, VA. The driver of the vehicle was a woman with brunette hair, possibly in her 20s or 30s, wearing a flannel shirt, and a passenger was in the front seat. The complainant and their passenger observed the vehicle driving in an extremely reckless manner in the garage and swerving out of the garage at a high rate of speed. The complainant claimed the driver made obscene gestures toward them while at the stop sign outside the parking garage. The OIG obtained closed-circuit television (CCTV) footage of two females matching the description entering Walmart as well as of the vehicle crossing Leesburg Pike, VA, heading in the direction of Blanton's residence. Blanton confirmed the females to be his daughters but did not initially recall the trip. The CCTV did not capture Blanton entering or exiting the Walmart with his daughters. He later sent the OIG an email stating that his daughter recalled him being in the vehicle and reading from a black binder. During a follow-up interview, he stated that he recalled being in the back seat.



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On both weekends and days certified as telework for the AOC, the Ford Explorer (AOC 053A) was observed transporting his youngest daughter to and from Bishop O'Connell High School, where she was enrolled, for both school and sporting events.

3. 2021 Ford Explorer ST

After driving the 2020 Ford Explorer, and because the Jeep Grand Cherokee's lease was coming to an end, Blanton told his Administrative Officer that he preferred the Ford Explorer and would like a similar vehicle for his use. The AOC purchased a 2021 Ford Explorer ST, which was equipped with D.C. license plate EA-4088, for \$49,033.64 and paid an additional \$37,458.74 to outfit it with emergency equipment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and supply chain issues, the 2021 Ford Explorer was not in the AOC's possession until March 2022.

R. Blanton advised the OIG that, while driving his daughter back to James Madison University (JMU) on a weekend following spring break, the new Ford Explorer (EA-4088) experienced issues and needed service. JMU is approximately 125 miles from Blanton's residence. The OIG confirmed with the AOC that Blanton had taken possession of the vehicle in early March 2022, drove it home over a weekend and returned it to the OCSO due to maintenance issues on March 21, 2022.

Coincidentally, on July 4, 2022, following multiple interviews and knowledge of the OIG's investigation into misuse of the AOC vehicle, an OIG investigator observed Blanton, teenage girls, a teenage boy, and one adult blond female exit the vehicle at the East Front of the U.S. Capitol Building.

Blanton did not use any of the AOC vehicles to respond to the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2020, or during any incident that has taken place at the U.S. Capitol during his tenure as the Architect. In a statement provided to the Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives, on May 19, 2021,⁵ pertaining to the events on January 6, 2021, Blanton said, "As a member of the Capitol Police Board, I advise my colleagues on the impacts to physical infrastructure of any security considerations being debated. My team plans, designs and constructs physical security infrastructure as approved by the Capitol Police Board and authorized by Congress." He went on further to confirm that he nor any AOC employee engaged in conversation with the U.S. Capitol Police (USCP) regarding a request for an emergency declaration or interest seeking National Guard support in advance of the breach of the U.S. Capitol. Blanton's statements about his role on the Capitol Police Board and his actions have continued to contradict the need for a law-enforcement-equipped vehicle since the onset of this investigation.

Misrepresentation of Position

⁵ <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/HA/HA00/20210519/112640/HHRG-117-HA00-Wstate-BlantonJ-20210519.pdf>.



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Each AOC vehicle assigned to Blanton was outfitted with an emergency equipment package, including law enforcement lights and sirens, a USCP radio and a satellite phone. In addition to downplaying any responsibility associated with driving a vehicle with emergency equipment activated, Blanton allowed his family to misuse and drive law-enforcement-equipped vehicles.

As a member of the Capitol Police Board, Blanton is issued credentials since he is charged with oversight and support of the USCP. The credentials allow the holder access to police information and secured areas without delay while carrying out their official duties. The credentials specifically do not delegate law enforcement authority. The investigation revealed that a minor accident involving the AOC-leased Jeep Grand Cherokee (EA 3080) took place in the parking lot of Vanish Farmwoods Brewery, 42245 Black Hops Ln., Leesburg, VA, 20176, on May 30, 2020. Blanton advised agents during two separate interviews that he could not recall the location of the accident. The other driver had backed out of a parking space and accidentally bumped into the Jeep Grand Cherokee that was parked along the roadway, not in a parking spot. When the driver inquired about Blanton's insurance information, Blanton told him that it was a government vehicle, he was an "agent" and he did not have insurance information because the government would handle the insurance claim. Blanton advised his staff of the minor accident but did not obtain a police report or witness statements as required in the AOC Fleet Management policy. Digital evidence obtained from photographs provided by Blanton to his staff confirmed the AOC vehicle to be at the aforementioned location on the date and time of the accident.

