



**STATEMENT OF**

**SORAYA CORREA**

Chief Procurement Officer  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

FOR A HEARING ON

**“Part 1: Oversight of the Administration's Effort to Protect the Integrity of Our Nation's  
Medical Supply Chain”**

BEFORE THE

**U.S. Senate Committee on Finance**

July 28, 2020

## **Introduction**

Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Wyden, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss how procurement enables supply chain integrity at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department).

I am Soraya Correa, the Department's Chief Procurement Officer. I have been a career civil servant for more than 39 years, and I am proud to say that I have been with DHS since its inception. At DHS, I have served in various leadership positions in procurement and program management including as the Head of the Contracting Activity for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Associate Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Immigration Records and Identity Services (formerly the Enterprise Services Directorate). I am deeply committed to the missions of the Department.

In my current position, I oversee the work of 10 contracting organizations composed of approximately 1,400 contracting professionals that provide operational procurement services to DHS Components, Directorates, and offices across the country. In fiscal year 2019, DHS procurement professionals obligated \$23.9 billion through over 74,000 procurement actions. My office manages the Department's procurement policy and processes and provides enterprise-level procurement tools and contract vehicles to support the DHS contracting organizations. I am an advocate for innovative procurement approaches, reducing administrative burdens, and ensuring the procurement workforce has the tools necessary to conduct their work with integrity to enable the DHS mission.

I am honored to serve in this role and to lead the hardworking professionals who procure the goods and services to meet the Department's mission needs. We are proud to buy a wide array of products and services including the supplies needed to respond to disasters or other national emergencies.

## **Procurement Enables Supply Chain Integrity**

As our country and the Department were confronted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the DHS procurement organization quickly adapted and continues to meet mission needs. Our organization understands emergency contracting operations and managing supply chain risk, including the importance of ensuring contracts and orders are awarded to only those contractors who are deemed responsive and responsible in accordance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

### *Policy and Oversight Actions*

As with other major disaster declarations and national emergencies, I invoked all special emergency contracting flexibilities within my authority under the FAR as the DHS Senior Procurement Executive, immediately after the President declared a national emergency for COVID-19. Specifically, and working in partnership with the Department's Chief Financial Officer, I increased the purchase card limit so that the Department, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in its emergency response capacity, could more easily procure larger volumes of emergency supplies and services. I eliminated certain paperwork requirements so that DHS could purchase COVID-19 related supplies and services quickly, cutting the normal procurement lead time from weeks to days or even hours.

I also instituted improvements within the regulatory framework so the DHS acquisition team, including program managers, contracting professionals and contractors, could continue work without disruption in a virtual environment. This effort included eliminating the requirement for hard copy documents, wet signatures, notarization, seals on bonds and other scenarios. These flexibilities allowed DHS, including FEMA in its emergency response role, to quickly support urgent needs for COVID-19 supplies and services within the regulatory framework. These flexibilities went into effect in March 2020 and will remain in effect as appropriate to ensure continued timely support of COVID-19 response and recovery operations. Throughout this process, DHS procurement professionals performed required contractor responsibility determinations before awarding a contract.

### *Meaningful Communications*

In early March 2020, I began communicating with industry and DHS contracting staff on a regular basis to ensure that everyone was aware of the flexibilities available to them. I regularly held conference calls with the contracting activities, legal counsel, and others to ensure DHS Components had all the information and tools necessary to respond to mission needs. As a broader DHS community, we answered industry questions and collaborated on ways to accomplish our mission remotely or on site as essential employees.

In April 2020, we initiated weekly virtual meetings with industry associations to discuss issues related to COVID-19. These discussions focused on the supply chain and how industry could support DHS operational requirements in response to the pandemic. We also hosted industry events focused on return to the workplace. In these sessions, we discussed and addressed industry's concerns and perspective as they plan to return to the workplace. These industry association meetings continue because they have proven to be an exceptional way to stay connected and transparent with business entities supporting or interested in supporting DHS with the COVID-19 response. We not only answer their questions, but also provide critical and timely information for them to disseminate to their members.

### *Process Enhancements*

As we began to see a significant surge in incoming inquiries from industry and offers of help to DHS in response to the pandemic, I established two teams at DHS composed of subject matter experts to support our COVID-19 response efforts: the Supplier Verification Team and the Procurement and Acquisition Innovation Response (PAIR) Team. These teams serve as centralized points to expeditiously review, vet, and refer information about companies offering COVID-19 solutions to the appropriate Components or offices within DHS. These teams examine the potential viability of a supplier based on several factors including the extent to which the supplier has been in the business of selling the related products or services. The teams compile reports and disseminate them to the DHS contracting organizations and senior program officials. The work of these teams supplement the Contracting Officers' efforts and provide information to support them as they conduct market research and perform responsibility determinations. Once these teams provide market research information, it becomes the responsibility of the acquisition team to conduct further checks and/or testing of the products.

