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July 17, 2024

The Honorable William LaPlante USD(A&S)
1010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1010

Subj: Realpolitik on Digital Engineering, Outcome-Based Metrics, and Project 2025

Dear USD LaPlante:

At your nomination hearing, March 22, 2022, you committed to require contractors to report valid *measures of cost, schedule, and technical performance* and to adopt digital engineering (DE) as the source of those measures (now called outcome-based metrics). (Attachment A). The pending revision to the DFARS EVMS clause should be foundational to those commitments.

This letter is apolitical but realpolitik. The *Heritage Foundation Project 2025* includes possible acquisition reform initiatives if there is a new president. I was pleased that several Project 2025 assessments and initiatives are consistent with mine, as follows:

1. Consider Commission on Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PBBE) Reforms

Per PBBE, budget execution metrics provide information only on the pace of spending, not on the value received for the expenditure...In the acquisition arena, the Department has developed earned value management (EVM) systems that purport to assess expenditures against established delivery benchmarks. However, EVM systems have long been criticized as easily manipulated and inadequate to the task.

2. Strengthen America's defense industrial base

The Project 2025 initiative to develop reforms...to incentivize industry to help America's military innovate and field needed capabilities is consistent with my white papers on DE, integrated program management, and outcome-based metrics.

Another Project 2025 initiative is to break the Defense Acquisition University's monopoly on the knowledge and certification that are required to perform as acquisition professionals and to eliminate an unnecessary barrier to entry in a career field that is vital to the DOD mission. That is consistent with my recommendations to train or retrain program managers and earned value professionals in project management skills provided by the Project Management Institute and systems engineering organizations.

Letter to President-elect Trump

I sent the attached letter to the Trump Transition Team, Subj: DoD Acquisition Reform - Under Budget and Ahead of Schedule, with a copy to Sen. McCain, dated November 13, 2016. Excerpt:

I offer to support your Sec. Def. in considering and implementing needed acquisition reforms. The biggest loophole in the EVMS guidelines allows contractors to report progress in terms of percent complete that is based on flawed, misleading metrics.

Unfortunately, neither the Trump nor Biden administrations took corrective actions.

Your Opportunity

Please implement your commitments during this term. There is no assurance that a possible Trump administration will implement the Project 2025 initiatives.



Paul J. Solomon

CC:

Hon. Andrew Hunter, AF Asst. Sec. for AT&L

Hon. Adam Smith, HASC

Hon. Carlos Del Toro, Secretary of the Navy

Nickolas Guertin (ASN RD&A)

Honorable David L. Norquist, NDIA

Hon. Robert J. Wittman, HASC

Hon. Heidi Shyu, (USD(R&E))

Hon. Donald Norcross, HASC

Anthony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

Shelby Oakley, GAO

Jon Ludwigson, GAO

Attachment A LaPlante Nomination Hearing Questions and Answers	
Question	Answer
51. If confirmed, what steps would you take, if any, to require contractors to report valid measures of cost, schedule, and technical performance for all acquisition pathways ?	If confirmed, I will work across the Department and with the industrial base— current and emerging—to validate, improve, or establish appropriate metrics across the acquisition pathways.
52. If confirmed, what steps would you take, if any, to require contractors that employ the DOD Digital Engineering (DE) Strategy to maintain valid information in the digital authoritative data source (ASoT, Authoritative Source of Truth) that is sufficient for program managers to make informed and timely decisions to manage cost, schedule, performance, and risk ?	If confirmed, ...engage with our industry partners and Service representatives to better understand how they are currently employing DE and how we can work in partnership to better collaborate within and outside of the Department.... A combination of strong data, tool and modeling standards and environments, training of our Acquisition Corps, and proper contract and data rights guidance are foundational to enabling successful adoption of DE to feed the right cost, schedule, performance and risk data to our acquisition decision makers.