

Office of Inspector General Washington, D.C., 20590

June 4, 2018

John Greenewald, Jr. The Black Vault 27305 W. Live Oak Rd., Suite 1203 Castaic, CA 91384 john@greenewald.com

RE: FOIA Request, Control No.: FI-2018-0052

Dear Mr. Greenewald:

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, dated May 2, 2018, sent to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). On May 30, 2018, the FAA referred your request to the Department of Transportation, Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for review and direct response to you. You requested: the final report for investigation #I08A0003320401.

Enclosed you will find twelve (12) pages of documents responsive to your request. Some information was redacted or withheld pursuant to exemptions provided by the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552(b)(5), (b)(6), (b)(7)(c) & (b)(7)(e)).¹ We are producing the 12 pages with redactions.

We consider this matter closed. The FOIA gives you the right to appeal adverse determinations to the appeal official for the agency. The appeal official for the OIG is the Assistant Inspector General, Brian A. Dettelbach. Please reference the file number above in any correspondence.

Appeals to Mr. Dettelbach should be prominently marked as a "FOIA Appeal" addressed to: U.S. Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General, 7th Floor West (J3), 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE, Washington, DC 20590. If you prefer, your appeal may be sent via electronic mail to <u>FOIAAPPEALS@oig.dot.gov</u>. Any appeal must be received within 90 days of this determination and should contain any information and arguments you wish to rely on. The Assistant Inspector General's determination will be administratively final.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. See 5 U.S.C. 552(c) (2006 & Supp. IV 2010). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

¹ Exemption 5 protects information encompassed by the deliberative process privilege. Exemption 6 protects names and any data-identifying individuals if public disclosure would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy. Exemption 7(C) protects personal information in law enforcement records. It prevents the disclosure of law enforcement information that could reasonably constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Exemption 7(E) protects techniques/procedures used in law enforcement investigations or prosecutions from disclosure. It prevents the disclosure of guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions if disclosure could reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law.

If you have any questions regarding this response, please contact the DOT OIG FOIA office at (202) 366-6131. For additional assistance, please see the contact information below.

Sincerely,

Siera Griffin

Government Information Specialist Enclosure

DOT OIG FOIA Public Liaison, Seth Kaufman

- Tel: (202) 366-8751
- Email: <u>Seth.Kaufman@oig.dot.gov</u>

FOIA mediation services, Office of Government Information Services (OGIS)/NARA

- Email: <u>ogis@nara.gov</u>
- Tel: (202) 741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448
- Fax: (202) 741-5769
- Address: OGIS/NARA, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001

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SYNOPSIS:

This investigation was predicated when the United States Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General (DOT/OIG) (b)(5)

(b)(5), (b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d involving Zerene Aerospace (Zerene), an airplane parts broker. The allegations were that Zerene was dealing in fraudulent aircraft parts and allegedly manufacturing aircraft skins, including wing components and control surfaces out of blocks of aluminum for various aircrafts, specifically the U.S. Air Force (USAF) E-3 (military version of the Boeing 707). Also, Zerene was allegedly changing data plates on various parts for both military and civilian aircraft. The weight of the items manufactured by Zerene was heavier than appropriate parts, indicating Zerene was using a different grade of aluminum. Zerene was not an authorized Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station or a Department of Defense (DOD) contractor and consequently not in conformance to industry standards.

(b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d	further alleged that	(b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d
	-	
	(b)(6), (b)(7)c	, (b)(7)d

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Initial surveillance revealed that aircraft parts were being manufactured at Zerene and on several occasions, several persons related to FAA Repair Stations and Aircraft Parts Brokers were observed at Zerene. In response to this information, a task force, titled "Operation Wingspan" was created involving several Federal Law Enforcement Agencies.

Between April 30, 2009, and August 26, 2010, fifteen Federal Search Warrants were executed. These search warrants spanned multiple judicial districts and in many cases, were executed simultaneously. Invaluable assistance was obtained from FAA Aviation Safety Inspectors from both the Flight Standards District Office and Manufacturers District Office as well as Inspectors from the Defense Contract Management Agency.

