SENATE GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
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Acquisition of Major Weapon Systems

Chairman Carper, Distinguished Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be able to testify about my experiences with defense acquisition programs. I want to briefly highlight a few principles and note several tools that are fundamental to an effective defense acquisition enterprise.

First, people run programs. In the Goldwater Nichols legislation, the Congress was amazingly prescient in assigning acquisition responsibility to the civilian chain of command working for the President. The DoD and Service Acquisition Executives are critical positions and these individuals are the key to successfully executing and improving defense acquisition. As the Undersecretary, I wrote a memo to Secretary Gates advocating the great importance of these positions. The acquisition executive must serve as the first line of defense against overstated requirements, understated budgets, unrealistic schedules, immature technology and Service-unique programs. Every unaffordable program a Service wants cannot be adjudicated by the Secretary of Defense or the President. It is harmful to the defense acquisition enterprise to delay filling these positions with qualified people.

Second, the President's acquisition team must enable the defense acquisition team to make the thousands of necessary, hard decisions every day. Military requirements officers and industry are constantly seeking to change and improve ongoing programs. The tough job is locking the design and executing the program. The acquisition executive must support program managers who say "no." The military promotion system will reward a requirements officer who pushes for more requirements and punish a military acquisition program manager who resists making costly changes to

a program. Similarly, civil servants in acquisition who want successful careers are cautious about hard issues. The President's acquisition team must support and empower these program managers when they try to make responsible decisions about spending taxpayer money.

Third, people execute programs, not paper. It is not possible to write a universally applicable procedure that will deliver successful results. No amount of process, procedure and certification will make the hard decisions that trained people must make. The growing volume of legislation and certification requirements do pose a serious risk of adding months and higher costs – at a time when our adversaries are doing things faster and cheaper. We should resist the urge to add to the acquisition laws and regulations which already resemble the tax code and consume a program manager's time and energy for little results. As a student of defense acquisition, I can tell you there are many valid examples of capable people delivering great results when freed from the constraints of the normal process.

Fourth, we need to increase the authority of acquisition program managers commensurate with the public accountability being levied on the defense acquisition team. People without accountability chop documents, cut budgets, increase requirements, impose new certification standards – then everyone wants to know why a program manager is late and over budget.

Finally, there are several tools that can enable more successful execution of defense acquisition programs.

The Department must use competitive prototyping to evaluate the validity of requirements, to mature technology with smaller teams, to inform our estimates of final development and procurement cost, and to assist in the

refinement of concepts of operation. I used to tell program managers that the cost of a program is known the day the contract is signed – the only question is whether they know the cost. It is very difficult to estimate the cost and schedule of a complex program based solely on paper. Appropriate prototyping is important.

At a more general level, DoD needs to pursue the development of prototypes to train our personnel in program management and systems engineering, to attract talented scientists and engineers to work on defense programs, and to inspire a new generation of young people to pursue technical educations.

DoD must use collaborative processes to make timely program development decisions and to appropriately include all stakeholders to achieve alignment – acquisition, budget, and requirements alignment. A Configuration Steering Board process was used to keep the F-16 a low cost fighter, and I reinstituted this practice in DoD. I used such collaborative approaches very successfully on the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle, the DoD Biometrics program, the Virginia Class submarine, DDG 1000 destroyer, the P-8 maritime aircraft, and other programs.

We instituted Joint Analysis Teams to review portfolios of programs which cut across Services. These teams shaped joint, interoperable, executable, and affordable development programs, seeking to build consensus through membership that included all relevant DoD stakeholders.

The Department has often used blue ribbon panels or independent reviews to assess problems. I sought to make this a regular process through creating Defense Support Teams which seek to harness experienced, independent outside experts to review program development plans and to

solve execution problems. DST's can partially offset the Department's inability to hire adequate government personnel to manage our programs.

As DDR&E, I began a practice of Quick Look Technology Readiness Assessments. It is of no value to spend tax dollars and to reach Milestone B, only to determine that the technology is immature. Quick Look assessments are necessary to drive investment in the timely maturation of key technologies.

These are just a few of the tools which I believe are fundamental to proper creation and management of complex acquisition programs. These tools must be employed by capable people with adequate authority.

The press stories will always report the programs which go badly. However, there are many programs which successfully deliver capability to the warfighter. The real key is trained and experienced acquisition team members with management support, decision making authority, realistic requirements, and adequate budgets. Under these conditions, program managers will carefully spend taxpayer dollars and successfully deliver capability to the men and women who serve this Nation.

I appreciate the chance to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.