

**TESTIMONY FOR STEVE EKin; RE: GSA WEAPONS PROGRAM**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2016**

**RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

**WASHINGTON, DC**

Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member Connolly and Honored Members of the Committee. I am Steve Ekin, the Director of the Georgia State Agency for Surplus Property, for the Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS). I have been employed there since 2002. In my position, I am responsible for both the Georgia Federal Surplus Personal Property Program (FSPP) and the Georgia State Surplus Program (SSP). As manager of the FSPP, I manage the GSA Weapons Program for the state.

I will be testifying in my capacity as the current President of the National Association of State Agencies for Surplus Property (NASASP). NASASP is a 501 (c) (6) organization, whose members are comprised of the 56 State Agencies for Surplus Property (SASPs). The SASPs partners with and are essentially the states' agents for the US General Services Administration (GSA) which oversees the FSPP.

The FSPP is a highly scrutinized Federal programs. We are routinely reviewed and audited by the Federal government, our own State governments and state legislatures. We conduct annual inventories on all Federal property and we must provide accountability, adequate security, approval of qualified recipients and compliance to all terms and restrictions based on Federal Management Regulations. We do this on a daily basis. Any discrepancies must be reported to the local authorities, GSA and if advised by GSA, the US Department of Justice and our State's Attorney General's Office. The SASPs and NASASP take these responsibilities very seriously.

Since 1999, the SASPs have acquired and redistributed to qualified law enforcement agencies (LEAs), thousands of weapons through the GSA Weapons Program. At least 29 SASPs acquired the weapons which consisted primarily of handguns of different types, rifles, also of different types and to a lesser degree shotguns, sub-machine guns and grenade launchers. Approximately 831 different law enforcement agencies acquired these weapons for their various law enforcement uses.

These agencies represent state, county and local governments across the country, along with some colleges and universities. Many of these agencies are small and rural in nature. In these types of agencies, many times each officer is responsible for buying their own weapons. The result is that a number of different kinds of ammunition must then be purchased as well for both practice and intended use. This is very costly to a small LEA. By using the GSA Weapons Program, the SASPs are able to help the LEAs acquire similar weapons and therefore purchase the same types of ammunition. Conversely, many of our urban departments need large

quantities of firearms which are just as financially restrictive. Either way, the program allows tremendous savings for our cash-strapped communities.

Over the years that the SASPs have participated in the GSA Weapons Program, we have found GSA to be instructional, informative, communicative and conscientious about the Program. In the beginning, there was a great deal of instruction and education. That continued on a routine basis throughout the years. GSA would often come to our National meetings to give updates, review procedures and answer our questions. They would also provide training along with their eligibility and compliance training classes, held routinely throughout the years, on the Weapons Program. They would correspond with individual SASPs when requested and sometimes when not to “checkup” and see how things were going. Their personnel seemed professional and well-trained in their dealings with the SASPs.

During the short time we have had to prepare for this hearing, we have been able to poll seven of the top states using the GSA Weapons Program. Those states include Georgia, Texas, Oklahoma, Missouri, California, South Carolina and Pennsylvania. All of the states agree on the benefits of the Program to the LEAs, but they all voiced the same concern, namely, the record keeping of GSA. Each state underwent inventory checks with GSA and discrepancies were indicated. In many cases the number and types of weapons did not match between the SASP and GSA. In some cases the recipient did not match. After investigation, many of the discrepancies were resolved without incident or criminal evidence. Most cases came down to the recipient not understanding the rules or inadvertently not following them. GSA has always been very good to work with to remedy the situation first instead of just assigning blame, especially where the possibility exists that the recipient is not at fault. For example, sometimes weapons were properly destroyed and recorded and reported to GSA, but their inventory still showed those weapons on the SASP inventory.

NASASP and the SASP stand ready to assist Congress, GSA, and the Federal government to make changes in the Weapons Program and improvements. My officers and I would be glad to provide any follow up needed from our States and Association. We would also be happy to answer any further questions in this very important matter.

Thank you.

## Steve Ekin Biography

Steve Ekin serves as the Director of the Surplus Property Division. Prior to joining DOAS, Mr. Ekin was the Director of Operations for an international import company where he was responsible for daily operations and logistics of a high volume distribution/manufacture facility. Mr. Ekin earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the University of Phoenix and is a Certified Professional Property Administrator from the National Property Management Association. He currently services as the President of the National Association State Agencies for Surplus Property (NASASP) and is active in the Investment Recovery Association. He is retired from the US Coast Guard