

# GETTING NOWHERE: DOD'S FAILURE TO REPLACE THE DEFENSE TRAVEL SYSTEM

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## HEARING

BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY, AND GOVERNMENT INNOVATION  
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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# GETTING NOWHERE: DOD'S FAILURE TO REPLACE THE DEFENSE TRAVEL SYSTEM

Wednesday, July 26, 2023

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CYBERSECURITY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY,  
AND GOVERNMENT INNOVATION  
*Washington, D.C.*

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:38 p.m., 2154 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Nancy Mace [Chairwoman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Mace, Timmons, Connolly, Khanna, and Mfume.

Ms. MACE. Good afternoon, you all. The Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation will now come to order. I apologize for my delay. I learned at the Citadel if you are on time, you are late, and I was very late today, so I apologize, Mr. Connolly. But welcome, everyone, and thanks for your patience today.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time, and I recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Good afternoon, and welcome to this hearing of the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation. We are here today to get answers and accountability concerning the most recent IT acquisition failure at the Defense Department. It is not a major weapons system contract we are talking about. This is a garden-variety travel booking system upgrade, and that is exactly what makes this failure so disturbing.

As DoD acquisition expert, Bill Greenwalt, of the American Enterprise Institute recently wrote, and I quote, "The Department's inability to bring online something as mundane as a workable tool for business travel does not bode well for its other efforts at accessing commercial technology and providers for military solutions. In artificial intelligence, data analytics, and a host of other areas, DoD is light years behind the commercial market. How can anyone expect the companies that make these technologies to do business with the Pentagon when it cannot even adopt a relatively simple piece of software?"

After years of planning, DoD was, up until a few months ago, on course to finally replace its decades-old legacy travel system with a modern software-as-a-service solution reflecting commercial best

practices. DoD's travel-related expenses, which chiefly fund temporary duty travel for civilian and military personnel, amounted last year alone to \$8 billion. But hundreds of millions of those dollars were wasted on improper payments. Additional dollars were wasted implementing manual workarounds the system requires. These are funds diverted every year from the agency's warfighting mission.

The annual cash bleed and user frustration under the existing system is so bad that DoD used it to justify the issuance, in 2021, of a noncompetitive, sole-source contract for a replacement system. It was that important to exit their travel system as soon as possible.

Last October, DoD Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, Gil Cisneros, instructed all DoD components that they were to move to the new travel system, and that course was affirmed when the agency's budget proposal was issued this past March. But just 2 months later, that all changed. In May, Under Secretary Cisneros issued a new memo that pulled the plug on the whole project and told all components to stick with or return to the old system.

Since then, in media comments and briefings with Committee staff, DoD has offered a variety of excuses for scrapping the effort to replace its archaic travel system. To put it politely, the excuses are lame, and they do not add up.

That is why I invited Under Secretary Cisneros to personally come here today and tell us what went wrong. Mr. Cisneros is not here, however, so why is that? DoD never indicated Mr. Cisneros is unavailable. Instead, the agency officials decided to put forward one of Mr. Cisneros' subordinates, who they deemed better able to answer our questions. It is not clear how they arrived at that decision.

Two weeks ago, there was a Joint Subcommittee hearing held in this very room concerning DoD's failed financial audit. One of the witnesses was John Tenaglia, who is the Senior Procurement Executive at DoD, who approved the sole-sourcing of the new travel system contract. I asked Mr. Tenaglia who was responsible for the recent cancellation of that contract, and he said—you can check the tape on this—he said, "That is under the purview of the Under Secretary of Personnel and Readiness." That is Mr. Cisneros, who is not here today.

So, that is who we invited to testify. That is who did not show up. So, they sent his subordinate. That sounds to me like an attempt really to dodge accountability, and the American people, that is not what they ask us to do up here. Even when we make mistakes, we need the people who are responsible to come up here to answer our questions so we can avoid such mistakes in the future. But that is not what is going to happen today.

So, Mr. Register, for your sake, I do not want to hear you say today that you cannot answer our questions because they are above your pay grade. I am going to lose it if that happens.

So, with that I am going to yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Mr. Connolly. You are on deck.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, and I join you in believing Mr. Cisneros should be here. The executive branch has a responsibility to be accountable to the legislative branch, and if

this is his aegis, if this is his lane, in terms of managerial responsibility, he needs to be here and accountable to the American people, here at the people's house in Congress.

I want to begin by applauding President Biden's historic nomination, since we are talking about DoD, of Admiral Lisa Franchetti, to serve as the Chief of Naval Operations, the highest-ranking officer of the United States Navy. Admiral Franchetti has a tremendous amount of experience at sea and at shore, including numerous high-level policy and administrative positions. If confirmed, Admiral Franchetti would be the first woman to be a Pentagon service chief and the first female member of the Chiefs of Staff.

