

Cancel DOD Cards

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Credit cards are being misused by the Department of Defense, and Congress must do its duty and clean up the Pentagon's financial mismanagement house -- now.

A General Accounting Office audit recently revealed that about 200 Army personnel have used government credit cards to get cash to spend on lap dances and other services offered at strip clubs near military bases. Its Army investigation also found that cards had been used for personal purchases of more than \$100,000 in electronic equipment, \$45,000 for cruises, and \$7,373 for closing costs on a house.

This comes after earlier congressional investigations that have revealed widespread misuse of government credit cards among military and civilian Pentagon employees.

Although an internal task force Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld set up has recommended tighter controls on government credit cards and increased prosecution of those who misuse them, Congress may have to do more. Mere "controls" cannot counter a basic disdain for financial responsibility, probity and self-control.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky, an Illinois Democrat and one of the House government reform leaders who sought the GAO investigation, is correct in characterizing Defense Department financial shenanigans as being just as bad as those of Enron or WorldCom executives who misled the public about corporate profits and well-being.

The investigation has revealed rogue spending, an out-of-control system in which too many people with government credit cards see the spending power they embody as part of their own remuneration and whose theft of public revenue for their own use is not punished.

How many more examples must taxpayers endure before Congress realizes that the Pentagon is too immature to handle the convenience of credit cards? It is time for Congress to take them away.