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MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP  
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOW FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: Accountable Program Leadership and Personnel Policies in the Warfighting Acquisition System

Reference: Secretary of War memorandum, "Transforming the Defense Acquisition System into the Warfighting Acquisition System to Accelerate Fielding of Urgently Needed Capabilities to Our Warriors," November 7, 2025

On November 7, 2025, the Secretary of War (SecWar) issued the referenced memorandum, which included an Acquisition Transformation Strategy and directed much needed change to the Warfighting Acquisition System. It also directed the Under Secretary of War for Acquisition and Sustainment (USW(A&S)) to coordinate with the Under Secretary of War for Personnel and Readiness to transform Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE) and Program Manager (PM) roles. This requires change to long-standing policies and practices across the Department for both military and civilian acquisition professionals.

While we aggressively work towards greater change, this memorandum provides guidance on program leadership tenure and hiring top talent from industry and Government. Our ability to accelerate contract deliveries and increase acquisition risk tolerance for the Warfighter depends on stability within our acquisition leadership and our capacity to appoint and retain the Nation's top talent in key positions.

To ensure stability, accountability, and increase the tenure in our acquisition leadership positions, all Components will adhere to the requirements established in 10 U.S.C. §§ 1731, 1734-1735, and 1737, as well as this guidance. Within 120 days, all slating and assignment processes for Program Executive Officers, PAEs and PMs, and related leadership positions must be reviewed and revised to align with the objectives in the referenced SecWar memorandum. This includes application of a 4-year appointment (with possible 2-year extensions) for both civilian employees and military personnel. Component and Service Acquisition Executives will review their policies, including waiver exception processes, and ensure they are brought into alignment with these statutory and Departmental directives. Any associated waivers must be copied to the USW(A&S) or assigned delegate. These adjustments will fortify the application of tenure requirements necessary to achieve mission outcomes and promote long-term accountability.

In our second line of effort, we must revitalize hiring top talent from industry for placement into leadership positions. Use of appropriate direct hire authorities for acquisition leadership positions should be the first approach used to streamline hiring of personnel from industry. Additionally, recruitment incentives may be considered to help bring the most skilled and capable civilians into the acquisition program offices responsible for delivering to our Warfighters. A recruitment incentive shall not exceed 25 percent of the employee's annual basic pay in effect at the beginning of the service period, multiplied by the years of service (including fractions thereof), for a period not to exceed four years. Acquisition Executives will create or

participate in industry outreach programs to identify industry personnel for program leadership positions, consistent with applicable law and policy.

These first two Acquisition Transformation Strategy initiatives will support the hiring of top talent from industry and Government and retain our strongest leaders to deliver the greatest results. My points of contact for this action are Mr. James Ruocco, Performing the Duties of the Assistant Secretary of War for Acquisition, at 703-256-9010 or james.a.ruocco2.civ@mail.mil, and Mr. Michael Cogar, Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Civilian Personnel Policy, at 703-571-9282 or michael.a.cogar3.civ@mail.mil.



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