

# Air Force Sergeant Rewarded For Spotting Price Tag

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A sergeant at Mather Air Force Base has won \$250 from the Air Force for questioning the \$2,243 price tag on a little plastic gadget he installed on an airplane.

The price turned out to be a bookkeeping error by the Air Force, not a case of overcharging by a defense contractor, an

Air Force spokeswoman said Tuesday.

It took Master Sgt. Ralph Harvey, a veteran of 34 years in the Air Force, six months to convince the brass that the price listed for a two-inch-square piece of plastic with six light bulbs embedded in it was too high.

Harvey, an electrical shop chief, ordered the part last March to install on a KC135E

tanker's instrument panel to indicate rudder position. When the part arrived from Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma, he said, he knew the price listed on the invoice was too high.

He did some investigating and found that the part could be produced for about \$60.

Under the Air Force's "Zero Overpricing Program," which offers rewards to people

who discover overpricing, Harvey queried Tinker and was told the price was right. He persisted, got the ear of higher-ups at Tinker, and they discovered the error, said Cathy Campbell, chief of media relations at Mather.

Campbell said a manufacturer had first quoted a price of \$476 each for the gadgets,

but negotiation brought it down to \$84.09. The Air Force bought 18 at that price in December, then later negotiated with another supplier to get the same gadget for \$58, she said.

She said the listed \$2,243 was a "key punch error," and no such amount had ever been paid to any contractor.