Unfortunately, Republican Senator Tommy Tuberville has created a national security vulnerability by actively obstructing all—all—pending promotions, for generals and admirals in the U.S. armed forces, to limit women servicemembers' access to reproductive health. The Senator's blockade is affecting more than 250 leaders waiting for promotion, and their families, including those of Admiral Franchetti.

The Pentagon rightly implemented new policies to effectively acknowledge the reality of the military's evolving makeup, but Senate Republicans shamelessly hijacked that nomination process and threatened our country's national security to forward their agenda.

According to the Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, and I quote, "This indefinite hold harms America's national security and hinders the Pentagon's normal operation. The United States military relies on the deep experience and the strategic expertise of our senior military leaders. The longer that this hold persists, the greater the risk that the U.S. military runs in every theater, every domain, and every service."

Furthermore, 2 weeks ago, Republicans here voted, almost unanimously, to pass an amendment in the NDAA that unequivocally limits servicemembers' access to abortion services. It is particularly disingenuous for Republicans to demand that military leadership fix the recruitment problem while simultaneously trying to force the Pentagon to enforce draconian policies that compromise women's reproductive autonomy, deny medical care for transgendered troops, and eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives specifically created to improve that recruitment.

To quote the former senior advisor to the Secretary of Defense, Bishop Garrison, "When the military gets recruits from diverse backgrounds there will be more innovative thought, more innovative solutions to incredibly complex and complicated problems that are facing the national security apparatus today." And a lack of innovative thought is exactly why DoD has failed to replace its antiquated and much maligned travel management system, related also, I might add, to its IT platforms.

In 2017, the Department began the effort to replace its legacy travel system, which has been plagued by high levels of improper payments. Eventually, DoD selected Concur Technologies to develop a prototype of a new travel management system. Based on the information available to us, it appears that the initial prototype and trial phase of DoD's new travel system showed promise. In fact, in 2021, after the prototype was, quote, "deemed successful," unquote, DoD awarded Concur a 7-year, sole-source contract to im-

plement a commercial software-as-a-service program known as MyTravel.

Last fall, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness issued a memorandum mandating the use of the new system. But at the last minute, DoD pulled back. A few weeks ago, DoD rescinded the memo mandating the use of MyTravel and canceled the sole-source contract for the buildout of the system. In short, DoD hired a contractor who delivered a functional product, but because the individual military services failed to uphold the commitments they previously had made to alter their financial management infrastructure—which is, as the Chair indicated at our last hearing, a mess, with over 400 individual financial management systems in the Pentagon. What could go wrong with that?—the new tool thus remained incompatible with their multiplicity system.

It is unbelievable that DoD continues to use the financial management infrastructure that was criticized, as I said in our last hearing, which contains more than 400 unique financial systems, operating across 10,000 disaggregated data management systems and 4,700 data warehouses.

While auditability is an important priority, DoD's focus on compliance with legal auditing requirements does not address the issues caused by the antiquated IT and travel systems. Until IT systems are modernized, which is why I fully support a hearing on the FITARA scorecard so that we can continue to press for updates and modernization investments. Passing an audit will not just be difficult, but impossible.

And if we pan back, we also see DoD has a history of resistance against basic oversight despite being given a litany of exemptions from fundamental management requirements and possessing the largest single budget in human history.

For example, we appreciate Mr. John Sherman coming to our Subcommittee last year to testify on Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act, FITARA, I helped co-author, to improve agency's management of IT resources and drive best practices. However, it is concerning that DoD is exempted from certain provisions within that law and is still only achieving a C on the scorecard.

As a reminder, these grades are not scarlet letters, but they do emphasize the need for agencies to take IT modernization seriously, and today's subject at today's hearing is illustrative of that. Furthermore, DoD must meet its mission to protect national security without sacrificing commonsense, good governance practices. DoD must justify the exemptions they want to retain through demonstrated responsible outcomes. You cannot have it both ways.

DoD spends billions and billions of taxpayer dollars every year for which they need to account. This fundamental activity, the basics of clean bookkeeping, will not occur unless DoD can first meet integral, good governance management standards that lay the building blocks for serving this Nation effectively. Among those fundamentals is replacing ineffective legacy IT systems with up-to-date, contemporary, nimble systems that concurrently reduce fraud and enhance customer service. Congress must get this nearly decade-long effort to modernize DoD's travel system back on track to



address the agency's hundreds of millions of dollars of improper payments every year or continue to risk not only travel convenience but military readiness.

I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Connolly.

I am pleased today to introduce our witnesses for today's hearing, and also my teenage kids just walked in and wanted to say hi, and recognize I am waving at the teenagers in the audience, not at our witnesses. So, pardon me, but this is their first time seeing a hearing and seeing their mom chairing a hearing. So, I am kind of stoked. Mom is stoked about them being here, although they are embarrassed.

