

April 28, 2009: Congressman Wittman Opening Statement for Hearing on the Defense Acquisition Workforce

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Rob Wittman (R-VA), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, today released the following prepared remarks for the subcommittee's hearing on the defense acquisition workforce:

"All aspects of the defense acquisition system are receiving much attention these days. The President and the Secretary of Defense have made acquisition reform a priority, and the leaders of both the Senate Armed Services Committee and our own Chairman Skelton and Ranking Member McHugh of the House Armed Services Committee have introduced legislation to improve the system.

"There's no question that any taxpayer funded system expending more than \$400 billion annually and employing thousands of people deserves continuous scrutiny. More importantly, the long history of armed conflict amply demonstrates that the combat force employing the most technologically advanced system, from longbows, to gunpowder, to stealth aircraft, to the capability to rapidly deploy expert marksmen and their equipment from Virginia to the Indian Ocean usually prevails. Our national security demands that we have a well funded, well managed weapons acquisition system for our armed forces.

"Our focus today is not the system, but its most important element-its people. Any complex system requiring sound judgment, creativity, and financial prudence needs talented, motivated professionals. What we are really doing is assembling a team of inventors, developing and packaging capabilities in ways heretofore unimagined at taxpayer expense. It is extraordinarily difficult to produce any new, capable weapons system, much less produce it on an exact schedule, to exacting performance standards, within an exact budget. As much as I'd like to see more precision, we do need to trust good people to make reasonable decisions on the nation's behalf.

"In that regard, this committee has initiated several legislative measures in the last few years designed to strengthen the Department's acquisition workforce. We believe these changes are having a good effect, and are eager to hear our witnesses' view of the matter. Even so, we understand defense acquisition needs excellent employees, and are happy to consider any further legislative changes that may be needed. Any systemic changes we make will have little real effect without a superb corps of acquisition professionals to operate it.

"Our witnesses are experts in this area and I look forward to their testimony."

To view Rep. Wittman's opening statement click on this link.