

ACC TODAY

U.S. Army Contracting Command

Winter 2013



BETTER BUSINESS PRACTICES

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View from the top

Veterans in the workplace

ACC Acquisition Awards



VIEW FROM THE TOP

Process improvements at ACC-Redstone

By Cathy Dickens,
Executive Director,
Army Contracting Command-Redstone

Over the past 12 months, Army Contracting Command-Redstone has significantly focused on continuous process improvement initiatives in multiple areas.

It is absolutely critical that well-defined processes and internal controls are in place to mitigate the effects of an inexperienced workforce responsible for an increasingly complex workload.

A Lean Six Sigma event was conducted on peer reviews for procurements of \$50 million and below to increase the quality and improve timeliness. Personnel across functional lines to include contracting, customers, legal, policy, small business and competition advocate participated in the event.

When the entire process was identified, there were a number of steps that were creating unnecessary wait time and it was evident some of the reviews were conducted by individuals with little to no experience in the type of acquisition they were reviewing.

This resulted in an average time of 72 days for the entire review and, in some cases, the quality of review did not add the level of value that the contracting officers expected. As a result of the team working together, an improved process was implemented with individuals with the right skill sets assigned for a 14-day period and ready to immediately begin a peer review.

In addition, an automated process utilizing the milestone database is being fully implemented, reducing wait time. Pilot programs have been conducted with reduced timelines of less than 30 days and improved quality.

The next event that the team is reviewing will be the justification and approval process with the same goals of improved quality and reduced timelines. In addition to lean events, there is a renewed emphasis for training specialists and contracting officers in cost and price analysis that is paying high dividends.

This is an area that is critical for ACC-RSA due to the high volume on sole source, high-dollar procurements. The training is conducted by the ACC-RSA contracting center university program and takes individuals back to the basics of proposal analysis, good documentation and negotiating a fair deal. Practical exercises and tips are provided throughout the training.

Many contract specialists with years of experience have praised the training as being one of the best courses and most practical to assist them in performing their duties.

ACC-RSA recognizes and embraces the ACC vision to be a premier contracting organization. Continuous improvement and learning for our workforce is an essential element in achieving this vision.

ACC TODAY



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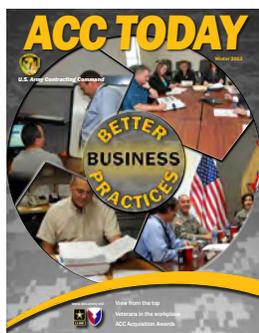
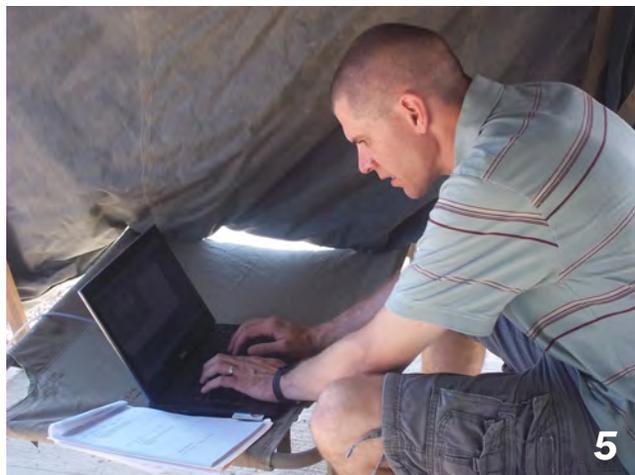
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Contracting Supports Jackal Stone

By Rachel Clark
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Members of the 409th Contracting Support Brigade participated in Jackal Stone 2012, a Special Operations Command Europe multinational special forces partnership-building exercise conducted in Croatia in September.

The brigade, headquartered in Kaiserslautern, Germany, provided contracting support at five locations across Croatia in support of the mission.

The 409th CSB's 624th Contingency Contracting Team, part of the 903rd Contingency Contracting Battalion, Wiesbaden, Germany, started planning a year ago for JS12 and integrated with the SOCEUR logistics team to ensure that all contracting requirements for the exercise were met.

"Getting our contracting teams engaged early in the planning stages ensures open communication and leads to better strategic planning," said Col. William Bailey, commander, 409th CSB. "Early integration is critical to the success of the mission."

The team, in conjunction with support provided by the 409th CSB's Kaiserslautern-based Theater Contracting Center, awarded six contracts worth more than \$1.9 million.



Jackal Stone 2012 is an annual joint and combined special operations designed to enhance capabilities and interoperability, build mutual respect among special operations forces, and share doctrinal and training concepts, tactics, techniques and procedures. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tyler Placie)

"What we do as contracting specialists is critical to the mission," said Staff Sgt. Joshua Thompson, 624th CCT. "While supporting SOCEUR during this exercise, we weren't necessarily in the fight but

kilometers from where we are running operations," said Sgt. 1st Class William Rawe, 624th CCT.

JS12 was also a learning environment for newer contracting

***"Getting our contracting teams engaged early in the planning stages ensures open communication and leads to better strategic planning."
Col. William Bailey***

our support kept them in the fight."

The contracts provided logistical support for approximately 1,700 personnel from 18 NATO and Partnership for Peace nations, covering everything from food, vehicles, life support services, fuel, a boat lease, and construction materials, but not without their own logistical challenges.

"Locating reliable vendors in the immediate area was a challenge. Most of the supplies that we are procuring are coming from sources that are located more than 100

professionals.

"This exercise has been an excellent opportunity for the team to gain experience with all aspects of the contracting process. They've been exposed to many contracting tasks," said Maj. Jessica Kovach, contracting officer and team leader, 624th CCT.

Contracting professionals get the job done at Austere Challenge 2012

By Rachel Clark
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Amid bombings, rockets and an embassy attack, contracting professionals from the 409th Contracting Support Brigade continued to support Austere Challenge 2012 in Tel Aviv, Israel, Sept. 9-Nov. 22.

The 644th Contingency Contracting Team from Kaiserslautern, Germany, and a civilian contracting officer from the Theater Contracting Center, deployed in support of the exercise.

According to the U. S. European Command website, the mission of AC12 was aimed at improving defensive capabilities between the U.S. and Israel against a variety of threats. The exercise included unit field training and scenario-driven opportunities as well as computer-simulated exercises designed to improve interoperability.

Shortly before the conclusion of

Being able to accompany the CCT and see the work in progress was a unique experience.” Melissa Lynn

the exercise, there was a reminder of the real-world political unrest in the region. Hamas militia fired rockets at Tel Aviv, a lone aggressor attacked the U.S. Embassy and a bus was bombed near the Israel Ministry of Defense compound.