(b)(5), (b)(7)e

The investigation revealed that Zerene was involved in a massive airplane parts fraud conspiracy that involved the fraudulent and illegal manufacture of various airplane parts, and their subsequent sale to the Department of Defense and the Commercial Aviation Industry through the issuance of false FAA Authorize Release Certificates (FAA Form 8130's), false Certificates of Conformance, and additional false documentation including purchase orders, invoices, and the illegal stamping of part numbers on the counterfeit parts.

In conclusion, as a result of the efforts of the "Operation Wingspan" task force, 11 individuals were sentenced totaling 275 months of incarceration.

(b)(5)

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BACKGROUND:

18 USC § 38 - Fraud involving aircraft or space vehicle parts in interstate commerce

(a) OFFENSES - Whoever, in or affecting interstate of foreign commerce, knowingly and with intent to defraud-

(1) (A) falsifies or conceals a material fact concerning any aircraft or space vehicle part;

(B) makes any materially fraudulent representation concerning any aircraft or space vehicle part; or

(C) makes or uses any materially false writings, entry, certification, document, record, data plate, label, or electronic communication concerning any aircraft or space vehicle part;

(2) exports from or imports or introduces into the United States, sells, trades, installs on or in any aircraft or space vehicle any aircraft or space vehicle part using or by means of a fraudulent representation, document, record, certification, depiction, data plate, label, or electronic communication; or

(3) attempts or conspires to commit an offense described in paragraph (1) or (2), shall be punished as provided in subsection (b).

18 USC § 371 - Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud United States

If two or more persons conspire either to commit any offense against the United States, or to defraud the United States, or any agency thereof in any manner or for any purpose, and one or more of such persons do any act to effect the object of the conspiracy, each shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than five years, or both. If, however, the offense, the commission of which is the object of the conspiracy, is a misdemeanor only, the punishment for such conspiracy shall not exceed the maximum punishment provided for such misdemeanor.

DETAILS:

This investigation was predicated when the United States Department of Transportation, Office of Inspector General (DOT/OIG) (b)(5), (b)(6), (b)(7)c (b)(5), (b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d (b)(7)d (b)(7)c (b)(7)d (c)(7)d (c)(7)d

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control surfaces out of blocks of aluminum for various aircrafts, specifically the U.S. Air Force (USAF) E-3 (military version of the Boeing 707) and possibly the KC-135. Also, Zerene was allegedly changing data plates on various parts for both military and civilian aircraft. The weight of the items manufactured by Zerene was heavier than appropriate parts, indicating Zerene was using a different grade of aluminum. Zerene was not an authorized Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) repair station or a Department of Defense (DOD) contractor and consequently not in conformance to industry standards.

(b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d further alleged that	(b)(6), (b)(7)c, (b)(7)d
	(b)(6) (b)(7)c	(b)(7)d
	(b)(6), (b)(7)c,	(b)(7)d

On Aug(b)(6), (b)(2008, (b)(6), (b)(7)c and (b)(6), (b)(7)c Kansas Aerospace, a Hialeah, Florida based FAA Repair Station and Parts Broker were interviewed and stated Zerene manufactured parts specifically for the KC-135, which is equivalent to the Boeing 707 and the E-3 AWACS. (b)(6), (b)(7)c stated Zerene was a parts broker, and not authorized as a DOD contractor or as a FAA repair station to manufacture or handle those parts. (b)(6), (b)(7)c stated Zerene worked closely with CAS Honeycomb, an FAA Repair Station and had been manufacturing aircraft parts without proper authorization for the past ten years. Other companies such as Daytona Aerospace, The Airborne Group, and others not named by(b)(6), (b)(7)c dealt directly with CAS Honeycomb and Zerene to purchase these unauthorized aircraft parts, and then sell directly to the U.S. Government. (Attachment 2)

