



April 21, 2016

Dear LTG Lyons,

I am writing to you today in the hope that the International Association of Movers (IAM) can solicit your personal engagement in order to find a way ahead for the future success of the Defense Personal Property System (DPS).

For almost a month DPS has been a nightmare for the industry. Access to the system has been spotty at best and for long sequences completely unavailable. This is just the latest outage. Industry also experienced significant outages this past December and January. Outages and system instability is becoming the norm rather than the exception for DPS. We must collaboratively find a way to insure DPS is a reliable and stable system. We are on the cusp of our busy Peak Season and if we are forced to go through a similar experience in the coming months it will be a disaster for all of the Defense Personal Property Program (DP3) stakeholders, including the service members.

An issue that further exacerbates this situation is the poor communication that takes place when we experience one of these outages. The DPS Program Office and the SDDC Personal Property Directorate are the entities responsible for communicating with the industry and the Military Services. There seems to be a lack of communication between SDDC and the DPS PMO which leads to either huge gaps in communication or no communication at all with the other stakeholders. This has to change.

We need a communication plan, as well as, a written contingency plan put in place for those times that DPS is unavailable. Shipments need to continue to move even when the system is unavailable and currently there is no documented plan to map out how that is to occur. What process should we use to accept new awards, is there a standard process to utilize in requesting accessorial pre-approvals, how can we accomplish capacity blackouts, should TSPs have the ability to refuse shipments be considered during outages, can military member claims be handled outside of the system when it is not available? These are just a few of the issues that must be addressed each time the system goes down. We must have a single point of reference so all stakeholders have the same understanding of how to proceed, preferably standardized across all of the Military Services.

It appears that all of the recent outages follow a new DPS release. It's apparent that significant and thorough system testing isn't being done prior to each new release. On a number of occasions IAM has offered up members of our DPS User Group to assist in testing new DPS releases and only on the rarest of occasions have any of the industry partners been engaged. We are incredulous as to why industry is not engaged, particularly in testing aspects of the system that are almost 100% industry related functionalities.

We have seen very little, if any, significant DPS development in the last few years. We are briefed on development schedules but it seems at every briefing timelines have "shifted to the right." We want to see

DPS and DP3 reach Full Operational Capability (FOC), however, at their current development pace we question if that will ever be achieved. It was IAM that pushed for the Committee language below, which focuses on DPS, found in the FY 2016 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA):

Defense Personal Property System

The committee recognizes the difficult task the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command has in managing the permanent change of station moves of thousands of military families each year. The committee notes that in 2013, representatives from the moving industry and Department of Defense met to discuss a complete redesign of the Defense Personal Property System (DPS) online module in an effort to make it easier for service members to more accurately track household goods and file claims for damaged items, as the module has for years been characterized as cumbersome and problematic.

The committee notes that a contract was awarded in 2013 to improve the functionality and usability of the Web-based DPS system. However, the committee remains concerned about the lack of progress in reforming the functionality of the system and that the DPS program management office has not issued the fiscal year 2015 development schedule to implement system enhancements and efficiencies.

The committee encourages the Surface Deployment and Distribution Command to press for greater accountability and responsiveness in the development and execution of improvements to the Defense Personal Property System.

We do not believe that there has been any “press for greater accountability and responsiveness in the development and execution of improvements to the Defense Personal Property System.” DPS is failing and we believe it will continue to falter without direct engagement from the Command’s leadership.

The Association stands ready to assist in any way necessary to ensure that DPS remains robust and that its development continues successfully toward FOC.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles L. White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles L. White, CAE, M.Ed.
Senior Vice President
International Association of Movers