Because of the attacks, U.S. personnel were evacuated from Israel. Members of the 644th CCT remained to provide continuing contracting support to U.S. forces in country.

“We still managed to work on our contracts, and held meetings

with numerous U.S. and foreign agencies,” said Maj. Jong Lee, 644th CCT team lead.

Despite the escalation of violence in the region, the team managed to complete all contracts for AC12, valued at more than \$390,000.

The 644th CCT was among the first U.S. forces to arrive in

September with about 20 other Army and Air Force personnel.

“We were the first ones in and the last ones to leave the country,” Lee said. “After the main body redeployed, I was designated as the officer-in-charge in Tel Aviv, ensuring that all military and civilians left the country.”

Part of the mission for the contracting team was to conduct market research and gather vendor information through cooperative working relationships with the embassy, Israel, Defense Contract



Staff Sgt. John Wycoki, a contracting specialist, 644th Contingency Contracting Team, works a contract in support of Austere Challenge 2012. Wycoki deployed to Israel in support of the bilateral air-defense exercise between the U.S. and Israel. (U.S. Army Photo)

Management Agency, and U.S. Air Forces in Europe.

Some of the items the team contracted for included generators, environmental control units, non-tactical vehicles, tents and laundry services.

“The overall experience and great support by the 644th contracting team exceeded the standard and established a higher bar for those that follow,” said Dawn Widhalm, plans and exercise officer, U.S. Army Europe.

Melissa Lynn, Theater Contracting Center exercise officer, provided contracting support during the exercise and mentored members of the onsite contracting team.

“Being able to accompany the CCT and see the work in progress was a unique experience,” said Lynn. “As a contracting officer, we are not often given the opportunity to see this. This experience was extremely beneficial, and I think this is something that should be explored for future military exercises.”

Disabled veterans prove to be more than just able employees

By Larry D. McCaskill
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An operations and intelligence noncommissioned officer, Sgt. 1st Class Scott Barkalow, was part of a mounted patrol in Eastern Afghanistan in February 2003 when his vehicle was hit by an improvised explosive device.

Bleeding profusely, Barkalow's severed leg landed in his buddy's lap as his friend worked on saving his life. The reality of the moment and understanding that his leg was never coming back didn't set in right away for obvious reasons.

Fast forwarding to 2004, after numerous operations and hours of rehabilitation and physical therapy, Barkalow walked, with the help of prosthesis, into a new job with the federal government.

"I can give thanks to a lot of people and organizations associated with the U.S. Army for the speed to which I was able to go back to work," said Barkalow. "My grandfather had always told me a man's got two options in life, go to work or go to jail. I went back to work."

Barkalow, currently a security specialist intern with the Army Contracting Command's Deputy Chief of Staff Intelligence and Security G2, is one of more than 1,400 veterans working within the command and one of more than 22.7 million living veterans nationwide according to the Department of Veteran Affairs website.

According to the Department of Army Office Chief of Public Affairs website, approximately 130,000

Soldiers leave the Army each year. The Office of Personnel Management 2011 statistics show that almost one in four of 2.1 million federal employees is a veteran. Of those, more than one million federal jobs support the military.

Within ACC, that translates to more than one out of every five employees having served in the military. Barkalow fits inside the even smaller subcategory of disabled American veterans, one of about two dozen within ACC.

"Veterans are important within the federal government and especially in positions that support the military," said William Baxter, ACC Deputy Chief of Staff Human Capital G1. "They bring the knowledge and experience they received from the result of military training and performing the task and that translates into a valuable employee. They also have been on the receiving end of support from federal civilians and offer insight as to what uniformed military personnel expect from their civilian counterparts."

When applying for a government job, wounded veterans receive additional points because of their sacrifice to the nation but some prefer not to disclose their status publicly.

"It's a matter of personal preference," said one ACC disabled veteran who prefers to remain anonymous. "My disability is invisible and I want to keep it that



A disabled veteran, Scott Barkalow, a security specialist intern with the Army Contracting Command's Deputy Chief of Staff Intelligence and Security G2, is one of more than 1,400 veterans working within the command. (U.S. Army Photo by Larry D. McCaskill)

way. To look at me you wouldn't know I had a disability."

Whether they disclose their disabilities publicly or not, Baxter said wounded veterans bring skills to the workplace that employers look for.

"The number of wounded warriors within the federal government, and working in general, is probably higher as many do not acknowledge their disability publicly," Baxter said. "It's a matter of pride. Many want to be accepted for what they bring to the table, a strong work ethic and the ability to do the job. The last thing many of them want is get a job based on something other than their abilities."

Not all veterans with disabilities received their injuries on the battlefield.

While playing intramural sports, U.S. Air Force Maj. Alfort Belin III, lost sight in his right eye after a violent collision.

Whether they disclose their disabilities publicly or not, Baxter said wounded veterans bring skills to the workplace that employers look for.

“The impact broke my orbital and facial bones, and I was knocked unconscious. When I awoke, my vision was lost in my right eye. It’s diagnosed as optic nerve trauma,” said Belin. “I’ve had surgery and plenty of rehabilitation until they finally diagnosed my vision loss was permanent and medically retired me.”

Now a civilian procurement analyst with the 414th Contracting Support Brigade in Vicenza, Italy, Belin said he relishes the opportunity to continue serving his country and helping to mold the leaders of tomorrow.

“I was very lucky in finding a position with the Army,” Belin said.

“Focusing on wounded warriors who can lead, manage, multi-task, and become an instant impact on an organization is an asset in any agency. There are a lot of wounded warriors like myself that loved to serve our country but are no longer medically fit to do so. Hiring a wounded warrior gives the warrior a sense of pride in serving the country in a different capacity.”

ACC employees recognized with two U.S. Army acquisition awards

By ACC Office of Public and Congressional Affairs

Two U.S. Army Contracting Command Soldiers have been named as recipients of U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center



Sgt. 1st Class Eric Sears

2012 Army Acquisition Awards.

The awards were presented at a Nov. 7 luncheon in Arlington, Va., in a ceremony that paid tribute to the uniformed and civilian professionals working behind the scenes providing combatant commanders and their Soldiers the weapons and equipment they need.

“I’m proud to see members of the command recognized for their valued efforts,” said Maj. Gen. Camille M. Nichols, ACC commanding general. “The effort put forth by the ACC workforce is nothing short of phenomenal. The awards are well deserved. Kudos to all and thanks for the good work that you do.”

