



**STATEMENT OF  
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**BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT, INVESTIGATIONS, AND  
OVERSIGHT**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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Chairman Carney, Ranking Member Rogers, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) acquisition program. I am the Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) for the Department of Homeland Security. I am a career executive and I have spent most of my 23 years of public service in the procurement profession.

Before addressing DHS' procurement systems, I would like to convey my top three priorities, which are essential elements to achieving the DHS mission:

- First, to build the DHS acquisition workforce.
- Second, to make good business deals.
- Third, to perform effective contract administration.

As the CPO, I provide oversight and support to eight procurement offices within DHS – Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Transportation Security Administration (TSA), United State Coast Guard (USCG), United States Secret Service (USSS), Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), and the Office of Procurement Operations (OPO). As the CPO, my primary responsibility is to manage and oversee the DHS acquisition program. I provide the acquisition infrastructure that includes acquisition policies, procedures, training and workforce initiatives that allow DHS contracting offices, as appropriate, to operate in a uniform and consistent manner.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your interest in the DHS acquisition program and in particular TSA's procurement system, the Transportation Security Administration Acquisition Management System (TSAAMS). TSA was authorized under the Aviation and Transportation Security Act (ATSA) of 2001 to utilize the procurement system of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), known as FAA Acquisition Management System (AMS).

While TSA's procurement system offers some process flexibilities beyond those offered by the Federal Acquisition Regulation, the two systems' underlying principles are the same -- to acquire quality goods and services at a fair and reasonable price with integrity, fairness and transparency. Both systems promote competition and the use of small businesses. Both systems also require the procurement of goods and services at a fair and reasonable price. The differences are the mechanics of how goods and services are purchased.

Regardless of the procurement system, however, all Components, including TSA, are subject to the same level of oversight. For example, TSA's capital investments are subject to the Department's investment review board and their contracting operations are subject to the Department's acquisition oversight program. My office reviews acquisition plans and justifications for procurements that exceed \$50 million. Furthermore, TSA must adhere to the key elements of the DHS acquisition program which included

- Advanced acquisition planning,
- The appointment of a Competition Advocate,
- Adherence to Federal-wide acquisition certification requirements for contracting professionals and program/project managers, and
- The issuance of contracting officer warrants to certified contracting professionals.

TSA is an active participant in the DHS Chief Acquisition Officers Council. This council, composed of the head of each contracting activity, was established for the purpose of integrating contracting functions while maintaining each component's ability to meet their customers' unique needs. Further, TSA also shares in the resources available to the other seven Component-contracting activities. As I will explain in more detail later, TSA participates in Department-wide recruiting efforts, training opportunities, and our newly established intern program.

I support the TSA's continued use of TSAAMS. The system "stood up" when TSA was created and hence is now an integral part of TSA's infrastructure. Most notable regarding the TSA procurement system, however, is that it serves as one example of how each component's contracting activity possesses unique characteristics for the purpose of achieving its mission. While TSA conducts its procurements using AMS, the Coast Guard, for example, conducts its procurement through decentralized contracting offices; and when responding to disasters, FEMA, pursuant to the Stafford Act, is to give preference to local businesses when awarding contracts.

## **WORKFORCE**

My responsibility as the Chief Procurement Officer is to understand the unique needs of each contracting activity and to provide the appropriate infrastructure to support each of these offices. While each contracting official is necessarily unique, they also share the common objective of acquiring goods and services to meet the mission's need at a fair and reasonable price, with integrity and transparency. To ensure we meet our collective objective, my goal, as the CPO, is to develop a "best in class" acquisition workforce. To do this I am focusing on three workforce initiatives:

My first initiative is the establishment of a centralized hiring initiative. A successful acquisition program requires a team of integrated acquisition professionals who manage the entire lifecycle of a major procurement effort. However, the competition for highly qualified acquisition and procurement professionals is intense both within the Federal government and the private sector. Therefore, in partnership with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, we have initiated an aggressive staffing solution to resolve personnel shortages and have centralized recruiting activities to better manage similar needs across the Department.

The centralized recruiting efforts include department-wide vacancy announcements, print advertisements in major media publications as well as attendance at key acquisition recruiting events. In addition, for Contract Specialists, one of our most critical staffing shortages, we received the authority to maximize the use of hiring flexibilities such as Direct Hire Authority and Re-Employed Annuitants. While these authorities are extremely helpful to our recruiting efforts, given the complexity of our acquisition programs, the recruitment of talented acquisition professionals will take time and I appreciate your continued support of these initiatives.

My second initiative is the establishment of an Acquisition Intern Program. In order to satisfy the long term need for qualified acquisition personnel, my office sought centralized funding in order to attract, hire, and train exceptional new talent. Beginning in fiscal year 2008, my office is centrally funding an Acquisition Intern Program that will start with 66 participants and grow to a total of 300 participants by fiscal year 2011. Our objective is to grow our talent and develop a pipeline for our future acquisition leaders. Interns would participate in a three-year program, rotating through three contracting offices within DHS, and would graduate from the program as journeyman-level professionals. This program is modeled after highly successful Department of Defense (DoD) programs and is especially critical for contracting. Unlike engineering, IT or finance, contracting is a field that is essentially learned. That is why DoD and others have relied on intern programs to develop the leadership pipeline for this profession and why it is perhaps the most critical initiative for strengthening the acquisition workforce.

My third initiative is the establishment of a centralized acquisition workforce training fund. By centralizing or training program, the Department is better positioned to deliver a unified training program that enables our acquisition professionals to achieve the appropriate certification levels and to develop the necessary skills and competencies to

negotiate good business deals. We will maximize the use of the training resources available to federal agencies from the Federal Acquisition Institute. In May, the Under Secretary for Management signed a partnership agreement with the Under Secretary of Defense (Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) and the President of the Defense Acquisition University to leverage existing DoD training and development opportunities. This agreement will enable DHS to use DoD's capabilities and talent pool to help develop our workforce on a long-term partnership basis. We will supplement these resources with specialized targeted training in areas such as the Safety Act, Performance Based Acquisition, and Buy American Processes and Compliance. Based on the results of reviews conducted by my Oversight Division, our training program will develop or purchase, as needed, training aides to close identified competency gaps.

### **SUMMARY**

The underlying principles of FAR and TSAAMS ensure the Department meets its goal of acquiring goods and services at a fair and reasonable price, while accommodating the mission of the organization. Both systems support my goal in building a world-class acquisition program and workforce integrating the necessary disciplines of program management, risk assessment, engineering, cost analyses, and logistics. This will take time, but building a solid infrastructure to include the appropriate mix of skilled acquisition professionals will enable DHS to achieve mission success while being good stewards of the tax payer's money.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for your interest in and continued support of the DHS Acquisition Program.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee about DHS contracting procedures. I am glad to answer any questions you or the Members of the Subcommittee may have for me.