Our first witness today is Mr. Jeffrey Register, Director of the Defense Human Resources Activity, reporting to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. Our second witness is Ms. Elizabeth Field, Director of Defense Capabilities and Management, U.S. Government Accountability Office, or GAO. Welcome, everyone. I welcome you two. We are pleased to have you this afternoon.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses, if you will please stand and raise your right hands.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony that you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Mr. REGISTER. I do.

Ms. FIELD. I do.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. Let the record show that the witnesses all answered in the affirmative, and Miles and Ellie, this is where it gets real.

Today, we appreciate all of you being here today and look forward to your testimony. Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statements and they will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statements to 5 minutes. As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on, and the Members can hear you.

When you begin to speak, a light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes the light will turn yellow, and when the red light comes on your 5 minutes has expired, and we would ask that you please wrap it up.

Today, first I want to recognize Mr. Register for your opening statement for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF JEFFREY REGISTER  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE HUMAN RESOURCES ACTIVITY  
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS**

Mr. REGISTER. Chairwoman Mace, Ranking Member Connolly, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you for this oversight hearing on the Department's decision to not exercise the next contract option period for MyTravel. Our path to improve DoD's travel systems has been long, but despite the challenges, the Department remains committed to travel modernization in support of our work force. The Department decided not to exercise the next contract option,

recognizing it was the fiscally responsible way forward when faced with the challenges that I will outline today. Rest assured, the Defense Travel System, DTS, is fully capable of meeting DoD's travel mission.

The Department faced significant challenges in the continued implementation of MyTravel which ultimately led to the decision not to exercise the next option period. That decision was made for two reasons: unexpectedly low use of MyTravel and the Department's prioritization of passing a "clean audit" over Enterprise Resource Planning, or ERP, financial management systems integration. In 2019, the services originally committed to integrate their ERP systems between September 2021 and January 2023. However, there were continued delays due to the shift in other Service ERP systems priorities, primarily supporting audit remediation, which led to extending the timeline to accommodate those delays.

Unlike DTS, MyTravel was intended to be a travel system that leveraged the financial management capabilities of the ERPs which meant the services needed to add more features to their ERPs before shifting to MyTravel. DTS allows Department components to be fully audit-compliant without needing the services to further invest in their ERPs. We eventually reached a point where we could not accommodate any more delays, and given that we still lacked firm commitments from the services on the timeline for ERP integration, we could not continue with the contract due to the cost to the Department.

Despite the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness's mandatory use directive for onboarded defense agencies, a robust training program, onboarding support, and executive-level engagement, usage of the system lagged behind estimated and contracted transaction volumes. The low adoption rate for onboarded organizations coupled with a slower than anticipated return to travel after COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, resulted in less than 12 percent system usage as of the end of April 2023.

While our decision may appear abrupt, the Department has been discussing the challenges and potential courses of action for MyTravel for some time prior to the announcement. Although the program made significant advances, continued implementation of MyTravel is no longer in the best interests of the Department.

The most fiscally sound way forward was to not exercise the next contract option period. This was determined after consulting with the offices of the Under Secretaries for Personnel and Readiness, Comptroller, and Acquisition and Sustainment. Without the commitments from the military departments and the travel transaction volumes they were expected to provide, it was not prudent or fiscally responsible to proceed with a \$44 million contract option for a system being poorly utilized.

Going forward, my organization will lead a collaborative analysis to review lessons learned from MyTravel and other factors to determine the best approach going forward. That will include functional, technical, and acquisition strategies to best meet the Department's needs while exercising sound financial stewardship. MyTravel was intended to be a cost savings for the Department, but that has not been the case. Until our analysis is complete, DoD will continue to utilize DTS, which is already used for the majority of Department's

temporary duty travel and has been significantly improved to include many of the cost-saving features originally envisioned for MyTravel.

As I previously said, DTS fully supports audit readiness requirements. It is also compliant with all DoD cybersecurity requirements and its customer satisfaction ratings are greater than 80 percent.

In closing, Madam Chairwoman, I thank you, the Ranking Member, and the Members of this Subcommittee for your outstanding and continuing support of the men and women who proudly wear the uniform in defense of our great Nation.

I look forward to your questions.

Ms. MACE. Thank you. I now recognize Ms. Field to begin her opening statement. Thank you.

**STATEMENT OF ELIZABETH FIELD  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE CAPABILITIES AND MANAGEMENT  
U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Ms. FIELD. Chairwoman Mace, Ranking Member Connolly, and Members and staff of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing on DoD's decision to discontinue its move to the new MyTravel system.

