



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on March 11, 2026

Defense Dept. Threw Away Almost \$100B in Use-it-or-lose-it Spendathon

The Department of Defense — or what President Donald Trump calls the “War Department” — threw away almost \$100 billion during a madcap use-it-or-lose-it spending spree in September 2025.

The waste included \$25 million on luxury food items such as lobster and Alaskan king crab, [Open the Books reported](#).

Yet the spending is not unique, as the outfit explained in a letter early that month to War Secretary Pete Hegseth. The abuse goes back to at least the second Bush administration, and the Biden Defense Department (DoD) did the same thing.

Where the ballyhooed Department of Government Efficiency was during the latest robbery of the taxpayers isn't clear.



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Bush. Obama. Trump. Biden. We've called out every administration's September spending spree. We wrote Secretary Hegseth last year because we believe this one can actually end it.

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Pentagon Should Focus on Defense Priorities, not Lavish Dinners, After Historic \$93.4B "Use-It-or-Lose-It" September

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\$100B in 30 Days; Have an \$1,800 Seat, General

The Housewives-of-Beverly-Hills spending spree is not unique to the Trump administration, [Open the Books said](#), but is instead an annual event. “Otherwise, ‘use-it-or-lose-it’ funding rules force the Pentagon to forfeit its unused money and potentially see reduced funding next year.” In other words, no matter which party controls the White House, taxpayers get the shaft.

“However, there has never been anything quite like September 2025, when \$93.4 billion was spent on grants and contracts,” Open the Books reported:

Since at least 2008 — and presumably in history — no federal agency has ever spent so much on grants and contracts in a single month.

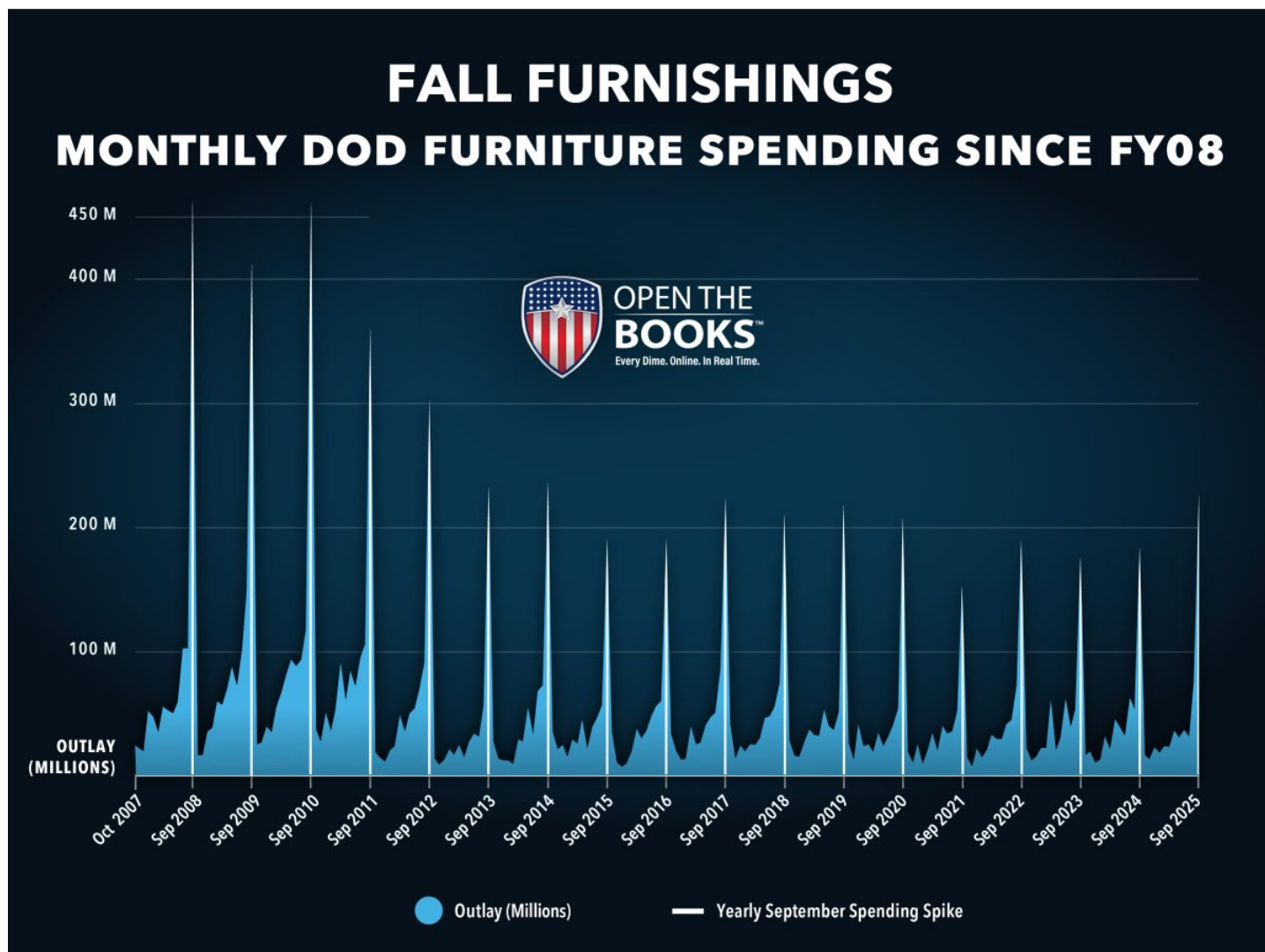
In the last five working days of September alone, the DoD spent \$50.1 billion on grants and contracts. That’s more than the annual defense budget of countries like Israel and Italy. In fact, there are only nine foreign countries that spend that much on their military in an entire year!