The award recipients are: Secretary of the Army Acquisition Director of the Year at the



Col. Michael Hoskin

Colonel Level, Col. Michael Hoskin, former commander of the 413th Contracting Support Brigade, Fort Shafter, Hawaii and Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) Contracting Noncommissioned Officer Award for Contracting Excellence – Sgt 1st Class Eric Sears, 414th CSB, Vicenza, Italy.

ACC-RI garners excellence in acquisition awards

By Liz Adrian
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ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, ILL. -

Several members of Army Contracting Command-Rock Island recently garnered one of two 2012 David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Awards.

Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta announced the winners Nov. 2. The winners all worked on the Small Business Set Aside solicitation for mortars and artillery through the Project Manager Combat Ammunition Systems.

According to the announcement, the Packard award is “a prestigious Department of Defense recognition of an organization that has demonstrated superior management and accomplishment in the successful execution of one or more of the Better Buying Power acquisition efficiency initiatives.” It recognizes contributions from military and civilian organizations, teams or groups in the areas of innovation and best acquisition practices.

Donna Ponce, contracting officer in the PM CAS Artillery and Mortars Branch, said that PM CAS submitted the nomination for the award.

“I was so honored that they submitted it,” said Ponce. “I had no idea they were nominating the team. It’s really nice that everyone was recognized because it was truly a team effort. This acquisition was a huge undertaking which resulted in the award of more than 30 small business contracts.”

According to the award citation, a single acquisition strategy was successfully implemented for the procurement of 53 artillery and mortar components totaling \$2.7 billion. This strategy was executed by issuing only two requests for



Thirteen ACC-Rock Island employees are among the recipients of the 2012 David Packard Excellence in Acquisition Award. They include (back row, left to right): Chet Jacks, Stephanie Boozer, Beth Patrizi, Katie Crawford, Katie Crompton Silvis and Adam Elmore; (front row, left to right): Pamela Kennerly-Ignatius, Carrie Lansing, Donna Ponce, Debbie Trainor and Katie Young. Adelaide Tkatch and Ted Stanley are not pictured. (U.S. Army Photo)

proposals: one from ACC-RI and one from ACC-New Jersey.

The extraordinary demand was due to a surge in foreign military sales requirements for artillery and mortar items during the past five years which had depleted five-year production contracts within two years, particularly small business items. The typical acquisition process was too lengthy and costly to address these demands.

The strategy, a 10-year multiple award, indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity, best value, 100 percent small business set aside featured many contracting tools not typically used in ammunition procurement. The innovative strategy created flexible and efficient buying that can

deliver cost-effective ammunition while enhancing opportunity to small business.

Several interns were assigned to work on the team.

“It was a great learning experience for new interns that were able to work on something from pre-solicitation through award,” said Ponce. “It was really a neat experience.”

Awarded at the Pentagon ceremony were: Ponce, ACC-RI; Rene Kiebler, PM CAS deputy project manager; Maryellen Lukac, PM CAS director, Business Management Division; Martin Moratz, PM CAS chief, Conventional Ammunition Division; and Arnold Rappaport, PM CAS artillery team leader.

In addition to the ceremony, Ponce and Rappaport were invited to the Senior Leaders' Acquisition Training Conference at Fort Belvoir, Va., Nov. 14.

"They wanted us to do a 15-minute presentation on lessons learned and what we did in executing the principals of Better Buying Power that led to us receiving these awards," said Ponce.

Michael Hutchison, ACC-RI

executive director and soon to be ACC deputy to the commanding general, said he is proud of the dedication and thoughtfulness that members of the team showed throughout the past four years.

"The Packard Award is a well-deserved honor that highlights the time and effort these team members put into this strategy," said Hutchison. "They worked diligently to help create a strategy

that provides real competition for small business, an innovative buying approach, and, most importantly, cost-effective and reliable ammunition to the war fighter."

The Packard award is sponsored by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics.

The other award recipient recognized was the DDG 51 Shipbuilding Program Office (Navy).

Sinnard earns Outstanding Performer award

By Mark Diamond
Surface Deployment and Distribution Command Public Affairs
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SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill. –

Carol Sinnard, a contract specialist assigned to the Military Surface Deployment and Distribution Command's Acquisition Center, was recently named Headquarters SDDC Outstanding Performer of the Quarter.

According to Karen E. Osborn, chief of contracting, SDDC Acquisition Center, Sinnard sets the standard for government professionals during a time of shrinking budgets and fiscal constraints.

Osborn said Sinnard, wearing her business advisor hat, went above and beyond in coaching her Defense Personal Property Program—known as DP3— customers in the development of their requirements packages.

"She provided guidance and training, and her hands-on efforts ensured an exceptionally well-defined performance work statement that greatly increased the opportunity for competition and set the stage for an \$11 million savings," Osborn added.

The director said Sinnard mentored her customers in the



Carol Sinnard was recently recognized as Headquarters SDDC Outstanding Performer of the Quarter. (Photo by Mark Diamond)

proposal evaluation and source selection processes, and worked closely with them during source selection, ensuring a timely and accurate proposal evaluation.

"In fact," Osborn said, "the source selection process went so exceptionally well that the contracts attorney stated it was the best source selection she had seen."

Sinnard's work didn't stop there.

"Following the contract award, Carol diligently worked with her customers, as well as both the new and old contractors, to develop a contract transition plan," Osborn said. "She again used her expert contract administration skills to negotiate a \$63,000 savings for the plan. Her hands-on approach and attention to detail also assured a smooth transition, with no impact to service support of the DP3 program."

Osborn added that Sinnard accomplished all of this while continuing to perform her already full workload of contract administration duties for the consolidated Web capabilities, information assurance and DP3 contracts, which total more than \$26 million.

"This was the SDDC contracting center's most challenging fiscal-year-end ever, and Carol was a top contributor to its success while simultaneously juggling eight other year-end procurement actions," Osborn said. "Her efforts were certainly instrumental in SDDC AQ's success in award of all contract requirements for the last quarter of fiscal 2012."

Veterans add value to

ACC workforce

By Larry D. McCaskill
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With one out of every five of its civilian employees a U.S. military veteran, Army Contracting Command officials say they value the experience and work effort of their seasoned workforce.

“Veterans are important within the federal government and especially in positions that support the military,” said William Baxter, deputy chief of staff Human Capital G1. “They bring the knowledge and experience of their military training and that translates into a valuable employee. They also have been on the receiving end of support and offer insight as to what uniformed military personnel expect from their civilian counterparts.”

A retired U.S. Air Force master sergeant, Linda L. Hindman, a secretary at ACC-Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., Edgewood Division, enlisted with her best friend under the buddy program in 1978.