I want to be clear from the outset that GAO, the nonpartisan, fact-based investigative arm of Congress, has not had the opportunity to conduct an audit on the MyTravel system or the circumstances surrounding its termination. In fact, it is probably fair to say that today we have more questions than we do answers.

That said, I would like to offer my observations on three things that we do know.

First, we know that DoD has long held concerns about the Department's legacy travel system, known as DTS. As DoD stated in 2021, DTS suffered from poor usability, low customer satisfaction, and improper payments of travel entitlements. Some of these problems were evident early on. In a series of audit reports that GAO issued between 2005 and 2009, we identified significant system deficiencies with DTS, such as inaccurate displays of flight and airfare information and weaknesses in controls designed to detect and deter travel that did not comply with DoD regulations. GAO made 14 recommendations to DoD to address these problems, most of which DoD implemented.

More recently, in 2019, we found that DoD needed to do more to avoid improper payments in its travel pay program. As you know, improper payments include those made in the wrong amount or that should not have been made.

While many of the problems we identified with improper payments related to user error, some had to do with the system itself. For example, at the time of our audit, a tool that DoD had developed within DTC to automatically review vouchers and look for possible improper payments did not flag all types of voucher errors, such as those that had been submitted without required receipts. We made five recommendations in our 2019 report, and to DoD's credit it moved quickly to implement them.

Nonetheless, DoD officials continued to have concerns about DTS. As recently as late 2022, DoD officials instructed organizations throughout the defense enterprise to phaseout DTS and move to the new MyTravel system, citing it as an industry-leading product.

The second thing we know is that cross-cutting agency reform is hard, especially at an agency as large and complex as the Department of Defense. DoD's multiyear, multimillion-dollar effort to replace DTS is just one example of unsuccessful attempts Department officials have made to roll out new enterprise-wide systems or to fundamentally change how the Department does business. In 2005, GAO added DoD's approach to business transformation to its High-Risk List because the Department had not taken the necessary steps to achieve and sustain business reform on a broad, strategic, department-wide, and integrated basis.

Creating a new enterprise-wide IT system for DoD is a particularly challenging endeavor, given the many weaknesses in the Department's operating environment. DoD has hundreds of IT and financial management systems, some of them created as far back as the 1960's, and many of them not designed to be auditable. As GAO reported in 2000, DoD does not have a clear picture of its systems' environment, nor does it have a well-defined roadmap with performance measures, targets, and timeframes for modernizing its countless IT systems.

GAO has also reported that DoD does not have adequate guidance to ensure that any new IT systems only move into development if the Department can document that they meet certain requirements, such as any unique interface requirements.

Without making a judgment as to whether DoD should have adopted the new MyTravel system, I would suggest that this experience may offer some insight into business transformation more broadly at the Department, which brings me to my third and final point.

Through decades of careful research and audit work, GAO has identified traits of successful and unsuccessful reform efforts, and based on that work developed a set of key questions that can be used to assess reform efforts, questions such as to what extent has the agency established clear outcome-oriented goals and performance measures for the proposed reforms, and is there a dedicated implementation team that has the capacity, including staffing and resources, to manage the reform process.

These questions may sound simple, and to a certain extent they are, but so often we find that unsuccessful reform efforts missed the mark in at least one of these areas. I offer them as a resource for both Congress and DoD in examining the MyTravel case. Perhaps some of the answers will become evident through today's hearing.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and I look forward to your questions.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Ms. Field, and I would now like to recognize myself for 5 minutes of questioning.

As I said in my opening remarks, many of us are frustrated by the lack of accountability, the lack of transparency concerning what happened here. It is a bipartisan frustration. And, in fact, I think

this failure to adopt a new travel system stems from a lack of management accountability within DoD. And compared to the civilian world, we envision our military as a clear hierarchy in which orders are handed down and then carried out. The lines of authority seem blurred when it comes to DoD business operations. I think it is very obvious here.

The primary reason Under Secretary Cisneros pulled the plug on adoption of the new travel system in May was that too few DoD components were prepared to use it because they had not finished the necessary financial management system integration work. Is that correct, Mr. Register? Yes or no.

Mr. REGISTER. That is correct.

Ms. MACE. OK. I want to know how that happened. So, they knew this program was coming and yet seemingly did not do anything to prepare. Under what authority did Under Secretary Cisneros issue his October memo instructing DoD components to adopt MyTravel?

Mr. REGISTER. I cannot speak to the authorities of the Under Secretary. I will have to take that one for the record.

Ms. MACE. Right, which is why we actually asked him to be here, and now you are here, and now you are telling me it is above your pay grade. So, like why are you here if you cannot—I mean, this is literally the first question, and you cannot answer it.

