

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE
ON INVESTIGATIONS

May 8, 2008

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Office of the Secretary
The Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1155

Dear Secretary Gates:

Organizations and functions under your direction are categorized as high risk programs by the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Notwithstanding the challenges the nation is facing abroad, several key programs within the Department of Defense (DoD) were designated as being at high risk as early as 1990 and continue to be so today:

- Approach to Business Transformation, 2005
 - Business Systems Modernization, 1995
 - Personnel Security Clearance Program, 2005
 - Support Infrastructure Management, 1997
 - Financial Management, 1995
 - Supply Chain Management, 1990
 - Weapon Systems Acquisition, 1990
- Contract Management, 1992
- Ensuring the Effective Protection of Technologies Critical to U.S. National Security Interests, 2007

I am writing to express my concern that many of these programs continue to be designated as high risk after more than a decade, some almost two decades. It is well understood that institutional change is often complex and takes both time and resources to transform these often unwieldy programs. However, strategic planning and budgeting can yield staggering results with disciplined management and oversight. As Secretary, you are uniquely positioned to guide this process.

The DoD currently has 330 reports with multiple issues identified by the GAO that remain outstanding. What actions has DoD taken to address these issues and achieve removal from the GAO high risk list in January 2009? Your prompt response is greatly appreciated.

Page 2

Please do not hesitate to contact me or Sheldon Shoemaker of my staff at (202) 228-6476 if you would like to discuss these concerns or other matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Claire McCaskill". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Claire" and last name "McCaskill" clearly legible.

CLAIRE McCASKILL
United States Senator