On June 29, 2020, Blanton used an AOC vehicle to pursue a vehicle involved in a hit-and-run incident that took place in front of his residence. A vehicle belonging to R. Blanton's boyfriend was struck in front of Blanton's residence. The Fairfax County police report stated in part, "Ms. Blanton's husband, Mr. James Blanton, an off-duty DC police officer, then followed the Mustang through the neighborhood." The Fairfax County Police chronology report identified Blanton as the 911 caller and listed him as working for the USCP. ICV footage depicted a vehicle matching the Jeep Grand Cherokee belonging to the AOC parked on the street in front of the suspect's residence. Interviews confirmed that, based on Blanton's statements, affirmative movements, use of a law-enforcement-equipped vehicle and credentials, the Fairfax County Police Officers, Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney and defense counsel for the suspect all believed Blanton was an off-duty law enforcement officer throughout the entire court proceedings. When the Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney and defense counsel were advised by the OIG in May 2021 that Blanton was not law enforcement, immediate steps were taken by the defense attorney to advise his client of the potential implications of an untruthful witness. Testimonial evidence obtained by the OIG revealed that, following the incident, Blanton told a witness that he used the AOC vehicle with the emergency equipment activated to pursue the driver and detain him near his residence on Elsinore Avenue (a few blocks away) until Fairfax County Police arrived.

Additional interviews conducted by the OIG and U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) confirmed that Blanton not only told neighbors he used the AOC vehicle's emergency equipment during that incident but also failed to later advise the Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney or the individual's



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defense counsel that he was not law enforcement. Testimony obtained from the individual's defense counsel confirmed that Blanton had never advised the court that he was not law enforcement, and he made an affirmative action when asked about being the off-duty law enforcement officer who witnessed the incident. Because of the defense counsel's belief that Blanton was off-duty law enforcement, he did not object to Blanton's presence at the pretrial meetings. Blanton denied representing himself as law enforcement, stated that it was their mistake and stated his credentials are marked to say, "Capitol Police Board Member."

Ethics Violations

Throughout the investigation, the OIG obtained multiple social media posts created by M. Blanton, including photographs of congressional license plates and a photograph of her and Blanton on September 30, 2020, from the dome of the U.S. Capitol with a comment stating, "This is happening!!!" and "All PATRIOTS welcome...PM me 😊." The specific comment was then later edited to read "*Patriots=Americans who love America. Not a candidate." On the same date, an additional photograph taken from the U.S. Capitol was posted with the comment, "Contact me for a private tour. All PATRIOTS accepted! While it is not against AOC policy to post photographs from the U.S. Capitol, M. Blanton openly offered tours of the building while it was closed to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, on December 28, 2021, M. Blanton publicly published images and comments on social media stating she took her swim team on a tour of the U.S. Capitol while it was still closed to the public. None of the posts or photographs are specifically in violation of U.S. Code (U.S.C.); however, offering private tours of the U.S. Capitol creates the appearance of impropriety and using a public position for private gain, which is a violation of AOC policy.

Blanton utilized his position and AOC vehicles for private gain by using AOC fuel, allowing family to drive a vehicle covered by government insurance and using an AOC vehicle to pursue the driver who struck a vehicle outside of his residence. He misrepresented himself as law enforcement and did not object or correct the Fairfax County Police Department, the Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney or the suspect's defense counsel. He also admitted to using an AOC vehicle on the weekend to drive to Aldie, VA, to meet with individuals who were interested in "government affairs type work." These actions are direct violations of the AOC Government Ethics policy.

During interviews, Blanton provided the OIG misleading and false information on multiple occasions. He indicated that he could not recall taking the vehicle on an overnight or out-of-town trip or recall where the Vanish Farmwoods Brewery accident took place (and stated it was near his residence); he also disagreed that his "incidental" use of the vehicle was frequent. Blanton told the OIG that he was advised the vehicle was to be "tethered" to him and that he used the AOC vehicle to run local errands or transport his children, but he would not "call it daily by any stretch of the imagination." Blanton stated that AOC policy governing vehicle use does not apply to his vehicle because it was separately appropriated. In a follow-up interview with the OIG and USAO, Blanton



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continued to provide misleading information and then confirmed that he came to his own conclusions that the vehicle was “tethered” to him and needed to be with him at all times. Blanton told investigators in multiple interviews that the AOC’s General Counsel and former Acting Architect had advised him of the permissible use of the vehicle. Both individuals, in multiple interviews, testified to the opposite.

