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The OIG at work

The Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General (VA OIG) has been busy. And as is typical, their work involves saving millions of dollars that should have gone to veterans services.

When the OIG analyzed the details about a contractor for the Veterans Crisis Line, they questioned why millions of dollars were paid when the work wasn't actually done. The job involved providing backup services for the toll-free 24/7 crisis line. However, that contractor didn't have enough staff, didn't train the staff they did have and didn't meet federal security requirements. Due to lack of contract oversight, the VA made payments to that contractor — \$11.2 million worth — for a year. The OIG, naturally, wants that money back.

Then there was the not-so-small matter of critical medical supplies and equipment and how those were managed. After being called on to inspect the practices at one certain VA facility, the OIG spent months looking at the inventory of expendable supplies, nonexpendable equipment, distribution controls and the leadership. What they found was so bad that four operating rooms had been closed because of lack of supplies, expired supplies and unreliable restocking, causing surgery backlogs and cancellations.

The OIG found expired supplies in operating rooms. (The OIG asked that they be removed, yet two months later the expired supplies were still there.) They discovered 50 pallets of supplies that were expired, damaged or obsolete. When it came to equipment, five pieces couldn't even be located. The value of missing nonexpendable items was \$10.5 million.

The facility had been awarded \$3.2 million for a contract for an inventory management system but never completely installed it and eventually disabled the program. They were then awarded more money to get the contractor to do the complete installation, and that wasn't done either.

Rumor is that the VA's OIG is not getting a bigger budget for 2027. That's ridiculous considering the amount of money they save the VA through their investigations.

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