“I stayed in until 2003 when my husband passed away. I decided to retire to stay home with my son,” said Hindman, who



served as an administrative assistant. “I definitely feel my military experience helps with my current job. It provided me with the skills to perform in almost any position in the administrative field. I was honored to serve for 25 years.”

Looking to be a part of something bigger than herself, Tora Henry, equal employment opportunity specialist, ACC EEO Office, Redstone Arsenal, Ala., decided to leave her family and friends in Beaufort, S.C., for the comforts of Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., and boot camp.



“The Marine Corps instilled a sense of pride, structure, leadership and discipline in my life that can’t be erased,” said Henry who left the corps as a sergeant after eight years.

“I see the world and the people around it so differently, having been exposed to many other cultures,” she said. “I’ve experienced the world and have a better appreciation for our diversity, similarities and differences.

Medically retired from the U.S.





Air Force after 10 years, Alfort Belin III, procurement analyst, 414th Contracting Support Brigade, Vicenza, Italy, uses his experience as a contracting officer to mentor others in the brigade.

“I love to help other veterans through contracting, leadership or mentoring,” said Belin who left the service as a major. “My time in the service definitely helps here at Vicenza.”

Citing a bad economy, Christine Miller, ACC-Redstone executive officer, joined the Women’s Army Corps in 1975 after not being able to find a job.

“I spent 11 years in the service,” said Miller, who left the service as a sergeant first class and a position as brigade operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge at the Ordnance, Munitions Center and School when it was at Redstone.

“I have a lot of good memories from my time in uniform, but I guess the top one would be when I was in basic training at Fort



McClellan, Ala. I was selected to observe the raising of the garrison flag on Veterans Day. There are no words for the pride I felt that day being a WAC and a member of the greatest Army in the world.”

A seaman’s tale and a lack of funds for college was enough to sway Edward Domowski, contract specialist, Mission and Installation Contracting Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to join the U.S. Navy.

“I couldn’t afford to go to college,” said Domowski, who retired in 1993 after 22 years of service. “Plus a neighbor, who was in his 80s, would tell me about his days at sea in the U.S. Merchant Marine. His tales created an interest for me, and the Navy represented a chance to see the world.”

Veterans are individuals and their tales are timeless, each weaving together the fabric that is the legacy of the American military. The stories of courage, sacrifice, duty and the memory of those who committed a portion of their lives for freedom are what Americans honor each Veterans Day.



MICC ensures smooth transfer of logistics contract management

By Daniel P. Elkins
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Mission and Installation Contracting Command officials welcomed the Army Sustainment Command directorate of logistics contract requirements on Oct. 1 under the Army-directed transfer from the U.S. Army's Installation Management Command.

Centralization of contract administration is part of the service's Enhanced Army Global Logistics Enterprise, or EAGLE, program aimed at standardizing installation maintenance, supply and transportation services across the Army materiel enterprise while reducing costs.

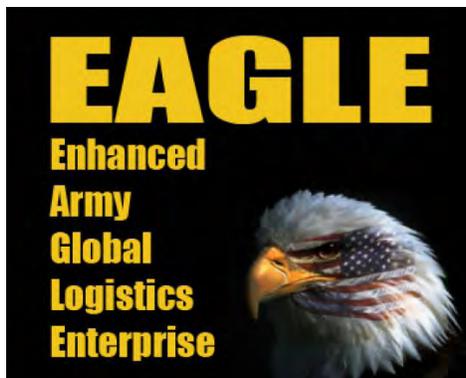
The MICC, headquarters at Joint Base San Antonio - Fort Sam Houston, Texas, is now responsible for overseeing the contract administration of most DOL services in the United States.

"EAGLE represents a significant effort by the Army and the acquisitions community to rein in spending at a time when our leaders are faced with historic budgetary constraints," said Pat Hogston, MICC director of strategic operations. "As vigilant stewards, we must explore every measure for reducing costs so that we can deliver the highest quality services and equipment to Soldiers at a fair price."

In preparation for the transfer of contract management, members of a MICC integrated process team worked closely with leaders from the ASC, Army Contracting Command, Expeditionary Contracting Command and DOL officials at Fort Benning, Ga.; Fort Gordon, Ga.; Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Irwin, Calif.; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Lee, Va.; Fort Polk, La.;

and the Presidio of Monterey, Calif. Dubbed a war room, the working group conducted numerous individual teleconferences and planning sessions to ensure a smooth transition.

"As there are numerous moving parts and organizations involved, the war room concept was considered to provide a single forum for all parties to raise and discuss the many moving parts to accomplishing this mission," said Cyp LaPorte, chief, MICC Plans and Programs Division.



"It was also needed based upon the importance of DOL mission functions to the sustainment of the Army and the criticality of not allowing any breaks in service to Army customers during this transition period."

LaPorte explained that while under IMCOM, directorates of logistics at installations developed and submitted their contract requirements to their servicing contracting offices. This resulted in either a single, installation-wide DOL contract or multiple smaller contracts divided over various individual DOL functions.

"Under the Army Sustainment Command model, requirements will all be centrally managed at the

command headquarters through an EAGLE program office," he said. "Both ASC and ACC-Rock Island, Ill., have spent a great deal of time and effort setting up integrated process teams to review and standardize the performance work statements of each of the various DOL functions to be assumed by ASC."

LaPorte added that the transfer created a need for leaders at ACC headquarters to review its contracting support mission for installation DOL services. That led to a decision that directed ACC-Rock Island to accomplish the pre-award mission for DOL support services because that center provides the primary contracting support to ASC.

Under EAGLE, ACC-RI conducts the pre-award function of the requirements and awards the EAGLE Basic Ordering Agreement Task Orders. After award, ACC-RI transfers the task orders to the MICC local contracting offices for contract management. MICC contracting offices will support EAGLE by performing post-award contracting functions at the installation level.

"The contract administration portion of DOL requirements will remain with the MICC as we are the ACC presence on installations and as such are in the best position to provide local contract oversight and management," LaPorte said.

The transfer of DOL requirements from IMCOM to ASC represented only a minimal increase in workload for members of the MICC as many local offices already administered those contracts.

"There are numerous challenges in this process as the transfer of DOL functions is a significant

effort for the Army to undertake,” LaPorte said, “but our people have the needed skills and expertise to administer the orders that will eventually be awarded by the Rock Island contracting center and transferred to our offices.”

Leaders of ASC, ACC-RI, MICC and ECC signed the EAGLE memorandum of understanding Oct. 8, which provides guidance on how the EAGLE business and contracting

process works between ASC and contracting partners. Contracting officials also established the business rules for EAGLE process.

MICC officials continue to operate the EAGLE war room to work technical issues related to how task orders will transfer from ACC-RI to the MICC, ECC and lifecycle management commands.