Mr. REGISTER. I am here to represent the Department when it comes to the decisions related to the contract and the decision not to—

Ms. MACE. Was the Under Secretary delegated to that authority by the Secretary of Defense?

Mr. REGISTER. I will have to take that for the record, Chairwoman.

Ms. MACE. That is the second question that you cannot answer today.

So, why do you think component heads did not prioritize the adoption of the new system? Why did that happen?

Mr. REGISTER. Madam Chairwoman, the audit remediation requirements in pursuit of the overall audit readiness impacted the services' ability to integrate into the MyTravel platform.

Ms. MACE. OK. So, tell me in English, what does that mean? Nobody understands what you just said.

Mr. REGISTER. Madam Chairwoman, so—

Ms. MACE. I do not think this is funny. Like, I really do not. Now you are laughing at me. You are coming up here and you cannot even answer two of the first three questions, and you are now giving me some B.S. answer. I do not understand it. How much money was wasted on this?

Mr. REGISTER. Madam Chairwoman, I do not view the investment that was made in MyTravel as being a waste of money. As the Department has been trying to innovate in this travel space, we are taking—

Ms. MACE. Who decided that the best course of action in May was to cancel the contract?

Mr. REGISTER. That was a coordinated decision within the Department in coordination—

Ms. MACE. Who decided that?

Mr. REGISTER. The Under Secretary of Personnel and Readiness, in coordination with the Comptroller and Acquisition and Sustainment.

Ms. MACE. Do you know how they came to that decision?

Mr. REGISTER. It was based on the information that the program put forward and where we stood in terms of courses of action in terms of where to take MyTravel going forward within this fiscal year.

Ms. MACE. So, DoD justified that a sole-source contract for a new system just a few years ago by arguing that it was wasting a lot of money? They actually said that, under the existing system? In fact, there is a document that we have here. This is a document that is a justification for the sole-source contract. It is pretty redacted when you start it, and I do not really know why it is redacted. In fact, on page 4, the second paragraph, the first line, "The DoD has incurred "blank" in costs to modernize travel." They could not even tell us how much was spent to modernize travel either.

Ms. Field, I have about a minute left so since my first witness cannot answer really any relevant questions or answer them very well, my last few questions are for you. It seems like this project was moving along well for a few years before it went off the rails. Was there a change at some point in how the travel system replacement project was managed within DoD that contributed to the failure?

Ms. FIELD. There was a change. Specifically, the reform effort to create the MyTravel program had been run out of a cross-functional team that was overseen by the First Deputy, Chief Management Officer, and then the Chief Management Officer and the Reform Management Group. When those units were disbanded, when the Chief Management Officer position went away, there was a clear disruption in leadership for this effort. The extent to which that is one of the factors behind the demise of MyTravel I do not know, but it certainly would bear—

Ms. MACE. Is there anyone in charge of managing business functions across the DoD?

Ms. FIELD. Well, certainly the Chief Information Officer has a key role to play in managing business systems, but as of right now there are three chairs that sort of co-chair the Defense Business Council.

Ms. MACE. OK. Thank you, and I yield back. Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

In October 2022, the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Gilbert Cisneros, who is not here, issued a memorandum mandating—mandating—the use of MyTravel as, quote, "the single official travel system," unquote, and instructing all DoD organizations that are not currently integrated with MyTravel to, quote, "develop an interface with that system."

Seven months later, that instruction was rescinded. Mr. Register, why?

Mr. REGISTER. Ranking Member, that memo was rescinded because we were not getting the travel volume that we were attempting to get under the current contract, so a decision was then made that based on the low volume, low usage to date, and the low forecasted usage, given that we did not have a timeline for the services

to integrate, that is what led to the business decision to not exercise the \$44 million contract option.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So, travel had declined in DoD.

Mr. REGISTER. Ranking Member, no, not travel at writ large. It was limited use of the MyTravel capability.

Mr. CONNOLLY. But he had instructed that they were to use MyTravel.

Mr. REGISTER. That was the mandate for the fourth estate, the defense agencies and activities, was to utilize MyTravel. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So, you are saying people disregarded that instruction, and because of that, the Pentagon decided rather than enforce the memo from the man charged with the responsibility, they would rescind his instruction. That is how we are going to deal with saluting and obeying orders in the Pentagon, at least when it comes to travel.

Mr. REGISTER. Ranking Member, I do not necessarily agree with that statement. The MyTravel capability was not fully ready for all forms of travel. We were trying to build as much travel volume as possible since it was a subscription contract, the number of trips on the contract. But as we found out, at least through this last fiscal year, the agencies and activities preferred to travel within DTS, both from a usability standpoint and because DTS better supported audit readiness requirements.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Somebody gave a sole-source contract for MyTravel, right?