Appropriations Violations

When deciding to procure the 2021 Ford Explorer ST, Blanton and his staff decided to purchase the vehicle outright versus using a GSA program or lease option. Blanton requested the tint be lessened (only on the back window where the emergency equipment is displayed, not on the side windows); a bench seat be added in the second row instead of captain’s chairs to add additional seating (according to R. Blanton, this was at the request of his daughters to have more room for guests); the advanced technology package be removed; a covert Washington, D.C., license plate be used instead of a U.S. Government license plate; and a global positioning system (GPS) tracking device be removed when the new security equipment was installed. Although the OCSO coordinates the equipment in the Architect’s vehicle, email evidence was found that outlined the OCSO’s own concerns of violating applicable Appropriations Law regarding the OSCO both purchasing and maintaining the Architect’s vehicle.

The 2021 Ford Explorer ST cost the agency \$49,033.64 to buy outright and an additional \$37,458.74 to outfit it with emergency equipment. Once obtained, the 2021 Ford Explorer and 2020 Ford Explorer belonging to the OCSO were both outfitted with D.C. license plates versus AOC license plates, making it more difficult and less transparent to track or report on by future complainants.

According to the original appropriations for the motor vehicle, the AOC is authorized “for purchase or exchange, maintenance, and operation of a passenger motor vehicle.”⁶ The OIG has concerns about the lack of limits this language places on the ability to purchase or replace a new vehicle annually, as well as limiting the type of vehicle and accessories that it may have installed (e.g., emergency law enforcement light packages, seating). The AOC is exempt from Title 31 U.S.C. § 1344 Passenger Carrier Use; however, the OIG does not believe that the AOC is exempt from Title 31 U.S.C. § 1343, Buying and Leasing Passenger Motor Vehicles and Aircraft, and should be limited by the statutory controls over vehicle acquisition and use, including price limitation and replacement of motor vehicles.

The additional \$37,458.74 to outfit the 2021 Ford Explorer ST with emergency equipment had been budgeted from a Jurisdiction Centralized Activities program group and not from the Capitol Construction and Operations budget, which authorized the purchase or replacement of the motor vehicle. Jurisdiction Centralized Activities funds are used for general operating expenses to include vehicle operations and maintenance. Per the AOC’s Fiscal Year 2021 budget submission

⁶ Division I—Legislative Branch Appropriations Act, Public Law 113-76, 128 Stat. 426 (2014).



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and justification, the AOC has justified the increased emergency and/or law enforcement motor vehicle accessories as a need since, “[A]s a member of the Capitol Police Board, the Architect of the Capitol plays a vital role in the COOP. Within the AOC, the OCSO jurisdiction is responsible for resiliency and COOP. AOC vehicles that operate in an emergency or COOP capacity must be compatible with USCP radio communications and emergency operations capabilities. Therefore, funds used to equip AOC vehicles to operate in a COOP environment or USCP supporting capacity are requested and obligated to OCSO through the Capitol Police Buildings, Grounds and Security appropriation.” Further, the OIG maintains that there is no reasonable justification for OSCO or other AOC COOP vehicles to maintain clandestine license plates that do not recognize the vehicle as AOC property.

The OIG has concerns that, although the motor vehicle may be permitted and budgeted from Capitol Construction and Operations, the AOC justifies any increase or changes to the Architect’s motor vehicle from a separate appropriation or group and that the appropriation is listed year over year since 2014, which raises the question of actual need and reasonableness.

Blanton used taxpayer dollars to fund an additional personal vehicle for his family. The OIG is dedicated to promoting economy and efficiency and preventing and detecting fraud, waste and abuse within the AOC’s programs and operations. Blanton’s actions have violated every pillar the OIG operates under, including theft, fraud, waste and abuse against not only the AOC but also the taxpayer.

Final Action

In December 2022, Congress included language in the Omnibus Appropriations bill to prevent use of funds for a home-to-work vehicle for the Architect of the Capitol or an authorized designee. On February 13, 2023, the President of the United States terminated Blanton’s appointment as Architect of the Capitol. The Department of Justice and the Office of the Fairfax County, VA Commonwealth’s Attorney declined to pursue criminal prosecution of Blanton. The IRS declined to open an investigation into the alleged violations of unreported fringe benefits. The results of this investigation were referred to the congressional committees with AOC oversight, the GAO and current AOC management for review and any action deemed appropriate, including recovery of misused tax dollars. As of May 1, 2023, the AOC has recovered funds in the amount of \$1,409.80 for the accident that took place at the brewery involving the AOC vehicle and withheld \$12,516.76 from Blanton’s final annual leave payment. The GAO issued their decision on the matter on September 7, 2023. The case is closed.