The MICC is responsible for

providing contracting support for the war fighter at Army commands, installations and activities located throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico. In fiscal 2012, the command executed more than 58,000 contract actions worth more than \$6.3 billion across the Army.

ACC-WRN Uses Lean Six Sigma to increase efficiencies

By Army Contracting Command-Warren, Mich.

When ACC-Warren’s property accounting requirements increased exponentially, Lara Jacobson knew the accounting process had to change.

Jacobson is the Business Management Division chief and Lean Six Sigma project sponsor at ACC-Warren, Michigan. She chartered a Lean Six Sigma project to study ACC-Warren’s property management process.

“With the number of ACC-Warren items to be tracked in the Army Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced System increasing from 300 to 2,700, we needed a better understanding of our current process to determine the best process going forward,” Jacobson explained. “We need to ensure that we can meet the required 72-hour turnaround time for all PBUSE notifications to our new ACC G4 (Deputy Chief of Staff Installations and Logistics) property book officer.”

Lean Six Sigma is a continuous process improvement program used by the Army. Lean process improvement focuses on eliminating non-value-added waste in a process or service from the customer’s point of view. Six Sigma focuses on achieving measurable improvements in quality.

Joan Moses, an Army-certified Lean Six Sigma black belt, facilitated an all-day Lean event in September. As part of this process, hand receipt holders and subject matter experts from the Business Management

Division and Information Management Office described the daily tasks they performed in receiving equipment, performing inventories and turning in excess property. The team documented the steps taken to complete each task with butcher-block paper and sticky notes to establish a process map.

By the end of the day, the team identified seven major processes related to property management.

“Putting the process on paper allowed everyone to see the big picture, to identify all of ACC-Warren’s customers, and to note gaps and waste in the process,” Moses said. “Potential improvements were recorded on a parking lot of ideas for future consideration.”

As part of ACC-Warren’s preparation for its increased PBUSE inventory tracking, the team also identified 17 categories of equipment currently tracked in the local TACOM automated durable property inventory system, with five of those categories currently tracked in PBUSE.

After the processes were fully mapped, ACC-Warren conducted a formal process review in November with the ACC G4 property book officer, William Pittman, and John Landry, ACC G4 supply chief. The Detroit Arsenal Installation PBO, Paul Cyman, also participated.

In most cases, only minor adjustments to the processes were needed to meet the property book officer’s requirements.

Pittman also confirmed that the automatically-generated forms from the local TACOM ADP system met the standards for PBUSE change notifications.

A step was added to the equipment turn-in process to enable ACC G4 and ACC DCS chief information officer G6 to assess whether ACC-Warren’s excess equipment can be reissued for use by other ACC organizations.

“The project was a success in our opinion here at the ACC G4,” Landry said. “The Lean processes that ACC-Warren now has in place are awesome and will make the transition, in my opinion, very seamless. ACC Warren property processes should be a model for the rest of the ACC contracting centers. These processes are very much in-line with Army Regulation 710-2 and Department of the Army Pamphlet 710-2-1.”

Jacobson, agreed.

“We were very pleased with the cooperation and good will shown by Mr. Landry and Mr. Pittman,” she said. “They offered very practical suggestions and recommendations that will lead to further improvements in our local process.

“Using the Lean Six Sigma approach was very beneficial to both parties,” Jacobson added. “We will definitely continue using this approach to streamline our property management processes and ensure the best stewardship of our Army equipment.”

Tiger Team established

to identify safety standards for contracts

By Larry D. McCaskill
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The Army Contracting Command's Safety Office is seeking comments and best practices from the contracting community as it moves to establish standardized contract safety processes.

"Contract safety is a critical program that ACC depends upon to ensure quality services are provided to the war fighter," said

safety processes and procedures command-wide."

Currently, contract reviews are the responsibility of the requiring activity and contracting officer representatives working with the contracting officers.

"The Army depends on CORs to conduct surveillance during the performance of a contract. Safety professionals assigned to

COR is in the same organization.

"When that is the case it makes it easier for the COR and the safety staff to work together," Waibel said. "Our challenge is to integrate safety into the requiring activities planning processes, and then to provide the contracting officer a method for checking that safety elements have been considered," said Waibel.

The first step Waibel is ready to make towards integration is to open up a dialogue with those involved.

"We are addressing the challenge by including all the stakeholders in the process and starting a discussion for establishing a process for contract safety program management across the Army," Waibel said.

Once implemented, contracting officers and their representatives will have a process to ensure contract safety processes are considered, said Waibel.

"The contracting officer is responsible for everything in a contract, but the reality is that we will not train and certify contracting officers to be safety professionals," Waibel said. "The contracting officer will need to have a method of checking if the safety community has completed its task and the safety community will have to step up and become involved in the process."

Waibel said he expects integrating the safety processes within the contracting community should take about six months. Anyone wanting to provide comments and best practices from across the command can contact Waibel at jerry.waibel@us.army.mil.



(Left to Right) Eddie Curet, Andrew Cabral and Jerry Waibel of the Army Contracting Command's Safety Tiger Team map out Army-level contract safety processes and synchronize ACC policy and procedures. (U.S. Army Photo by Larry D. McCaskill)

Jerry L. Waibel, ACC safety director. Contract safety is the analysis of risk to government employees, equipment or facilities due to contracted operations.

Until now, Waibel said the safety community has been working outside of the contracting community in order to ensure safety procedures are adhered to.

"To take this project to the next level, safety professionals are working directly with the contracting community to develop relationships and provide awareness of established safety processes," Waibel said. "The commander's intent in establishing this tiger team is to standardize contract

the requiring activities have the responsibility of assisting the CORs when needed," Waibel said. "The critical element here is to include safety professionals in the planning process to identify risk, and include site specific safety requirements in the statement of work/performance work statement based on that risk.

"One thing to remember is that safety awareness starts at the ground level. We will never be able to enforce safety standards from the headquarters. The requiring activities have to provide that service."

Waibel said every requiring activity has a safety staff supporting its organization. Many times the



Process in place to ensure future audit readiness

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Edward Thomas, senior accountant, ACC Deputy Chief of Staff Resource Management G8, and the rest of the G8 team are working to ensure the command is prepared for future audits. (U.S. Army Photo by Larry D. McCaskill)

The Army Contracting Command's Deputy Chief of Staff Resource Management G8 has been designated as the lead for the command's Army audit readiness efforts and will implement command-wide standard practices to ensure successful audit readiness testing.

"In addition to the G8, subordinate Internal Review and Compliance offices within the command will also play a major role in this coordinated effort," said Belinda Gemme, DCS, Resource Management G8.

