

**Statement of Senator Daniel K. Akaka
Nomination Hearing for Ms. Elaine Duke to be the
Under Secretary for Management
Department of Homeland Security
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
June 20, 2008**

This hearing will come to order.

Good morning and welcome.

Today, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs meets to consider the nomination of Ms. Elaine Duke to be Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security.

Ms. Duke is a native of Ohio and a graduate of Southern New Hampshire University, but, most importantly, she received her MBA from Chaminade University of Honolulu. Aloha pumehana and congratulations on your nomination.

Ms. Duke has over 25 years experience in the federal service. Most recently she has served as Deputy Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security and prior to that as the Chief Procurement Officer for the Department. I would also like to point out that she spent a considerable part of her career serving in Hawaii first at Hickam Air Force Base and subsequently at

Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. The depth of her experience is extraordinary and the nation is grateful for your service.

As you know, implementing and transforming the Department of Homeland Security has been on the Government Accountability Office's "high risk list" since 2003. I believe that DHS represents the most serious management challenge in the federal government today. That concern, shared also by Senator Voinovich, is one reason why we introduced *The Effective Homeland Security Management Act* (S. 547), which would establish a Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security for Management with a term appointment. We have not yet succeeded in that important goal but were able to strengthen your management authority by designating your position the Chief Management Officer for DHS.

I want to also commend Ms. Duke on her accomplishments over the course of her tenure as the Department's Chief Procurement Officer. Already you have made significant progress in integrating procurement operations across the Department, and, equally important, you have recruited new acquisition workforce talent through the Acquisition Professional Career Program. I understand that some of the first acquisition interns are attending this hearing

today. I want to extend my welcome to them. I congratulate you on being selected for this challenging program and thank you for your service to this country.

However, I remain concerned about the Department's heavy reliance on outside contractors. As you know, the Department does not know how many contractors it currently employs or in what capacity.

DHS still struggles to provide sufficient project management and oversight, particularly with large acquisitions such as *SBI*net. I look forward to working closely with you to ensure that DHS improves its acquisition and builds up its workforce.

Ms. Duke, I appreciate your work to make sound management practices a priority at DHS. The Department has done an admirable job in assessing the critical skills of its workforce and developing succession plans for the upcoming presidential transition. This was not an easy task and continues to be a work in progress, but the Department is to be commended for the attention it has shown to the importance of strategic planning and comprehensive workforce assessment.

In addition to the short-term transition planning, DHS has a long-term workforce challenge as Baby Boomers retire. DHS must attract the next generation of employees equally committed to the Department's mission and with the needed skills. Veterans preference, diversity, and collaboration with unions and employee organizations must be cornerstones of this strategy. I am pleased that during your staff interview you emphasized your dedication to diversity recruitment. I look forward to hearing more about your plans today.

A key element of the Department's recruitment and retention strategy must be improving employee morale. Past Federal Human Capital Surveys have highlighted system-wide employee problems at DHS that must be addressed. As Under Secretary for Management, your duty is to be the voice for strategic human capital management and to ensure that workforce needs are met. I look forward to working with you in this effort.

I am also pleased that you are willing to continue serving at DHS through the presidential transition. As the transition draws closer, continuity of leadership is increasingly important. Your long career of civil service will provide you the credibility you need through

the transition, and your management experience will be valuable to keeping the Department focused on its mission. If confirmed, I would certainly hope that the next administration would consider keeping you in your position.

Again, I look forward to working closely with you. My door will always be open.