One item on the Pentagon’s shopping list this year was furniture, which “is near the top of the military’s wish list at the end of every fiscal year.”

The Pentagon spends about \$257 million on it each September, “a 564% increase above the norm.” In other months, the bill is “only” \$38.8 million. The bill in 2025: \$225.6 million, half of it labeled “office furniture.”



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"The purchases included \$60,719 worth of chairs from the premium furniture manufacturer Herman Miller, including at least one order of their luxurious Aeron Chair for \$1,844," [noted the website](#):

Another \$12,540 paid for three-tiered fruit basket stands.

Furniture spending today is far lower than in President Obama's administration, when the military routinely spent \$300 to \$400 million every September. However, it has increased compared to Joe Biden's administration. Since 2008, there have only been four Septembers when the DoD spent less than \$178 million on furniture: the four Septembers that Biden was president.

King Crab, Lobster Tails, and Ribeye Steaks

When Hegseth warned the Pentagon's portly patriots on September 30 that it is "completely unacceptable to see fat generals and admirals in the halls of the Pentagon," that was "no coincidence," the [website reported](#). The Pentagon spent almost \$150,000 on donuts.

"The Pentagon spent \$2 million on Alaskan king crab in September. It's the fifth time the Pentagon under Donald Trump has spent \$2 million or more on king crab in a single month: twice during his first term and three times in 2025. It's only happened one other month in history (February 2021)," the website disclosed.



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Lobster tails on the menu cost \$6.9 million, “a theme of Hegseth’s spending.”

“In 2025, the DoD spent more than \$7.4 million on lobster tail in four separate months: March, May, June and October. That had previously only happened once in history (October 2024).” The website continued:

September 2025 also saw the Pentagon purchase:

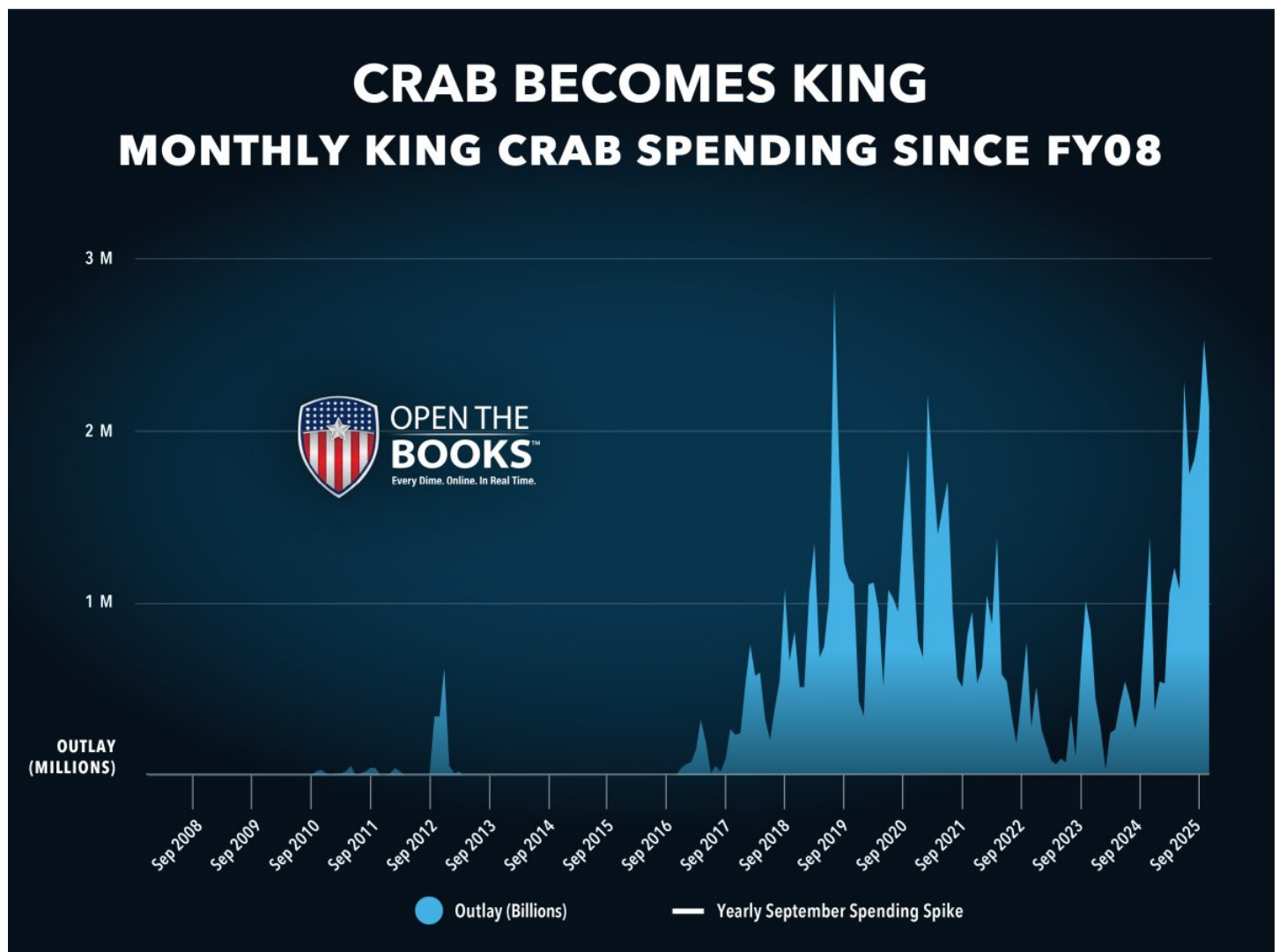
\$15.1 million of ribeye steak

\$1 million of salmon

272 orders of doughnuts for \$139,224

\$124,000 for ice cream machines

\$26,000 for sushi preparation tables



Taxpayers needn’t see the details of other spending, such as that on computer technology, to know they’re being robbed.

And in that department, “salesmen have taken note,” [Open the Books continued](#):

The Hewlett-Packard computer company gave its employees the following instructions in



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September 2024:

“Did you know that 8.7% of federal government spending will occur in this last week? That’s five times the normal weekly rate! Contact your government customers and take advantage of the federal spending rush. Stock up now to get your share of the ‘use it or lose it’ funds.”

...

In September 2025, defense officials bought \$5.3 million of Apple devices, including 400 of the new iPad Air M3 for \$315,200. The same iPad with 128 gigabytes of storage is available online for just \$499, but the DoD opted for the more expensive 512 gigabyte edition at a rate of \$788 each.

Another \$4 million was spent on Samsung products, including a 98-inch monitor with “crystal UHD display” for \$4,000.

The War Department also bought a \$98,329 Steinway grand piano for the Air Force chief of staff’s home, “a \$26,000 violin, and a \$21,750 custom handmade flute from the luxury Japanese brand Muramatsu.”

“Just for good measure, the Pentagon dropped another \$111,497 on footrests and \$3,160 on stickers featuring Dora the Explorer, Frozen, Paw Patrol and more,” the [website reported](#).

The Pentagon spent some \$6.6 billion on goods and services from foreign countries and their businesses.

To be fair, the War Department isn’t the only government bureaucracy that rushes to spend every taxpayer dime it can. The General Services Administration doubles spending every September. The State Department increases it by five times.



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Our data shows a clear pattern: as the fiscal year ends, DoD contract and grant spending surges because agencies must spend their budgets or risk losing them. The result is a predictable end-of-year spending spike. 



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Hegseth Letter

Hegseth can't plead ignorance. Open the Books chief John Hart wrote to him on September 2, 28 days before the fiscal year closed, about the use-it-or-lose-it spending. And he didn't just knock Trump. He went after Presidents George W. Bush and Joe Biden, too.

"Open the Books has been tracking federal spending for over a decade," [Hart wrote](#):

We have watched this practice persist regardless of which party occupies the White House. President George W. Bush's DOD spent an astonishing \$85.4 billion on grants and contracts in September 2008, the most expensive month we have on record. During President Donald Trump's first term, the DOD's two most expensive months for grant and contract spending



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came in September 2018 (\$63.3 billion) and September 2019 (\$59.4 billion).

Near the end of President Joe Biden's term, September spending once again approached the highs of the Bush administration. In September 2024, DOD spent \$79 billion — more than the annual defense of all but seven countries. In just the last five working days of September 2024, DOD spent \$33.1 billion — 7% of its contract and grant spending for the whole fiscal year and more than Israel's entire defense budget (\$27.5 billion) in 2023.

Hart also listed what Open the Books discovered was spent in September 2024, the final year of the Biden administration:

\$6.1 million of lobster tail

\$16.6 million of ribeye steak

\$211.7 million of furniture

\$36,000 for footrests

\$16.3 million on cartons, crates, and toolboxes

Hart told Hegseth he had the power to stop the waste, fraud, and abuse. "We urge you to do so as you pursue your goal of reorientating DOD around its central warfighting and lethality mission," [he wrote](#).



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