Edward Thomas, a senior accountant in the resource management directorate, is spearheading the effort.

"Action plans and timelines are under development," Gemme said. "We're also forming the Headquarters ACC lead work groups for the business processes related to the statement of budgetary resources. While some of the work groups will be focused primarily on our internal resourcing business processes, such as Defense Travel System, other work groups will cross both internal business processes and the larger contracting mission business processes, such as government purchase card."

According to Thomas, the Army's first financial statement will focus on the statement of budgetary resources in 11 process areas including contracts, temporary duty travel, civilian payroll and the government purchase card.

To accomplish the task, Thomas said work groups formed from functional area subject matter experts created an action plan. The plan outlines the process methodology, maps current process flows, and identifies process gaps to fix and implement improvement opportunities.

"Audit readiness is not just a one-time event," Gemme continued. "As an Army entity and a part of the federal government's bigger plan to be better financial stewards over public funds, I would say to look at this as the first stage of an on-going process."

"DoD established the Financial Improvement and Audit Readiness Plan for improving financial processes, controls and information," she said.

One of the main building blocks within the audit readiness process is the General Fund Enterprise Business System. GFEBs is a web-enabled system that allows the

Army to share financial data across the service.

"It's an integrated financial system that feeds off of various Army processes and programs that touch financial information," Thomas said. "GFEBs is the backbone for audit readiness and its success is contingent upon full collaboration from the financial community as well as other stakeholders including contracting operations, human resources, logistics and information technology."

Due to the nature of this effort, Thomas said ACC members can anticipate receiving information on audit readiness through several channels and that it will be a part of internal control plans.

"Implementation of GFEBs has changed how we conduct many of our business processes and we must adjust," Thomas said. "Preparing for a clean audit provides an opportunity to deliberately develop, document and implement these changes," he said. "Everything is important to success, even something as trivial as filing timely and accurate travel vouchers has an impact on audit readiness."

Contract Preparation:

A complex, involved process

By Larry D. McCaskill
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Establishing a contract is accomplished by numerous professionals with unique skills working in unison to ensure the government gets the products or services it needs.

“There is no way to capture all the intricacies of the contracting process in an article,” said Henry A. Molnar, procurement analyst, Army Contracting Command Operations Group. “This is just a shell of some of the steps, meant as a minimal guide and is in no way remotely all-inclusive to the contracting process.”

“The KO does not need to memorize the FAR”

Jason Detko, chief, ACC Contracting, Operations Group

According to Molnar, the first step in developing a contract is understanding and validating the customer’s requirement. Early coordination and collaboration among stakeholders is essential to developing a well-defined requirement. Once the requirement is defined, industry can clearly understand what goods or services the government is procuring.

“After defining the requirement, the acquisition strategy lays out the government’s path forward in getting the requirement to contract,” he said. “The first steps include determining what type of contract it is. What competition methodology would be best or are there small business opportunity considerations. These areas are just

a few items addressed as part of the acquisition strategy.”

By defining everything clearly, Molnar said all parties have a much clearer picture of what to expect as the contract stages progress.

“The desired results of market research and acquisition planning are indications to support going forward with a solicitation to industry for proposals by the contracting officer, or KO,” Molnar said. “The solicitation provides instruction on how to make an offer, identifies the government’s requirement, and the terms and

conditions of the pending contract.”

If the need has been defined clearly, interested parties will be able to react and forward a formal offer that can be accepted, evaluated and compared to other offers as well as the government cost estimate.

“The KO must also consider whether market research indicates that there are sources available to provide the supplies and/or services. In other words, is there an industry base to support the requirement? Other questions the KO should be answering are: What type of contract should be utilized and how much risk is there,” he said. “Also, are any external review and approval authorities required or can a small business or mandatory source provide this supply and/or service?”

As each contract is developed, contracting officers must make decisions regarding how vendors will be able to compete for the contract. The contracting officer must consider conditions or constraints that relate to the proposed acquisition.

“Once the pre-planning and any necessary approvals are obtained, the solicitation is released to industry,” Molnar said. “Bids or proposals are submitted by industry, evaluated and the contract award is then made to the successful offeror.”

Given the scope of the different types of contracts, Molnar said it’s difficult to calculate an average time the award process takes from start-to-finish.

“There are many variables that can affect the process time; the two biggest being the type of contract and the type of work to be completed,” Molnar said. “The process time for a task order can vary from 25 to 45 days to process once a multiple award-type contract is in place. Complex new high-dollar actions can take six months under ideal conditions and possibly years to compete based on the complexity of the requirement.”

According to Jason Detko, chief, ACC Contracting, Operations Group, the more complex the contract, the more in-depth knowledge of the Federal Acquisition Regulation the contracting officer needs to have up front.

“The KO does not need to memorize the FAR, but must be

“The men and women who execute these requirements on behalf of the Army take their duties and responsibilities seriously,” Detko said.

able to appropriately research and interpret it to adequately lead the procurement process along,” Detko said. “The KO is just one component of a multi-function procurement team of experts and mostly serves as the business advisor to the team facilitating the regulatory requirements to put the contract together. However, the KO is the only government representative authorized to sign any contract.”

The authority to obligate money on behalf of the federal government comes from receiving a contracting officer warrant that outlines the dollar thresholds and limits the obligation authority of the contracting officer. Only the KO has the authority to direct the contractor to provide goods or services on behalf of the government as established through the KO warranting process.

“There are strict anti-deficiency laws governing who can obligate the government to ensure we are not receiving benefit without a properly executed agreement between the government and a contractor through a written, enforceable contract,” Detko said. In some cases, individuals who are not contracting officers may be held personally liable for payment of any goods or services provided without authority.

Molnar said procurement teams are often established to solicit, evaluate and recommend award of the contract. Participants of the team may include but are not limited to safety specialists,

program managers, budget or finance experts, legal counsel, small business specialist and quality control and technical experts. Other direct or indirect stakeholders and higher-level approval authorities such as the head of the contracting activity or principal assistant responsible for contracting also contribute to the establishment of the contract.

Once a contract has been written, bid on and awarded, Detko said government officials monitor its execution to ensure the contracted goods and services are provided.

“The government’s job is not over when the contract is awarded. The government must conduct contract administration and perform a variety of actions prior to formal commencement of work through contract closeout,” Detko said. “The KO does a variety of things including providing post-award notifications to unsuccessful firms and conducting debriefings to those unsuccessful offerors, if requested.

“The KO must also define administrative oversight of contractor performance to the contracting officer representative or the Defense Contract Management Agency. The KO might host a post-award conference with the successful offeror which would include a detailed review of the contract, including all work to be performed, the final terms and conditions and any discussions related to performance and/or delivery schedule,” Detko said.

