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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

RICHARD J. KESSLER, STAFF DIRECTOR
KEITH B. ASHDOWN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

April 30, 2014

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
US Government Accountability Office
441 G St. NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Comptroller General:

We are writing to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) undertake a review of the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) major acquisition programs, meaning those with expected overall costs exceeding \$300 million. Through these programs, DHS and its underlying components are acquiring systems to help secure the border, increase marine safety, screen travelers, enhance cyber security, and execute a wide variety of other operations. In 2011, DHS reported to Congress that it planned to ultimately invest \$167 billion in its major acquisition programs. DHS reported it planned to spend almost \$10 billion on these programs in fiscal year 2014 alone.

GAO has highlighted DHS acquisition management issues in its high-risk list since 2005, and over the past several years, your work has identified significant shortcomings in the department's ability to manage an expanding portfolio of major acquisitions. In response to your recommendations, DHS has taken steps to improve acquisition management, such as dedicating additional resources to acquisition oversight, and documenting major acquisition decisions in a more transparent and consistent manner. However, the department still faces many challenges to its ability to effectively manage its major acquisitions.

In order to help the Committee understand how DHS is executing its largest acquisition programs, we request that GAO undertake an assessment of the extent to which:

1. DHS's major acquisition programs meet their cost, schedule, and performance targets, and how progress toward these targets are recorded and communicated in key reports per the Department's directives;
2. DHS rigorously tests its major acquisition programs' systems to ensure they meet the defined requirements; and
3. DHS's major acquisition programs face common risks and challenges departmentwide.

Please contact Troy Cribb (Troy.Cribb@hsgac.senate.gov) with the majority staff and Kathryn Edelman (Kathryn.Edelman@hsgac.senate.gov) with the minority staff for the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs; Charlie Moskowitz (Charlie_Moskowitz@hsgac.senate.gov) with the majority staff and Mike Howell (Michael_Howell@hsgac.senate.gov) with the minority staff for the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on Financial and Contracting Oversight; and Ryan Consaul (Ryan.Consaul@mail.house.gov) with the majority staff for the House Committee on Homeland Security and Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency with any questions.

Sincerely,



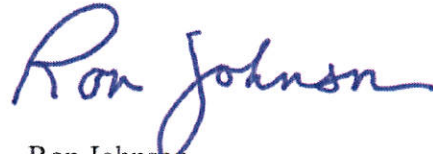
Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Senate Committee on Homeland Security
Security and Governmental Affairs



Tom A. Coburn, M.D.
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs



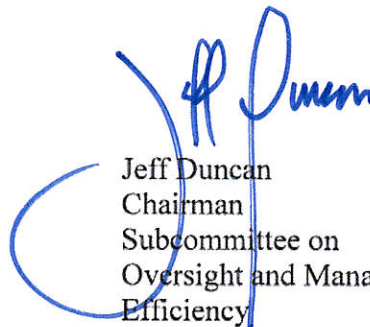
Claire McCaskill
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Financial and Contracting Oversight
Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs



Ron Johnson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Financial and Contracting Oversight
Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Governmental Affairs



Michael McCaul
Chairman
House Committee on
Homeland Security



Jeff Duncan
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Oversight and Management
Efficiency
House Committee on
Homeland Security