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May 6, 2003

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The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Walker:

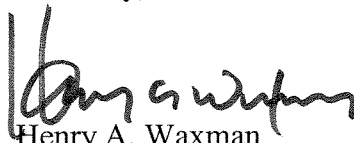
I am writing to ask that you obtain information about the President's visit to the USS Abraham Lincoln last week.

The Administration has provided conflicting accounts of the reasons for the President's dramatic visit to the aircraft carrier by jet. White House spokesman Ari Fleischer initially indicated that the carrier would be hundreds of miles offshore and would be too far from land to be reached by helicopter. Today, however, he admitted that the President could have traveled to the carrier, which was located just off the San Diego coast, less theatrically. According to Mr. Fleischer:

the ship did make much faster progress than anticipated. I asked about that when I was on board. It's a factor of the weather. They were able to get closer to shore. But the bottom line remains the same, that the President wanted to arrive on it in a manner that would allow him to see an arrival on a carrier the same way pilots got to see an arrival on a carrier. As it did get closer, he could have taken a helicopter out there if he had wanted to. He chose not to.¹

Since last week's event — which had clear political overtones — was paid for by American taxpayers, I ask that GAO provide a full accounting of the costs associated with the President's trip.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member

¹White House, *Press Briefing* (May 6, 2003).