

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Bonnie Watson Coleman

Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency

Hearing “Probing DHS’s Botched Management of the Human Resources Information Technology Program”

Thursday, February 25, 2016

Today, the Subcommittee meets to respond to a serious management challenge facing the Department of Homeland Security—specifically, how does DHS build and maintain the large, complex workforce needed to keep Americans safe? When the Department began its operations in the wake of September 11th, it was the largest reorganization of the U.S. Government since the end of World War II.

Aware that the Department’s critical work would require something on the scale of today’s DHS—with 240,000 employees working in sixteen operating and support components—leaders within and across these functions knew they would need tools for the full range of activities involved in managing people in an organization of the Department’s scale and scope.

To put management of the new Department’s workforce on a solid footing, DHS initiated the Human Resource Information Technology or “HRIT” investment in 2003. The report on HRIT released today by the Government Accountability Office makes clear that after more than a decade of sustained investment in HRIT, the program has provided virtually none of the capabilities that DHS leaders initially hoped the program would yield.

The absence of the management tools expected from HRIT has created real gaps in human-resource management at DHS. GAO’s new report on HRIT and previous reviews of DHS management have found that a combination of fragmented, duplicative, and paper-based personnel information systems have resulted in high administrative costs, shortfalls in employee skills or numbers, great difficulty in strategic management of human capital across DHS, and potential violations of DHS security policies. A recent report prepared by DHS for Congress—required under a law reported from this Committee last year—echoes these same concerns.

It leaves me to wonder how many times DHS has had to improvise to fill gaps left by HRIT’s failures to date. Two reports issued last month by the Department’s own Inspector General underscore the toll taken by HRIT’s shortcomings:

One of these reports notes that the Department will not complete implementation of a Performance and Learning Management System (PALMS) developed as part of HRIT until 2017. The IG finds that without PALMS operating at full capacity, DHS lacks an effective governance structure for training oversight.

In another January 2016 report, the DHS IG raises several concerns with regard to the \$1.2 billion “HR Access” contract, awarded by the Transportation Security Administration in 2008, to support the recruitment and hiring of the workforce responsible for the security of the traveling public in the U.S. The IG notes that TSA will award a similar contract, with performance starting next year.

Ms. Bailey, I realize that DHS Chief Information Officer Luke McCormack has taken charge of the HRIT investment. But as the representative of DHS human-capital managers left empty-handed by HRIT, I very

much hope that you will make clear how the Department plans to recover from HRIT's performance to date, and to reinvigorate human-resource management at DHS.

Having said that, gaps in management capability and the risks associated with these gaps don't just happen by accident.

Mr. Fulghum, we respect your distinguished service to your country for almost three decades in uniform, and as a leader in the Department's Management Directorate since October 2012.

Nevertheless, I feel compelled to tell you that the Department's HRIT experience must impress upon you and other DHS leaders that acquisition management has to improve, demonstrably, for programs at all phases of the acquisition life cycle—and it must do so now. The Department's responsibility to steward public resources, even as DHS protects the American people, demands no less.

Mr. Fulghum, I cannot understand how the Department would continue a complex, multimillion-dollar acquisition for more than a decade without a current schedule, a validated estimate of life-cycle costs, a complete accounting of costs incurred, or the assurance that the planning document for HRIT reflects the Department's current priorities and goals.

Mr. Chairman, on this past Tuesday, the House passed the "DHS Acquisition Documentation Integrity Act of 2016," which I introduced earlier this month. The bill's language codifies best practices already embodied in DHS acquisition policy, and builds upon an Acquisition Decision Memorandum issued in April 2015 to ensure regular, transparent reporting of acquisition programs' performance to DHS leadership and Congress.

Mr. Chairman, as we've seen in the case of HRIT, anything less than up-to-date acquisition documentation increases the odds of cost and schedule overruns; risks delayed delivery of critical capabilities; and depletes resources needed to address future requirements.

Congress and the Department simply cannot allow GAO's latest report on HRIT or this hearing to fade into a background already overpopulated with other reports and hearings on poor management at DHS. On so many levels, the American people cannot afford that.