Mr. REGISTER. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Presumably, when you do that, award the contract, you have made a qualitative decision that that is the capability we need, and you have made a decision, we have to replace the capability we currently have for various inadequacies and weakness. Is that correct?

Mr. REGISTER. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So, I understand maybe a memo that is not a recession, but we are going to delay a little bit the implementation because of travel volume and for everyone to get with the program, but to rescind it is essentially to put up the white and flag and say we are not going to proceed anymore and keep on doing what you are doing in the old system. Would that be a fair interpretation of what happened?

Mr. REGISTER. Ranking Member, not exactly. Since the approach that the Department has taken with MyTravel from the outset has been an innovative, agile, cost-savings approach from the get-go, so as that production contract was let there was still development that was required. It was an agile development process. Given that the services could not get the ERPs integrated in time got us to this juncture this Fiscal Year where it made no business sense to continue and wait for that and exercise that next contract option, that it was just fiscally irresponsible.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Ms. Field, is that the analysis of GAO? Is that what happened?

Ms. FIELD. Well, again, we have not done an audit and I have limited information, but I would offer just a few thoughts. The first is that when you think about the bulk of travel that happens at

the Department it is by the services. They are the biggest components. So, if the services do not agree to make adjustments to their systems to connect to MyTravel, of course you do not have the volume of travel that you need to make the investment worthwhile.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Let me interrupt you there. The Under Secretary of Defense, civilian control, said, "This is the system. You will use it." What do you mean, services get to—what is that, odd referendum?

Ms. FIELD. So, we have seen, on more than one occasion, and this is just the latest, incidents in which the Department, at the OSD level, wants to reform a business operation enterprise-wide, and the services do not agree, and the reform efforts fail.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Chair, my time is up, but I certainly am prepared to join with you in insisting Mr. Cisneros come back for a subsequent hearing to account for this story.

Ms. MACE. Or else.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, we are nicer than that, but—

Ms. MACE. I am not. I am not. Not today.

Mr. CONNOLLY. No peaches for him.

Ms. MACE. No peaches for him, but maybe Mr. Timmons can be a little bit nicer than us today. But thank you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I am going to try to be productive with my 5 minutes. I am one of six Members of Congress that also serves in the Guard or the Reserves, out of 535. I actually have drill in August. I am currently CAC-ed in, and I am on the DTS website. I have personally had really, really bad experience with DTS. I have multiple times had to use my own resources to get to trainings, because flights were canceled.

And I have been texting with a number of people that I serve with in the South Carolina National Guard, and it is interesting because while I hate DTS, they actually think it is OK. The platform is OK. The issue is the manner in which the approvals are necessary to actually authorize the travel. So, I book my flight, and I get an authorization, and it does not get approved because probably three, four, or five people actually have to sign off on it. And that is a challenge because, one, I am in the Guard, and not everybody is active.

So, I guess my first question, do you have any data about the disparity between the approval ratings for DTS between active versus the Guard and Reserve components? Mr. Register, would you have any thoughts, even anecdotal?

Mr. REGISTER. I do not have any anecdotal references between the two. I can certainly understand, knowing—

Mr. TIMMONS. If you do not use it on a regular basis—

Mr. REGISTER. Exactly.

Mr. TIMMONS [continuing]. If you use it every 6 months, that can become a problem, and you do not know who to hound to make sure that they grant your approval.

Now I will say this, and I think it might give some of my colleagues some color to the challenge. MyTravel apparently was just horrific. I mean, it just did not work, and it was not functional. I guess the idea was to try to streamline all of these issues and provide some new technology to address this challenge, but it just did



not work. And I would imagine that it seemed like a really good idea, and once they started implementing it everybody said, “This just does not work.”

So, I do believe that our former colleague, Mr. Cisneros, should come and chat with us about this, but I have a feeling that is what he is going to say. He is going to say, “It seemed like a good idea at the time, and we tried to fix it, and we realized that the solution that we thought was the solution was actually way worse than the previous one.”

So, I guess, you know, I use Uber Eats a lot, and when he arrives at my door, I get a message saying, “The food has arrived. Come get it.” I mean, theoretically, the biggest challenge with DTS is the lack of real-time communication between the individual, the servicemember, and the approval authorities. I am assuming it is at least one, two, three, or four, depending on the individual’s rank.

Is there a way that you could add some sort of a notification component to DTS to streamline that process? Because it seems the biggest challenge is, one, people do not know how to use it—that is me. I do not know how to use it. I rely on other people for that. But two, it is the approval process. Is there a way to address that?