On September 25-28, 2008, agents conducted a site visit of Tinker Air Force Base, Oklahoma to review the packages contracting U.S. Air Force (USAF) officers put together to purchase parts from, Daytona Aerospace, The Airborne Group, and Kansas Aerospace. During the review of the packages, it was immediately evident the certificate of conformance supplied (ATA 106) by the aforementioned companies contained only minimal trace information on the ATA 106. All companies certified the parts being supplied to the USAF as being "New Surplus", further certifying parts identified above were manufactured by a FAA Production Approval Holder, or to an industry or commercial standard. A preliminary visual inspection of aluminum aircraft skin purchased from The Airborne Group revealed the part appeared to be too big and thick. (Attachment 3)

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On October 30, 2008, agents conducted an undercover operation at Zerene Aerospace. This operation confirmed the allegations and provided probable cause used in the application of a Federal Search Warrant for Zerene. (Attachment 4)

(Agents Note: Due to the voluminous amount of activities associated with this investigation, this report is grouped into activities as it relates to associated corporations.)

Zerene Aerospace Industries:

On April 30, 2009, three Federal Search Warrants were simultaneously executed on Zerene Aerospace's three Miami, Florida facilities which confirmed Zerene was neither an FAA authorized repair station, a DOD contractor, nor in conformance with any FAA or acceptable industry standards as it relates to the manufacturer of aircraft parts. Julio Zerene immediately cooperated with Law Enforcement, and as a result of his cooperation along with hours of surveillance, and numerous interviews it was revealed that a massive conspiracy existed to defraud the DOD and commercial aviation customers.

On July 13, 2009, Zerene was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On July 22, 2009, Julio Zerene pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On October 2, 2009, Julio Zerene, Zerene Aerospace Inventory was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to 37 months incarceration and two years supervised release. In addition Zerene was ordered to forfeit a 2003 BMW "7 Series", several pieces of jewelry, and numerous illegally manufactured aircraft parts. (Attachment 5 combined)

CAS Honeycomb:

On May 8, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on CAS Honeycomb (CAS), a Miami, Florida based FAA repair station. Jorge Cascante, owner and accountable manager of CAS cooperated with Law Enforcement.

On February 25, 2010, Jorge Cascante, owner and operator of CAS Honeycomb, an FAA Repair Station, was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On March 24, 2010, Jorge Cascante, CAS Honeycomb, pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

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On June 17, 2010, Jorge Cascante, CAS Honeycomb, was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to 30 months incarceration, followed by two years of supervised release. (Attachment 6 combined)

The Airborne Group:

On May 19, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed at the Airborne Group (TAG) in Miami, Florida. TAG was a DOD contractor and aircraft parts broker. Mariella Bianchi, owner of TAG and her son Juan Beltran, TAG sales representative cooperated with Law Enforcement.

On September 14, 2009, Mariella Bianchi, and Juan Beltran, owner and employee of The Airborne Group, an aircraft parts broker were charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On August 18, 2009, a Federal Seizure Warrant was executed upon Bank America, seizing \$130,706.18, under the control of Mariella Bianchi of The Airborne Group.

On January 5, 2010, Bianchi and Beltran, were indicted in U.S. District Court, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida on a single count of Conspiracy to Commit Airplane Parts Fraud and six separate counts of Committing Airplane Parts Fraud in violation of Title 18 United States Code, Section 38. This indictment supersedes the information that was previously filed on September 14, 2009, that charged each of the above defendants with a single count of aircraft parts fraud. This indictment became necessary as the defendants refused to accept the offered plea deal which had been initially agreed to.

On April 7, 2010, Beltran, pled guilty to one count contained in the Indictment charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On April 7, 2010, Bianchi, pled guilty to one count contained in the Indictment charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Conspiracy to commit Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On July 7, 2010, Beltran was sentenced on one count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to 30 months incarceration followed by three years supervised release. Additionally, \$1,936,512.65 in restitution was ordered to be paid joint in several with his defendant mother, Mariella Bianchi. Also, \$130,706.18 in cash was forfeited pursuant to a seizure in 2009.

