

Assad Sets Record Straight Regarding DOD Acquisition “Myths”

Written by Nick Sanders

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We have, from time to time, had differences of opinion with statements and actions made by the Honorable Shay Assad, DOD Director of Pricing.

Mr. Assad has parlayed his former position as Director, Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy (DPAP) into key role that is essentially whatever he wants it to be, from leading fact-finding and negotiations on Major Defense Acquisition Programs to setting contract management policy, and from establishing the Department’s position on how CAS 412 equitable adjustments will be negotiated to defending DCAA’s new, risk-based, approach to determining where the auditors will conduct audits.

Years ago, during the days of the allegedly independent Commission on Wartime Contracting, Mr. Assad successfully positioned himself as the mediator between DCMA and DCAA, and thus ascended over the Directors of those other DOD agencies. We have no problem with that. Our problems have all involved his policy positions and the direction he’s given to those other DOD agencies.

Recently, Federal Times [carried a story](#) in which Mr. Assad dispelled certain “myths” about the DOD acquisition workforce. Apparently, he made his remarks in public, at a recent National Contract Management Association (NCMA) symposium. We weren’t there, but we assume the Federal Times reporter (Andy Medici) got the gist of Mr. Assad’s myth-busting.

The first “myth” Mr. Assad “sought to dispel” was the notion that the DOD contracting workforce was untrained and unprepared to award contracts and administer those contracts after award. Not true, according to Mr. Assad. In fact, he asserted that “Our workforce today is healthier and stronger than it has been in the last 10 years or so.”

He also noted that any reports that the acquisition workforce is shrinking are wrong. In fact (according to Mr. Assad), that workforce has grown by roughly 24,000 over the past five years. He also noted that more than one-third of the DCMA contracting officers have industry and/or business experience, thus dispelling the myth that today’s contracting officers are inexperienced.

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Thus, according to Mr. Assad, the current state of the DOD acquisition workforce is just fine.

But to keep improving things, Mr. Assad noted that DOD contracting folks will receive “better curricula and more funding” for training.

Well, there you go.

We don’t relish being in constant opposition to Mr. Assad; that’s not what we’re about here. But still ...

This website has posted articles that both summarized, and linked to, official GAO reports which indicated that Mr. Assad’s view of the DOD acquisition workforce is *optimistic*. Do a keyword search on “GAO” or “DOD IG” or “DCMA” and see what you get. We believe there’s sufficient evidence, from official sources, to lead one to the conclusion that there are significant DCMA workforce concerns that need to be addressed. We sincerely hope that Mr. Williams’ successor will make addressing those concerns his or her number one priority.

But it would seem to be difficult to prioritize issues when one is in denial that they even exist. If the doctor doesn’t establish a medical baseline based on correct measurements, one suspects it would be difficult for the doctor to correctly diagnose, and treat, the patient. Similarly, if a senior DOD acquisition leader is operating from an inaccurate assessment of the current state of the acquisition workforce, one suspects that senior acquisition leader might not make the best decisions that would fix the problems reported by official government sources.