

Statement of Senator George V. Voinovich  
Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the  
District of Columbia

High-Risk Logistics Planning: Progress on Improving Department of Defense Supply  
Chain Management

July 27, 2010

Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing, the fourth in a Subcommittee series on Department of Defense (DoD) supply chain management.

Last month, I had the opportunity to travel to Iraq with a delegation of House and Senate colleagues. While in Baghdad, we visited with Lieutenant General Kenneth Hunzeker and Lieutenant General Robert Cone, who briefed the delegation on the gradual transition of personnel and equipment out of Iraq.

As a longtime observer of Department of Defense supply chain issues, I am encouraged by how the Department is addressing this aspect of the great challenge posed by the simultaneous drawdown in Iraq and surge in Afghanistan.

But for those tasked with delivering the right material to the right place at the right time, sustaining more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan poses the greater challenge. Thanks to that country's poor transportation infrastructure and mountain terrain, few environments are as difficult to operate in as Afghanistan.

As the supply chain increasingly shifts to Afghanistan, the Department will face a critical test to determine whether the dangerous logistical gaps that emerged during the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom have been closed, and whether progress will continue in the areas of requirements forecasting, asset visibility, and material distribution.

To pass this test, the Department must have an effective strategic plan that decision makers can use to prioritize, coordinate, fund, and account for the hundreds of existing supply chain initiatives.

In anticipation of this hearing, Senator Akaka and I sent a letter to the Department in September 2009 in which we posed a number of questions about the new Administration's supply chain management priorities. We focused on shortcomings in the Logistics Roadmap that were identified by a January 2009 Government Accountability Office report.

The response Senator Akaka and I received from Dr. Ashton Carter, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, indicated that a new DoD Logistics Strategic Plan would soon be issued, and would serve as an update to the existing Roadmap.

But despite this implication of continuity between the Roadmap and the new Logistics Strategic Plan, these two documents differ in the issues they address and the level of detail they provide.

The Roadmap, for instance, runs more than 380 pages, and provides information on individual initiatives carried out by the service branches and component agencies. By contrast, the Logistics Strategic Plan contains roughly 26 pages of text, and restricts its discussion to a high-level analysis of DoD logistics issues.

Of course, more detail is not necessarily better in the realm of strategic planning. I hope that Mr. Estevez and Mr. Edwards will help the Subcommittee assess the likely effectiveness of the new Administration's approach to managing the supply chain, including savings that can be realized as the Department struggles to cut overhead and restrain spending. I am also eager to learn how this new approach builds on the past work of individuals like Clay Johnson, Ken Krieg, Jack Bell, and James Hall.

Finally, I look forward to hearing from the Department about the measurable improvements in supply chain management that have resulted from several years of concerted effort in this area. What increased supply chain efficiencies can the Department demonstrate, and what cost-savings? Most importantly though, how are deployed personnel better able to accomplish their missions as a result of past logistics planning efforts? These are critical questions.

Mr. Solis will aid in this discussion by providing insight into how the many initiatives contained in the Department's logistics planning documents are being applied in the field, particularly in Afghanistan.

Today's hearing will be my last on the issue of supply chain management before I depart the Senate in January, so I expect a full and frank discussion on these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.