Mr. REGISTER. There are some system abilities to address that. In some regard, our hands are tied, so to speak, based on the Federal requirements of travel approval. So, there needs to be that accountability built into the system for audit purposes and that sort of thing. But I think DTS, quite honestly, has improved in the past three to 5 years, to help streamline that to some degree—

Mr. TIMMONS. And I will say this. I was commissioned June 10 of 2018, so I have been in 5 years now, and not until about, I do not know, 18 to 24 months ago I could not even get on my email or access any of the Air Force portals unless I was on base, using a particular computer. And even on base it was hard. So, we have made huge strides. The fact that I am able to use a MacBook Pro has made my life drastically easier.

And, you know, I think one thing that we need to think about when we are looking at this, there is a dollar component of it. The biggest problem is you are going to be giving a servicemember money that they are not owed, because when you figure that out later, they do not have that money, or often times they do not have that. So, we can look at it from that perspective.

But I guess the other thing, and I think the bigger problem is we need to address—I mean, I hate to even use this—it is a mental health issue for servicemembers. When you are sitting here trying to manage something that is not within your control that really should be easier, it really drives you up the wall. And I have had more frustrations trying to manage DTS than I care to talk about. But I do think that the Pentagon is trying to move it in the right direction, trying to improve, and I guess we can try to help them in that endeavor.

Thank you for being here, and with that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Timmons. I will now recognize Mr. Mfume for his 5 minutes of questioning.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank you for holding this hearing and share with you my expres-

sion of frustration also. I, for the life of me, just cannot understand why persons who are duly appointed refuse to show up at congressional hearings to discuss very important facts and details about the operation they are overseeing. I mean, that just makes no sense whatsoever. And there really is no explanation for it. I mean, this is how we get to subpoenas. You know, you invite, they do not show up. You invite again. They do not show up. And then, all of a sudden, there is an effort within the Committee to subpoena someone. It is not because we want to do it. This is the only way we can talk to people.

Mr. Register, I am not here to blame you because you are just carrying out the duty of a person who is above you. But it is frustrating, I can tell you that. And I do not even know that I have any questions because my questions will not be able to get answered. The Chair has just proven that. So, my frustration is sort of overflowing here.

I do have one question, though, for you, Ms. Field. Are you aware of Asif Khan at GAO?

Ms. FIELD. Mr. Asif Khan from our Financial Management and Assurance team, yes.

Mr. MFUME. Yes. He was kind enough to come here a couple of weeks ago. We did a joint hearing. And Mr. Asif Khan is the Director of Financial Management and Assurance at GAO. This was a joint hearing that we held on the DoD, and Mr. Khan highlighted the fact that there are over 400 systems in DoD. And when asked by the gentlewoman from South Carolina how many of those systems work, he said none of them, which just shocked me, and I think both sides of this Committee hearing room. None of them. Four hundred.

Then he went on to say that since 1995, DoD has been on a risk list. In other words, every year they pose a substantial risk in terms of their auditing and their financial management, and they get cited for it. But they were here asking that we sign off, again, on the appropriations bill so that they might be able to continue their work.

Four hundred financial systems. They do not communicate with each other. He said they do not have any controls, and so the information is not passed from one system to another, including the system that we are talking about here today, and that is this whole matter of travel and everything that might be related to it.

I am just flabbergasted. And Madam Chair, I would support whatever effort you and the Ranking Member should come up with to make sure that this does not happen. This is an affront to a democratic process, and I am sure it is an affront to men and women all over the country who are watching this and are saying to themselves, also, I cannot believe what you say because I see what you do. And then since you do not do anything, like show up at a duly called meeting, what you say, Mr. Cisneros, does not matter at all.

Let me go one step further, and while I am at it, I want to reiterate what the Ranking Member said regarding the problem that we are having from the other body, which is how we refer to the Senate, with the gentleman from Alabama, Mr. Tuberville, who has continued to hold up hundreds of DoD appointments, putting our

Nation at risk in a number of different ways, and creating a situation through this boycott to confirm people that is, in my estimation, just as damaging. And I want to mention that even though that is not the subject of this hearing because it is doing equal damage, I am sure.

So, I thank you both for doing your duty, for showing up, but I hope, Mr. Register, you take the word back, if it is not being taken back already, that there is near unanimity in this Committee for a better approach to our invitations to join and to give information to the American public.

Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Mfume. Not only an affront but offensive and thank you for your comments. We agree with you.

I would now like to recognize Mr. Khanna for his 5 minutes.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for your leadership. I just want to echo my colleagues' comments that it is unacceptable for the Honorable Gilbert Cisneros not to be here. Especially someone who has served in Congress should understand that they need to be here. And look, I worked at the Commerce Department. You know, the Under Secretary can show up. It is not the Secretary. I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary, and the Under Secretary has enough time to come to a congressional hearing. It is not like we are asking Secretary Austin to come.

