

SANTA MONICA, Calif., Sept. 13, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Pentagon has ended a deal described two years ago by Consumer Watchdog that allowed a company owned by top Google executives to buy jet fuel for a fleet of aircraft based at Moffett Field. The public interest group said today the aircraft should be evicted from the facility and an investigation opened to see if laws were broken.

H211, a company owned by Google CEO Larry Page, Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt

and Google Co-Founder

Sergey Brin

, apparently bought fuel to which it wasn't entitled under the agreement with the Defense Department. The fuel was purchased below commercial market prices. Consumer Watchdog first raised concerns about the Google executives' sweetheart deal in a 2011 report,

Lost in the Cloud: Google and the U.S. Government.

New details of about the arrangement emerged in a Wall Street Journal report Thursday.

The Google executives' aircraft including a Boeing 767, a Boeing 757 and four Gulfstream V's, were allowed to be based at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Ames Research Center's Moffett Federal Airfield ostensibly because they were to be used to do research flights for NASA, but the *Journal* documented that few of the flights originating from Moffett were NASA related. Some were flights to Tahiti,

Hawaii

and

Croatia

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"It would be bad enough if these billionaires simply got a sweetheart, cut-rate deal," said John M. Simpson

, Consumer Watchdog's Privacy Project Direct. "What's truly outrageous is their company appears to have bought

\$6 million

worth of fuel subsidized by taxpayers that they weren't entitled to at all. Why should they get to fill up their fuel tanks to fly on personal junkets around the world, when we're all struggling to fill

our gas tanks?"

Read Consumer Watchdog's Report here: <http://insidegoogle.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/GOOGGovfinal012411.pdf>

Read the Wall Street Journal article here: http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424127887323864604579069730686941454-IMyQjAxMTAzMDEwMjExNDIyWj.html

H211 was only entitled to buy fuel from the Department of Defense when the planes were used for NASA missions. However, as *The Wall Street Journal* reported Thursday only 155 scientific missions had been flown for NASA as of last year, while more than 710 flights had departed Moffett since 2007.

The contract between H211 and the Pentagon specifies that the fuel was supposed to be used only "for performance of a U.S. government contract, charter or other approved use."

The Wall Street Journal reported that 2.3 million gallons of fuel were purchased from the DOD since 2009 for the Google jets at an average cost of \$3.19, while the average price at commercial airports for the same period was \$4.35, a savings totaling \$2.67 million.

NASA's relation with the Google executives is under investigation by NASA's Inspector General. Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) has also raised questions about the arrangement. The sweetheart deal that allowed the fuel purchases was terminated Aug. 31, probably because of the IG's investigation, Consumer Watchdog said. However, the aircraft are still based at Moffett, about three miles away from Google's headquarters.

"The U.S. Attorney should investigate what happened here and if the law has been violated, those responsible must be held accountable," Simpson said. "Simply ending the arrangement and then sweeping everything under the rug is unacceptable."

Pentagon Ends Sweetheart Fuel Deal For Google Execs' Aircraft At Moffett Highlighted By Consumer Wat

Written by Australian Business

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