

STATEMENT OF
LURITA DOAN
ADMINISTRATOR
U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
JUNE 13, 2007



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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Davis, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the invitation to appear before you today to address the matters raised in your May 24, 2007 invitation.

I recently celebrated my one-year anniversary at the General Services Administration. It has been an extraordinary 12 months marked by a number of accomplishments attributable to the many dedicated GSA employees' efforts and commitment to a culture of action and performance improvement. GSA has:

- Regained our clean audit and eliminated many non-performing programs saving millions of taxpayer dollars;
- Stood up a new Office of Emergency Response and Recovery (OERR) to better help in times of disasters;
- Rekindled entrepreneurial energies throughout GSA and restored the confidence in GSA by our two largest customers (the Defense Department and the Judiciary);
- Reduced the time to award contracts by three months;
- Successfully executed the largest reorganization in the history of GSA; and
- Launched a government-wide acquisition contract to provide the people who have sacrificed so much for our country, our nation's service disabled veterans, more opportunities to do business with the federal government.

And, these are only a few of GSA's achievements – achievements that have, at times, been overshadowed by allegations against me. I will continue to fight for fairness as these allegations are considered and resolved. In some instances, the allegations simply have been untrue. In others, I made mistakes and said so. In still others, the allegations have not been presented in fair, accurate, and complete context.

As I have said since my first days as Administrator, there is no greater asset at GSA than its employees. However, the leak of the Office of Special Counsel report has had serious consequences for people other than me, and it will have an impact on my testimony today. My answers to OSC investigator questions regarding employees' performance were made with the expectation that identifying information about those discussed was to be treated confidentially, and because I wanted to be fully cooperative with the OSC investigation team. Nevertheless, the second report leaked to the press was in unredacted form. That is, no effort had been made to maintain the confidentiality of the identities of individuals referred to in the report before it was leaked. Thus, the candid comments I made under oath and with the expectation of confidentiality by the investigators have been disseminated well beyond the bounds of the report. The leak of carefully selected portions of these statements has caused damage enough to these

individuals, and I prefer not to aggravate the situation further by further public discussion that would be unfair to those employees who are innocent victims of the OSC report that was leaked. I am sorry that the investigation into allegations against me has resulted in the release of sensitive information regarding the work of these employees. I never intended or imagined that this information would be carelessly made public by others, and I sincerely regret any unintended consequences that may have resulted. It is so very sad that people, good people, who have decided to devote some part of their life to serving the government, have had to undergo a public discussion of their performance for no good reason. They and their families do not deserve to be dragged into this political battle and it will just be another disincentive, of which there are many, to work in government. For these reasons, I would like to refrain from publicly discussing performance or other employment or personnel information about any particular individuals in my testimony. It is important to note that these performance evaluations occurred prior to the January 26th meeting. I would appreciate the Committee's understanding and agreement on this point.

I believe a basic misunderstanding of my motives lies at the core of at least some of these allegations. While I have been aggressive in my pursuit of better government, in insisting upon increased opportunities for small, minority, women, veteran and disadvantaged businesses, and in trying to bring GSA together as a team, I have not always made my motives clear. None of my actions, however, has been intended for or resulted in personal or partisan political gain.

Working at GSA and for the federal government is new to me. Many of the business protocols and simple ways of attacking everyday problems that were so familiar to me are not the same in the Federal Government. There has been a learning curve for me – and believe me – I've learned and embraced this new environment and will continually strive to improve. One of the best things about me is that I am direct, that I speak bluntly, that I don't sugar coat anything. Of course, that's probably also one of the worst things about me.

With respect to recent inquiries surrounding an alleged Hatch Act violation and the report of the Office of Special Counsel, I have responded in detail explaining why the report is deficient and why the investigation lacked objectivity, impartiality, and fairness. I have not been permitted to review witness statements, even with the witnesses' identifying information deleted. Although the Office of Special Counsel provided me a compact disc recording of approximately 8 hours of my testimony, that office refused to provide me with a copy of the written transcript of my own testimony until just a few days ago, after the report went to the President and to this Committee. Further, although, at times, I might have spoken too freely during a 9 hour deposition, these statements have been mischaracterized. I have never accused nor intended to accuse any one of maliciously trying to mislead or lie to the Office of Special Counsel or Congress. Characterizations of that sort are simply not true.

An opportunity to review the witnesses' testimony is particularly important. At least some of the witnesses interviewed were exposed to the significant press coverage of

the meeting and some were subject to prior questioning on this issue by the staff of this Committee. I believe that fairness requires that I have some opportunity to examine whether the testimony of any of these witnesses may have been affected by one or both of these factors. Lastly with respect to the report and the handling of it by the Office of Special Counsel, I must reiterate my deep disappointment and outrage that the report was leaked to the press before I had any opportunity to respond in my own defense. In fact, before I had even received the report, an article about it had been posted online. A copy of a draft of the report and the final versions were posted online shortly thereafter. This circumstance, as well as the manner in which the investigation was pursued and the report written, only compounds the unfairness of a process which should be above reproach. I have delivered my response to the OSC report. The report has been delivered to the President. If I violated the Hatch Act, and I do not believe I did, it is for the President to decide. I serve proudly at the pleasure of the President and I await his decision.

Also, let me assure this committee, without any caveats and in the simplest and most straightforward way I can, I have supported and will continue to support any GSA employees fully and honestly cooperating with Congress or any investigation.

I am grateful for this opportunity to serve and am excited about the successes GSA has had. We have built a strong team of both career and non-career employees at GSA, and I believe that we are laying the groundwork for a successful future for this generation of GSA employees, and for those who will follow in the years to come. The innovative organization we are building is good for our government and good for our country.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Davis and Members of the Committee, I hope my appearance here today will answer any questions you might have and will set the record straight. We intend to continue to cooperate to the fullest because we believe a full airing of the issues will help set the record straight.

Thank you and I look forward to working with this Committee to further enhance the services and products that GSA provides to the taxpayers. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.