The Supplier Verification Team sub-divided itself into two teams; one focuses on personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e., aligned with the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act* (CARES Act) definition of PPE) and the other focuses on non-PPE (e.g., COVID-19 Test Kits). Early in the pandemic response, we recognized that shortages of PPE would affect the DHS frontline mission operations, as well as FEMA's role in supporting emergency

response efforts. Thus, the Supplier Verification Team researches vendor leads, conducts phone screening, and vets vendors through publicly available databases, such as the Better Business Bureau and the System for Award Management. This vetting process examines the legitimacy of a supplier based on several factors including the extent to which the supplier has been in the business of selling the specific PPE product, has existing inventory located within the United States, has existing mechanisms to receive the products domestically, including existing contracts or relationships with manufacturers, the model numbers of products offered, and whether the supplier would require for DHS to pay for the product in advance of receipt. This initial review provides valuable market research information for our procurement professionals who formally enter into the contracts and orders for PPE.

The PAIR Team, unlike the Supplier Verification Team, reviews and researches industry inquiries that offer innovative approaches and solutions submitted in support of DHS's response to COVID-19. The PAIR Team conducts market research to determine the potential viability of offered solutions and shares their findings with program officials and contracting personnel across DHS. Industry capabilities and offerings reviewed to date include information technology (IT) solutions for contact tracing, health screening, alternatives to PPE, disinfection products, medical supplies, and others.

As part of the federal efforts to scour the globe for PPE and consider all opportunities, FEMA and its federal partners explored thousands of leads both across the country and overseas. Whether a lead came from the White House Coronavirus Task Force, Members of Congress representing businesses in their State, or through an enterprise's unaffiliated inquiry, FEMA processed all leads through standard vetting procedures and the federal procurement process. To be clear, DHS follows the law and all applicable procedures, including those prescribed by the FAR, in entering into contracts. To ensure the integrity of the process, FEMA established a firewall between those responsible for identifying leads and those responsible for accomplishing the purchase.

Additionally, my office, in partnership with the Department's Office of the Chief Readiness Support Officer, established a centralized ordering process to utilize the funds DHS received under Section 3618 of the CARES Act for Departmental PPE needs.

#### *Innovative Solutions*

We have used various methods across the Department to seek innovative solutions that support our COVID-19 response effort. I have long been an advocate of innovative approaches to our work, and the COVID-19 response is no exception.

FEMA used an open solicitation that immediately alerted industry to all the COVID-19 PPE and related items that FEMA needed. The open solicitation approach covered a broad number of items and saved significant time compared to posting separate solicitations for each item. FEMA's approach avoided a lengthy evaluation process while obtaining necessary items at fair and reasonable prices as quickly as possible.

DHS released a general solicitation in April 2020 using our Commercial Solutions Opening Pilot Program Authority for innovative commercial solutions relevant to the DHS response to COVID-19 and other microbial threats. The purpose of the solicitation is to obtain innovative commercial products that may help meet our new and emerging mission needs that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and to prepare us as we consider future outbreaks or similar

threats. Vendors may propose solutions in any of several broad categories to include PPE alternatives, decontamination or disinfection solutions, contact tracing solutions, screening solutions, and other IT categories. The solicitation will remain open until August 31, 2020.

In addition, we partnered with other DHS offices and industry to identify innovative ways to obtain and distribute needed supplies and to enable greater use of the supplies in our inventory. For example, the DHS procurement team worked with U.S. Customs and Border Protection to obtain a donation from Exxon Mobil Chemical Company of medical-grade hand sanitizer for distribution by the FEMA National Response Coordination Center. Approximately 20,000 gallons were delivered weekly to first responders and hospitals over a six-week period.

### **Conclusion**

The Chief Procurement Office remains fully committed to ensuring the Department has the products and services needed to fulfill its critical mission to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. We will continue to look for every opportunity to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our policies and processes to ensure the integrity of the supply chain throughout the procurement process. We will seek out new ideas and innovations to get the best possible solutions to the people in the field as quickly as possible, while being good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I look forward to your questions.



**Homeland  
Security**

# Biography

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## **Soraya Correa** Chief Procurement Officer

A 2018 Distinguished Presidential Rank Award winner, Soraya Correa was appointed as the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Chief Procurement Officer in January 2015. In her capacity as the Senior Procurement Executive, Ms. Correa is responsible for the management direction of the acquisition system of DHS, including implementation of the unique acquisition policies, regulations, and standards of the agency. She oversees the work of ten Heads of Contracting Activity that provide operational procurement services to DHS components, directorates, and offices. She has initiated and led several key efforts designed to improve how the 1,400 member DHS procurement workforce focuses as a team on finding the right solutions to enable and support the DHS mission. These efforts include the Acquisition Innovations in Motion (AIiM) framework, including the Procurement Innovation Lab (PIL), and the Education, Development, Growth, and Excellence (EDGE) mentoring program. Additionally, Ms. Correa has continued to grow and enhance efforts including the Homeland Security Acquisition Institute, the Acquisition Professional Career Program, the Strategic Sourcing Program Office, and Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

Ms. Correa has been with DHS since its inception serving in key leadership positions including Head of Contracting Activity for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Associate Director of the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Enterprise Services Directorate.

Ms. Correa has also held leadership positions at other federal agencies including the Naval Sea Systems Command, General Services Administration, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Her accomplishments as a leader are well recognized by the government and industry communities. She has received awards including the Secretary's Award for Excellence, Management Support Awards, Federal 100 recognition, Public Sector Partner of the Year, Top Women in Tech, and several other accolades that reflect her commitment to the acquisition workforce, procurement innovation, and promoting meaningful communications with industry.