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On July 7, 2010, Bianchi was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to 30 months incarceration followed by three years supervised release. Additionally, \$1,936,512.65 in restitution was ordered to be paid joint in several with her defendant son, Juan Beltran. Also, \$130,706.18 in cash was forfeited pursuant to a seizure in 2009. (Attachment 7 combined)

Falcon Aviation Group:

On May 19, 2009, a Federal Search Warrants was executed at Falcon Aviation Group (Falcon), in Miami, Florida. Falcon was a current DOD contractor and aircraft parts broker. Falcon owner John Falco cooperated with Law Enforcement.

On September 14, 2009, John Falco, owner of Falcon Aviation Group, was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On November 10, 2009, Falco pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On February 9, 2010, Falco was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to 37 months incarceration, and three years supervised release. In addition Falco was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$1.3 million. (Attachment 8 combined)

McCain Research Labs:

On July 16, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on McCain Research Lab, a Ft. Lauderdale, Florida based FAA Repair Station.

On November 24, 2009, Willie McCain, owner, McCain Research Labs (MRL) an FAA Repair Station was indicted on four counts of Airplane Parts Fraud in U.S. District Court, West Palm Beach, Florida. Specifically, McCain falsely certified approximately 156 FAA 8130, Airworthiness Approval Forms for commercial and military aircraft.

On March 11, 2010, McCain pled guilty to four counts contained in the Indictment charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts. On February 9, 2011, McCain's appeal to overturn his conviction was "Denied as Unnecessary" by the United States District Court of Appeals.

On May 24, 2010, McCain was sentenced on four counts of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to one year and one day incarceration, and two years supervised release. In

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addition, McCain was ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$21,750. (Attachment 9 combined)

Daytona Aerospace:

On November 19, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Daytona Aerospace, a Margate, Florida based aircraft parts broker and DOD Contractor.

On May 19, 2011, Hector Sorvik, former employee of Daytona Aerospace, was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On May 24, 2011, Saif Cheema, former employee of Daytona Aerospace, was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On May 26, 2011, Kudus Amodu, former employee of Daytona Aerospace, was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On October 19, 2011, Henry McFlicker and Ayodha Persaud, former officers and owners Daytona Aerospace were charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 371, Conspiracy to Commit Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On August 26, 2011, Amodu pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On June 3, 2011, Sorvik, aka Hector Arias, pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On June 17, 2011, Cheema pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 38, Fraud Involving Aircraft Parts.

On January 26, 2012, Persaud pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 371, Conspiracy to Commit Aircraft Parts Fraud.

On January 26, 2012, McFlicker pled guilty to one count contained in the Information charging Title 18 USC Section 371, Conspiracy to Commit Aircraft Parts Fraud.

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On August 26, 2011, Sorvik, aka Hector Arias, was sentenced on a single count of Title 18, USC, Section 38, aircraft parts fraud, to five months incarceration, three years probation with the first 5 months under house arrest, and \$16,000 in restitution.

On August 26, 2011, Cheema was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to three years probation, with six months of house arrest, \$16,000 restitution, and a \$100 special assessment.

On November 18, 2011, Amodu was sentenced on a single count of Title 18 USC, Section 38, Airplane Parts Fraud, to two years probation, with six months of house arrest, and \$1,458 restitution. In addition, Amodu was ordered to cooperate with US Immigration Officials regarding any deportation procedures.

On April 5, 2012, Persaud was sentenced on a single count of Title 18, USC, Section 371, conspiracy to commit Aircraft Parts Fraud, to 37 months incarceration, 36 months probation, and ordered to pay \$1,454,232 in restitution.

On April 5, 2012, McFlicker was sentenced on a single count of Title 18, USC, Section 371, conspiracy to commit Aircraft Parts Fraud, to 45 months incarceration, 36 months probation, and ordered to pay \$1,454,232.00 in restitution. (Attachment 10 combined)

DECLINATIONS:

Airframe International:

On August 6, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Airframe International, a Miami, Florida based FAA Repair Station. (Attachment 11)

Best Aviation:

On August 26, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Best Aviation, an Elmhurst, Illinois based aircraft parts broker and DOD Contractor. (Attachment 12)

Southern Manufacturing:

On September 3, 2009, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Southern Manufacturing, a Miami, Florida based machine shop. (Attachment 13)

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ALC Engineering:

On July 1, 2010, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on ALC Engineering, a Cashion, Oklahoma based DOD Contractor. (Attachment 14)

On Septer(fibetb)(6) 2(0)(7), c (b)(6), (b)(7)c of Oklahoma based ALC Engineering (ALC), was charged in U.S. District Court, Fort Lauderdale, by way of an Information on a single count of Title 18, United States Code, Section 38, Aircraft Parts Fraud. On Nov(b)(b)(r(b)(6), 20)(7), AUSA Marc Anton dismissed the Information charging)(6), (b)(7) based on a lack of criminal activity that occurred in the Southern District of Florida.