According to Molnar, contract administration is done to ensure

compliance with the contract’s terms and conditions as well as documenting and agreeing on any contract modifications. “Contract administration is the process of systematically and efficiently managing contract execution, minimizing risk and performing analysis for the purpose of maximizing financial and operational performance of the contractor,” Molnar said.

Molnar and Detko said contracting is an extremely complex process controlled by myriad statutes, regulations and policies. It is a herculean effort to properly define and articulate requirements to form the foundation of a legally binding contract. Proper stewardship of taxpayer resources is paramount in every contracting situation. Contracting personnel are charged with providing good and services effectively, efficiently, and legally, while operating in an extremely dynamic environment.

“The men and women who execute these requirements on behalf of the Army take their duties and responsibilities seriously. Without properly resourced and trained contracting personnel, there would be no linkage between requirements and the contractors to fulfill those requirements,” Detko said.

Strategic Approach drives MICC realignment

By Daniel P. Elkins
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Mission and Installation Contracting Command officials realigned six field directorate offices into four effective Dec. 4 in a strategic effort to bring consistency to its operations and improve contract administration and oversight.

The four field directorate offices are located at Fort Bragg, N.C., Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., Fort Hood, Texas, and Fort Knox, Ky.

Of the two existing field directorates, MICC-Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington has been realigned under Fort Bragg, and MICC-Fort Sam Houston serves as the headquarters' activity responsible for acquisitions not normally provided by other MICC elements, as well as specialized contracting assignments for the MICC leadership. The command's remaining 34 subordinate contracting offices located throughout the country and Puerto Rico have been administratively and operationally realigned under those four directorates.

"The MICC continues to mature its oversight and responsive capabilities to meet the growing demands of our Soldiers and the acquisition community," said Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke, the MICC commanding general. "The realignment of contracting offices under field directorate offices restores a command-wide focus that supports our core mission of providing responsive contracting solutions and oversight for our customers."

Analysis for the organizational realignment began in mid-2012 and included an assessment of the command's operational efficiency

to determine a structure that would improve contract compliance and oversight of operations, provide strategic support to customers, and effectively utilize existing resources.

Sarah Corley, a senior contracting professional in the MICC who helped lead the realignment integrated process team, said the selection of locations for field directorate offices came after thorough mission analysis and was based on their link with the command's major customer groups.

"The realignment provides a more strategic alignment with the customer base, in order to provide optimum opportunity for standardization of processes and products," Corley said. "The realignment strikes a core balance between horizontal and vertical spans of control, leverages the strengths of pre-existing organizational components, enhances the ability to streamline and standardize MICC's processes, achieves consistency of operations, enhances support to core customers, and provides a mechanism to measure results."

MICC officials met with field directors and their deputies here in October to conduct roundtable discussions on realignment that included procurement authorities and roles and responsibilities for the four field directorate offices to support their customers.

The MICC's major customers include the U.S. Army Forces Command and Reserve Command supported by MICC FDO-Fort Bragg; U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command supported by MICC FDO-Fort Eustis; U.S. Army

Test and Evaluation Command supported by MICC FDO-Fort Hood; and Department of the Army-level customers in the Military District of Washington supported by MICC FDO-Fort Knox.

At the same time, the MICC is transferring contracting responsibility for Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Fort Dix, N.J., and Miami to other areas of the U.S. Army Contracting Command. California's MICC-Moffett Field will assume oversight of contracting support actions at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif.

For the most part, the realignment should be transparent at the installation contracting officer and customer levels, according to Albert Jacob, the chief of MICC Contract Operations.

"However, MICC offices reporting to a different field directorate office as of the effective transition date should coordinate with the new field directorate office and MICC Contract Operations to ensure proper visibility, compliance with the MICC Deskbook and to avoid delays during the transition," Jacob said.

The MICC is responsible for providing contracting support for the war fighter across Army commands, installations and activities located throughout the continental United States and Puerto Rico. In fiscal 2012, the command executed more than 58,000 contract actions worth more than \$6.3 billion across the Army, including more than \$2.6 billion to small businesses. The command also managed more than 1.2 million Government Purchase Card Program transactions valued at an additional \$1.3 billion.

Army to close its National Capital Region contracting center

By Ed Worley
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The U.S. Army announced Nov. 16 that it will close its National Capital Region contracting center next year.

Army Contracting Command-National Capital Region, located in Alexandria, Va., will be closed July 20, 2013, and its workload distributed to other contracting centers operated by the U.S. Army Contracting Command.

The workload redistribution affects 260 civil service positions and six military positions. All ACC-NCR civil service employees will be offered their current position at the new locations. Soldiers will be reassigned through the military personnel system.

“This was a difficult decision,” said Maj. Gen. Camille M. Nichols, commanding general, U.S. Army Contracting Command, headquartered at Redstone Arsenal, Ala. “But as good stewards of the taxpayers’ money, we must make the most effective and efficient use of our resources, including our people. We have a position for all of our valued employees and will work diligently to make their transition to their new job locations as easy as possible.”

High employee turnover and operating costs were the primary factors for closing the center and redistributing its workload to other ACC contracting organizations, according to Gene Duncan, acting chief, Operations Division, ACC Operations Group, and project officer for the transition. ACC-NCR employee turnover was more than 30 percent between Oct. 1, 2010 and June 30, 2012, compared to normal workforce attrition of between eight and 10 percent. By moving

the organization from a highly competitive area, turnover will be reduced, the workforce will stabilize and the already strong customer service and contract quality will improve, he said.

The Army predicts the move will save about \$13 million annually, once the transition is complete, through increased efficiencies, reduced facilities and information technology costs, reduced turnover and reduced locality pay as the positions are moved outside the



National Capital Region.

ACC-NCR's workload will be distributed to ACC contracting centers at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill. (87 positions), Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (79 positions), Warren, Mich. (10 positions), Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. (32 positions), and Redstone Arsenal, Ala. (22 positions) as well as to the Mission and Installation Contracting Command offices at Fort Knox, Ky. (10 positions) and Joint Base San Antonio, Texas (12 positions). An element of 14 positions will remain in the National Capital Region at Fort Belvoir, Va., to handle support functions including customer support, coordination and Government Purchase Card oversight.

Employees will have until Jan. 8,

2013, to accept or decline the management-directed reassignment. Employees who decline transfer will be eligible to register in the Priority Placement Program, a Department of Defense system designed to help displaced employees. In addition, ACC will provide relocation and transition assistance. Employees may also be eligible for placement through the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan for positions outside the Department of Defense.

