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Johnson, Michelle; Asch, Larry

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

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Acquisition Research Program



The Acquisition Research Program publishes a weekly email newsletter, **Need to Know**, in which we highlight key developments in acquisition, policy, government innovation, and research—as well as the latest news about ARP events and research. We hope you enjoy the newsletter, and let us know if you are doing work we can highlight in future issues.

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March 5, 2021

Issue 45

This week sees publication of a few notable reports. GAO has released its latest high-risk list. Spoiler alert: DoD contract management is still on it. Other acquisition challenges on the list are weapon systems, federal IT, and acquisition management at the VA and NASA. The other big publications this week are a new (Interim) National Security Strategy and the Final Report of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence. This latter report just happened to get released the same week we held our webinar on Developing AI in Defense Programs. If you missed it, we'll have the recording in next week's issue. Another trend is continued movement on (re)shoring up the domestic supply chain, with more DPA contracts to that effect. We contextualize that contract with an analysis of January's Made in American executive order – our lead story this week.

[This Week's Top Story](#)

[Government Contracting Insights: Biden Issues New Buy American Directive](#)

Samantha L. Clark, Evan R. Sherwood and Michael Wagner, National Defense Magazine

On Jan. 25, President Joe Biden issued a much-anticipated executive order announcing plans to strengthen the government's preference for domestically sourced supplies, a move that has major implications for contractors.

Executive Order 14005 on "Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers" is the most ambitious in a line of recent proclamations from the White House aimed at strengthening domestic preference requirements in federal contracting. It calls for an array of changes to existing domestic preference regulations and procedures in order to "maximize" federal purchases of domestic supplies.

The order calls for the Federal Acquisition Regulation Council to consider amending Part 25 of the FAR to change the regulatory thresholds and standards that have long defined the application of the Buy American Act. ...

Of potentially greater significance, however, the order directs the council to consider replacing the BAA's "cost of component test" for evaluating domestic content with a test that considers "the value that is added to the product through U.S.-based production or U.S. job-supporting economic activity." This is a potentially seismic change to the law's regulatory analysis, though substantial questions remain about how the government would identify and quantify the "value" of U.S. production or "job-supporting economic activity."

[Read more.](#)

[ARP and NPS News](#)

[Naval Postgraduate School and Xerox Collaborate to Advance Additive Manufacturing Solutions](#)

Matthew Schehl, NPS

[**Registration is open for the 18th Annual Acquisition Research Symposium**](#)

This year's event will be held May 11-13, 2021 as a live webinar presented through Zoom for Government. Keynote speakers are Ms. Stacy Cummings, Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Vice Admiral Jon A. Hill, USN, Director of Missile Defense Agency, and Mr. Frederick J. (Jay) Stefany, Acting Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition. Seats are limited. Register today!

[**Acquisition and Innovation**](#)

[**DOD Announces \\$9.98 Million Defense Production Act Title III Agreement With Hardwick Tactical Corporation to Strengthen the Domestic Clothing and Textile Industrial Base**](#)

DoD Press Release

[**Basic cybersecurity standards must start with procurements, experts say**](#)

Dave Nyczepir, Fedscoop

[**Defense Innovation Unit Launched 23 Projects Last Year, Up One-Third**](#)

Mila Jasper, Defense One

[**Former Air Force acquisition boss joins drone maker Volansi**](#)

Valerie Insinna, Defense News

[**Research**](#)

[**High-Risk Series: Dedicated Leadership Needed to Address Limited Progress in Most High-Risk Areas**](#)

U.S. Government Accountability Office

[**Final Report of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence**](#)

[**2021 AI Index Report**](#)

Stanford University Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence

[**Weapon Systems Cybersecurity: Guidance Would Help DOD Programs Better Communicate Requirements to Contractors**](#)

U.S. Government Accountability Office

[**Policy**](#)

[**Government Contracts Legislative and Regulatory Update – February**](#)

JD Supra

[**Electronic Code of Federal Regulations \(Beta\)**](#)

[**Interim National Security Strategic Guidance**](#)

The White House

[**Congress**](#)

[**New Senate defense appropriations chairman talks nuclear modernization, defense cuts and earmarks**](#)

Joe Gould, Defense News

[**Senate draft of COVID-19 relief bill proposes \\$1B for Tech Modernization Fund**](#)

Jackson Barnett, Fedscoop

[**What the Pentagon's top policy nominee thinks about nukes, Iran and other priorities**](#)

Aaron Mehta, Defense News

[**Lawmakers propose check on Biden's war powers**](#)

Joe Gould, Defense News

[**Defense and Federal Government**](#)

[Message to the Force](#)

Secretary of Defense

[Biden national security guidance calls to increase diplomacy, downplay nukes, end Afghanistan conflict](#)

Aaron Mehta, Defense News

[Pentagon's Logistics Agency Utilizes Software Bots to Improve Accuracy, Efficiency](#)

Michael Molinaro, Defense Logistics Agency

[Official Explains DOD Data Strategy](#)

David Vergun, DoD News

[JADC2 Faces 'Huge Weakness': Old Policies, Old Tech](#)

Paul McLeary, Breaking Defense

[Acquisition Tips and Tools, with Larry Asch](#)**Now that DoD Acquisition has done the A's & B's, how about the C's?**

DoD Acquisition Leadership has tackled the A's and developed an Adaptive Acquisition Framework. The prior administration provided the B's with Better Buying Power initiatives. When are we going to deal with the most important challenge, the C's:

Culture, Culture, and more Culture change.

Let us start with getting the DoD acquisition culture to remove the mindset of the most dangerous phrase in the English language:

"Because we've always done it this way."

Rear Admiral Grace Murray Hopper is famous for this quote. She was a pioneering computer scientist whose work was central to the development of COBOL, one of the foundational programming languages. In 1975 "The Baltimore Sun" published a profile of Grace Murray Hopper. On the wall over her desk, she hung a clock going counterclockwise to remind hardheads that because something was done one way in the past is no reason why it can't be done a better way in the future. "The hardest thing in the world is to change the minds of people who keep saying, 'But we've always done it this way.' These are days of fast changes and if we don't change with them, we can get hurt or lost."

Are we doing things the way we've always done them because we always have, or because it is the right thing to meet mission? Anyone can do things the way we have always done them. The ability to question processes and propose change comes with understanding fundamentals and experience. Each day that we do our job better equips us to ask those questions and change. If we allow our people just to do it the way we have always done it, they will make good clerks and not provide innovative solutions to meet our customer's mission.

Nothing can stifle innovation more than a work culture that discourages looking for new ways to improve. It takes leaders at all levels to challenge the "we've always done it that way" mindset. We need to discourage our people from using phrases such as "This is what we've always done," "That will never work," "I was told to do it that way," or "They will never approve that."

Acquisition is unbelievably bureaucratic and slow. We must change the culture to move in a different direction for the future.

Take on the C's and create bold culture changes, clean up the regulatory and policy underbrush so acquisition personnel can focus on purchasing smartly and in a timely manner.

Let's start with eradicating a culture of "Because we've always done it that way."



Acquisition Research Program
Graduate School of Defense Management
Naval Postgraduate School
www.nps.edu/web/acqresearch
arp@nps.edu
831-656-3764

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