And this issue is a concern. I mean, I have been outspoken about some of the fraud and abuse and waste in the Department of Defense, and this is one of the areas where there needs to be accountability. And to not be here answering questions really is not a good look. So, I would urge you to take this back to the Under Secretary, and I believe there is going to be bipartisan cooperation to have him come here whenever this will be convened again.

You know, this is one of the challenges with all of this. It exposes the technology gap in the Department of Defense. I mean, the idea that the Department of Defense still excludes many of its IT systems from FITARA is a real issue, and I would like to get your thoughts on that. And I would also like to get your thoughts, with Chair Mace last week we introduced the SEARCH Act, H.R. 4793, that would require agencies to use modern technology, like AI, large language models, to improve government search functions, to make information easily accessible to the American public.

Would implementing LLMs and modern AI technology help improve DoD websites, as this bill would specifically require the usage and implementation of AI and LLMs? Would it help improve, potentially, the travel system and MyTravel? Ms. Field?

Ms. FIELD. I think the issues with DoD's business systems are so vast, frankly, that what we need first, as the Department considers AI or any other technologies, are two things. One is a clear business enterprise roadmap, so that Department officials know what systems they are going to modernize, which legacy systems they are going to get rid of, how they are going to do it, when they are going to do it. And they need an updated, federated business enterprise architecture, something that the Department initially told us, at GAO, they would have by the end of last year. We do not have it, and we do not have a timeline for receiving it either.

Mr. KHANNA. I agree with that, but certainly you would agree that having modern AI technology, in general, for DoD functions would be a good thing.

Ms. FIELD. I think modernizing across the board to include AI certainly is a function that could show promise for the Department, yes.

Mr. KHANNA. Mr. Register?

Mr. REGISTER. I agree with that premise, and as it relates to MyTravel, I think we have proven that modern technology can be utilized, and a software-as-a-service capability does have promise. We just need to prioritize our financial integration and really dig into whether certain commercial offerings, subscription offerings, for example, at a firm, fixed price, are in the best interest of the government.

Mr. KHANNA. I appreciate both of your answers. I have enjoyed working with Chair Mace in the past on trying to modernize our government. In the last Congress, we did things with preparing the government for quantum. I am honored to be working with her on the SEARCH Act of AI.

But I also just want to echo that I support her efforts to hold accountability of the DoD travel system and will be working with her to make sure that we have the appropriate folks here to answer the questions.

With that I yield back.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Khanna, and in closing I want to thank our panelists again for their testimony today. I want to thank Mr. Khanna, too, for your leadership as well. We work together a lot. You do not see that a lot up here, but I appreciate your bipartisanship on this Committee, as always.

And in closing, I need to say something to you, Mr. Register, about this hearing today. On June 30, I wrote to Under Secretary Cisneros requesting documents that are relevant to this hearing. Specifically, I requested the unredacted version of this document of the Defense Travel Modernization Justification documentation and approval of the sole-source contract awarded to SAP to Concur. And in case the Department is confused, this is a document that I want in unredacted format that I just showed you, and I showed it earlier a couple of times. I asked to have it by July 14. Today is July 26. We are 12 days past the deadline, and I still have not received the document.

I would like it by the end of the week. Will you commit today to getting me this document, unredacted, for the Oversight Committee, by the end of the week?

Mr. REGISTER. Madam Chairwoman, the Department is continuing to review your request.

Ms. MACE. How long does it take the DoD to review a document, a five-page document, and whether or not they can deliver it unredacted? How long does that process take?

Mr. REGISTER. Madam Chairwoman, the Department is continuing to review your request.

Ms. MACE. Your answers are such bullshit. Like I really, like, take that back to Under Secretary Cisneros, that the next time we have this hearing, he better show up. I am just sick and tired of the bullshit, like truly. You know, you could not deliver the docu-

ment, and you are sitting here smirking at me, like this is some freaking joke to you. This is not funny. You guys waste billions of dollars every single year. You are coming here mocking us. We have questions that you cannot answer. You guys cannot deliver a simple document.

Your time is up. You do not get to speak, and this is my Committee, so turn your microphone off.

But you cannot deliver the documents, you cannot deliver the witness, and you cannot deliver the answers. And you are just sitting there, smirking, with your smug look on your face, laughing at us, and you think that this is respectful of the institution, the institution of Congress, the institution of men and women who put on the uniform every single day and put their lives on the line. You come here and you act like this. It is an insult to the American people.

So, I would suggest that you get a little professionalism and respect for all of us up here, Republican and Democrat, and next time you show up, show up with answers and show up with the witness that we asked for.

So, with that, and without objection, all Members will have 5 legislative days within which to submit materials, to submit any additional written questions for the witnesses. They can do that. They will be forwarded to the witnesses for their response.

If there is no further business, and there is not, without objection, because this hearing is absolutely over, we stand adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:30 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

