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The Honorable Michael Duffey
Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment
1010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1010

Subj: New Acquisition Reform Book - *Licensed to Steal: The Incompetence Myth*

Dear Hon. USD (A&S) Michael Duffey:

My email to you yesterday cited a letter to Chairman Rogers, Subj: *15 Years of Unfinished Business with Your Committee; Part 2*, dated October 25, 2025. The HASC's unfinished business is to fix a weapon systems acquisition process that is based on false metrics of cost, schedule, and technical performance.

Today, I recommend that you read and react to a new book by Carrie Tinker. She demonstrates that the weapon acquisition system is not broken by using official government audits, GAO reports, DoD Selected Acquisition Reports, congressional testimony, and seventy-five years of hard data to demonstrate that the system is working exactly as intended. The book is entitled *Licensed to Steal: The Incompetence Myth*.

Excerpts from the book follow:

The United States government acquisition system, where failure is success, waste is revenue, and incompetence is the story we tell ourselves to avoid confronting an uncomfortable truth: What if it's not broken? What if it works exactly as designed—just not for us?

Contractors can meet all metrics while delivering non-functional products.

Government System Design: Profit from spending (more cost = more revenue), immunity from failure (bailouts guaranteed), and competition eliminated (incumbency advantages).

Process determines reward (not outcomes).

Metrics divorced from reality (Earned Value Management green while products fail).

Result:

- System designed to produce cost growth, delays, and dysfunction.
- Designed to resist reform (supported by 70 years of identical patterns).
- The "failures" serve someone's interest (contractor profits). The reforms are sabotaged deliberately (lobbying and legislative blocking).
- The accountability vacuum is intentional. (revolving door ensures no prosecution). The outcomes are not mistakes—they are the plan.

The book may be purchased from Amazon.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul J. Solomon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Paul Solomon

CC:

Hon. Adam Smith, HASC

Hon. Mike Rogers, HASC

Hon. Roger Wicker, SASC

Russell Vought, Director, OMB

Hon. SON John Phelan

Hon. Gen. B. Chance Saltzman, U.S. Space Force

Hon. Pete Hegseth, Sec. of War

Anthony Capaccio, Bloomberg News

Meg O'Keefe SAE G-47 SE Committee

Carrie Tinker, Author

Hon. David Norquist NDIA

Hon. Troy Meink, Sec. of the AF

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