

Joint Statement of
Michael Thibault and Christopher Shays, Co-Chairs
The Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan

Hearing:

‘Better Buying Power in Defense Spending’

Room 216, Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, DC
10 a.m., Monday, March 28, 2011

Good morning. I am Christopher Shays, co-chairman of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The other Commissioners at the dais are Robert Henke, Katherine Schinasi, Charles Tiefer, and Dov Zakheim. Co-Chairman Michael Thibault and Commissioners Clark Kent Ervin and Grant Green could not be with us today.

This hearing will come to a hard stop at 11:30 a.m., so this statement is short. We want to maximize the time available for the question-and-answer session.

Today’s hearing has a single witness, Ashton B. Carter, Ph.D., who has served the nation as Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics since April 2009. His formidable resume includes degrees in physics and medieval history, positions at Harvard and the MITRE Corporation, and authorship of 11 books.

We have asked Dr. Carter to talk with us today because his work bears critically on contingency contracting, which is the focus of all the Commission’s efforts. We had three purposes in mind:

1. We are looking for his current assessment of the progress and prospects of his “Better Buying Power” initiatives at the Department of Defense, especially as

they relate to contingency contracting. Dr. Carter's initiatives aim at targets like cost and process efficiencies, increased competition and incentives, and improved acquisition "tradecraft"—all topics of interest in the Commission's work as well. We are also interested in how these initiatives will fare given the chronic understaffing of the federal acquisition workforce and the poor outlook for addressing that shortfall under current funding pressures.

2. We are interested in his reaction to the recommendations we offered to Congress late last month in second interim report, "At What Risk? Correcting over-reliance on contractors in contingency operations."

3. As we prepare our final report for release in July 2011, we welcome Dr. Carter's thoughts on contingency-contracting issues that may warrant further analysis or new directions for improvement.

Individual Commissioners may hold differing views on details and directions of Dr. Carter's work, but all of us appreciate the insight and dedication that he brings to his mission. And we recognize that bringing policy, cultural, and process change to Defense acquisition is both urgent and challenging in light of operational demands and the battles over the federal budget.

The Commission thanks Dr. Carter for joining us today. Now, if the witness will rise and raise his right hand, I will swear him in:

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony
you will give in this hearing is the truth, the whole truth,
and nothing but the truth?

Thank you. Let the record show that all the witness answered in the affirmative.

Mr. Secretary, please begin.

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