**House Armed Services Committee**

**Ranking Member Adam Smith Opening Remarks**

**Full Committee Hearing on “Initial Findings of the Section 809 Panel: Setting the Path for Streamlining and Improving Defense Acquisition”**

**May 17, 2017**

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Today’s hearing on the interim report of the Advisory Panel on Streamlining and Codifying Acquisition Regulations, also known as the “Section 809 Panel,” provides the committee with a reminder of the importance of thoughtful improvements of the Department of Defense’s acquisition system. As the panel’s interim report notes, the world is catching up with us on research & development spending, we face at least two “peer competitor” nations in terms of many high-end military capabilities, and technology is changing at such a pace that the DOD is challenged to keep up, let alone lead, on these issues. While the DOD continues to procure generally excellent equipment, its process for doing so can be far better.

However, as we all seek to streamline the acquisition system, we should not lose sight of two things. First, we need to be very careful about adding any more process or bureaucracy to a system already drowning in both. The 809 Panel’s interim report makes it clear that additive legislation may not be the path to success. The second thing is the need to retain basic good-government policies, such as competition whenever possible, ensuring accurate cost estimates, and thorough testing of systems. While I strongly support efforts to cut away unproductive red tape, I am wary of going too far and ending up in a place where we are buying systems based on under-the-table deals that cost too much and aren’t tested to ensure they actually work as promised. The DOD has been there before and it resulted in the acquisition system we have now. We should not repeat those mistakes. What I hope the Section 809 Panel can do today and in the panel’s final report is help us sort through and cut away unnecessary things while preserving the critical “crown jewels” of effective government oversight along the way. Given the threats we face and the rapid pace of technology we can’t afford to get this wrong.

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