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The Hon. Secretary of the Air Force Dr. Troy Meink
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Subj: First Use of the Digital Thread and Outcome-based Metrics on the B-2 Program, 1999

Dear Hon. Sec. of the Air Force Troy Meink:

This letter augments my letter, Subj: *B-2 Success Stories; 2000 and 2025*, dated June 27, 2025, which told a digital engineering (DE) success story about the B-2 program. That success was cited in the *Defense Acquisition Magazine* article dated July-August 2025 entitled:



Excerpt: "Schedule performance was based on the status of engineering artifacts in the requirements traceability matrix. Performance-based metrics helped make the B-2 a very successful program and demonstrated how to measure progress of systems engineering (SE) requirements management, traceability, and verification."

The methodology used in 1999 was the first use of DE leading practices, including the digital thread, to obtain schedule performance from the Authoritative Source of Truth (ASoT), the DOORS requirements traceability matrix. DOORS was the ASoT for planning and tracking the status of requirements. Despite the early B-2 success, the GAO reported that the Air Force lacks a policy for digital threads.

GAO Recommendations

In December 2025, GAO published GAO-26-107009 *Weapon Systems Testing: DOD Needs to Update Policies to Better Support Modernization Efforts*. You concurred with the following recommendations:

The Secretary of the Air Force should, as the Air Force revises its weapon system test and evaluation policy, ensure that policy fully reflects leading practices for product development by requiring developmental and operational testers to provide input into the development of acquisition strategies, including on testing-related topics such as the use of and access to *digital twins* and *digital threads*. (Recommendation 4)

The Secretary of the Air Force should, as the Air Force revises its weapon system test and evaluation policy, ensure that policy fully reflects leading practices for product development by requiring developmental and operational testers to develop test strategies and test plans that reflect an iterative, integrated testing approach enabled by *digital twins* and *digital threads* to support delivery of *minimum viable products* (MVP). (Recommendation 5)

Please implement revisions to policy regarding DE, digital twins, digital threads, and MVPs that are in the white paper, "Integrating the Embedded Software Path, Model-Based SE, MOSA, and DE with Program

Management." It includes the need to intersection DE and program management practices to enhance project outcomes.

Also, please collaborate with your colleagues to rescind the DFARS Earned Value Management System (EVMS) clause and to eliminate reviews for compliance with the guidelines in NDIA/EIA-748, EVMS. In my opinion, the NDIA defense of the status quo has obstructed acquisition reforms that would accelerate the use of DE tools for program/project management, including the digital thread and the requirements traceability matrix as an ASoT for schedule and technical performance. NDIA excluded engineering best practices and outcome-based metrics from EIA-748. More information is in my letter, Subj: Unfinished Business to Institutionalize DE, November 3, 2025 and in other letters at www.pb-ev.com, EIA-748 EVMS STANDARD STATUS tab.

Yours truly,



Paul J. Solomon

CC:

Hon. Adam Smith, HASC

Hon. Mike Turner, HASC

Hon. USD (A&S) Michael Duffey

Hon. David Norquist NDIA

Hon. Roger Wicker, SASC

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