On October 12, 2011, AUSA Marc Anton discussed the impact of a "Due Diligence" package prepared by the law firm representing (b)(6), (b)(7)c Due to the appearance that Tinker Air Force Base(b)(6), (b)(7) appeared to have solicited and tacitly approved (b)(6), (b)(7)to ignore the specifics of certain Department of Defense contracts, future prosecutions involving airplane part manufacturers were now problematic. (Attachment 15)

Aerospace Precision:

On July 15, 2010, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Aerospace Precision, a Hollywood, Florida based FAA Repair Station and DOD contractor. (Attachment 16)

Aerospace Distributors:

On July 15, 2010, a Federal Search Warrant was executed on Aerospace Distributors, a Federal Way, Washington based Aircraft Parts Broker and DOD contractor. (Attachment 17)

Aircraft Composite Technologies:

On August 26, 2010, a Federal Search Warrant was executed at Aircraft Composite Technologies, a Medley, Florida based FAA Repair Station. (Attachment 18)

On July 31, 2012, AUSA Marc Anton provided a Declination/Closing Memorandum for all of the remaining targets of Operation Wingspan. (b)(5), (b)(7)c

(b)(5)

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(b)(5), (b)(7)c	
(b)(5), (b)(7)c	(Attachment 19)

The remaining targets included in the declination were: ALC Engineering, Southern Manufacturing, Aerospace Precision, Aerospace Distributors, Airframe International, Best Aviation, and Aircraft Composite Technologies.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

(b)(6), (b)(7)cRemaining allegations involving brides received(b)(6), (b)(7)c(b)(6), (b)(7)cwill be transferred to the regional offices for AFOSI, NCIS, and DCIS for furtherinvestigation. In addition, due to the fact that(b)(6), (b)(7)cwas provided to DOT/OIG Special Investigations division regarding the alleged criminalconduct mentioned above. (Attachment 20)

Dow Aerospace - Current allegations involving DOD related misconduct will be transferred to the regional offices for AFOSI, NCIS, and DCIS. (Attachment 21)

EVIDENCE:

All evidence maintained by DOT/OIG has been properly disposed of as directed by AUSA Marc ANTON. (Attachment 22)

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ATTACHMENTS

**Due to the voluminous nature of the documents listed in the Attachments and already maintained in ALERTS, they will not be attached to this Final Report of Investigation. However, if an official request for a copy of the Final Report of Investigation is made, the attached copies will be printed from ALERTS and submitted as appropriate.

No. Description

1	Initial Complaint – May 2008
2	Interview, $(b)(6), (b)(7)c - August, (b)(2008$
3	Tinker Air Force Base Site Visit – September 25, 2008
4	Undercover Operation – October 30, 2008
5	All documents related to Zerene Aerospace Industries
6	All documents related to CAS Honeycomb
7	All documents related to the Airborne Group
8	All documents related to Falcon Aviation Group
9	All documents related to McCain Research Labs
10	All documents related to Daytona Aerospace
11	All documents related to Airframe International
12	All documents related to Best Aviation
13	All documents related to Southern Manufacturing
14	All documents related to ALC Engineering
15	Due Dilegence Package, ALC Engineering
16	All documents related to Aerospace Precision
17	All documents related to Aerospace Distributors
18	All documents related to Aircraft Composit Technologies
19	Declination from U.S. Department of Justice – July 31, 2012
20	All documents related to (b)(6), (b)(7)c
21	All documents related to Dow Aerospace

22 Evidence Custody Documents

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