“There will be another option within ACC,” Duncan said. “Under the ACC Command Assistance for Placing Employees Program, employees who decline the management-directed reassignment will have the opportunity to indicate interest in other ACC locations. Selecting officials will receive information regarding those employees’ skills and certification levels. The gaining selecting official will make the selection. Employees selected under this program will receive travel orders and must report to the gaining location no later than July 20, 2013.”

Army Contracting Command provides global contracting support to Soldiers through the full spectrum of military operations. ACC consists of about 6,800 civilians and Soldiers at more than 100 locations worldwide. In fiscal year 2012 ACC awarded and managed more than 228,000 contract actions valued at more than \$74 billion.

In fiscal year 2012, ACC-NCR executed more than 4,600 contract actions valued at \$1.84 billion.

Strong Bonds strengthens Soldiers and their families

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The Strong Bonds couples retreat was conducted for ACC and ECC headquarters couples to increase individual Soldier and family member readiness through relationship education and skills training (U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Trevor J. Rush)

A chaplain-led couples retreat is helping commanders build individual resiliency by strengthening the Army family.

Called Strong Bonds, its core mission is to increase individual Soldier and family member readiness through relationship education and skills training.

“The program’s training materials provide the chaplain with tools designed to increase individual readiness,” said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Jose G. Herrera, Expeditionary Contracting Command. “By helping couples and families learn how to strengthen relationships by developing their relationship skills, the program contributes to comprehensive Soldier fitness.”

The retreat was conducted offsite to minimize day-to-day distractions and to maximize the training effect, he said. This retreat, a first for

couples in the Army Contracting Command and ECC headquarters, was conducted in Nashville, Tenn.

Co-located at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., the ACC and the ECC chaplain sections have been collaborating to provide comprehensive spiritual fitness for all personnel on the campus through activities like weekly Bible studies and monthly prayer luncheons.

Limited to married Soldiers, the training equips couples with the tools to work through ordinary and extraordinary conflicts that could end a marriage, said ACC Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Charles ‘Chip’ Fields.

“The itinerary is arranged in such a way as to balance time in training and time for couples to enjoy alone in order to practice the training,” he said.

“The training includes role playing, instructional videos and learning in a group environment. Most of all, they

get to enjoy time together.”

Herrera said some mistake the retreat as a few days off.

“To those who think it is a mini-vacation, I would say come and try it. You will come away with a different perspective,” he said. “There are many testimonies of Soldiers regarding the impact that the Strong Bonds weekends have had on their personal lives and on their marital and familial relationships.

“As with anything, if you put nothing into it, it is difficult to get any good results. But if you put something into it, you will reap the rewards,” he said.

Many participants had an idea of what to expect before arriving.

“I expected to receive tips and tools on how to better communicate with my wife; tools in general on ways to improve my marriage and better understand my life partner as well as interact with other military couples,” said Lt. Col. Jvon Hearn, ACC inspector general. “The retreat also gave couples some one-on-one time with each other to reflect on what they had learned and consider ways to implement those tools into their marriage and family life.”

“It was a great event and the site that hosted it was top notch,” said Lt. Col. Steven C. Maddry, ECC, Deputy Chief of Staff Information Management G6. “I’ve attended a similar event hosted by the chaplain in one of my previous assignments, but the material was along a different subject area. I think the material that Chaplain Fields taught is very beneficial to couples. It helps couples that want to keep their marriage and family relationships strong.”

For one noncommissioned officer, the training seemed like any other until she reached an epiphany.

Emanuela C. Smith, human resources NCO in the ACC Deputy Chief of Staff Human Capital G1. “The concepts, principles and techniques had a different impact on me and my spouse. My perception going in was slightly different once it was over.”

For Smith, the retreat gave her an opportunity to reflect on where she is and where she plans on going.

“I’ve noticed how I have grown and how I have changed as a person,” said Smith. “Although change is constant, the consistency of wanting to make things better and learn more still remains the same. It is very interesting as I learn how my thought process of wanting better for me, my marriage and my family continues to

grow and blossom.”

According to Herrera, the command will conduct Strong Bonds events throughout the command monthly during the first quarter of fiscal year 2013 and at least two events quarterly for the remainder of the fiscal year.

“Not only will we conduct more couple retreats, but we plan to host a robust number of retreats for our single Soldiers and some retreats designed for the entire family in mind,” said Herrera.

“We are hoping that these training events will result in more resilient Army families as they put the skills and training they received this past weekend into action in their own lives. A more resilient Army family means a more resilient Soldier,” Herrera continued. “A

more resilient war fighter is always an asset to the nation and to the Soldier’s family.”

The inspector general agrees.

“I believe the Army will greatly benefit from the program because the training provided Soldiers and their spouses gives them the tools that will help them better understand one another and ultimately improve their marriage relationship,” Hearn said. “In addition, I believe that as couples and families become stronger, it will eliminate many of the distracters that take Soldiers away from the job both physically and mentally, thus making for a better Soldier, better unit and ultimately a better Army.”

Sharing during the season of caring

By Mission and Installation Command-West Point, N.Y.

For eight consecutive years, members of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-West Point, N.Y., contracting office have reached out to adopt a family in need within their community.

The family is one who has been suggested by either one of the community schools or churches.

“Sometimes I think our office gets more out of this annual tradition than any of the families that have been helped,” said Annemarie Kopko, MICC-West Point director. “I am very proud of the MICC West Point team’s enthusiasm and generous hearts.”

The tradition took roots in 2005 when Moe Flanagan came on board as the new administrative support assistant.

“Moe asked the contracting staff if they were interested in supporting a family for the holidays and it took off from there,” Kopko said. “Every year

since, we fill a local family’s pantry in November as well as providing their Thanksgiving dinner and continue to support them during the Christmas season.

“Moe is our entire committee. She keeps lists of food to be donated, ages of the children and sizes to be purchased, and the best times to deliver. The rest of us follow her lead,” Kopko said.

Through a third party, MICC-West Point employees receive a wish list. Once received, some contribute money and others donate items directly from the list.

“In addition to the gifts, we restock their pantry and provide Christmas dinner,” Kopko said. “On

the morning of the delivery, we all bring gift wrap, bows, tissue paper, etc. and, as time permits, stop in and wrap a few presents. Then, Moe and her elves deliver the gifts directly to the family.”

In addition to toys, bedding, clothing and games, Kopko said some office members have been generous enough to donate computers, bicycles and televisions. “The West Point Provost Marshall Office also helps us out by providing donated toys that they have collected,” she said. “Most of us are shocked and touched to see blankets and warm coats on the children’s wish lists instead of toys.”

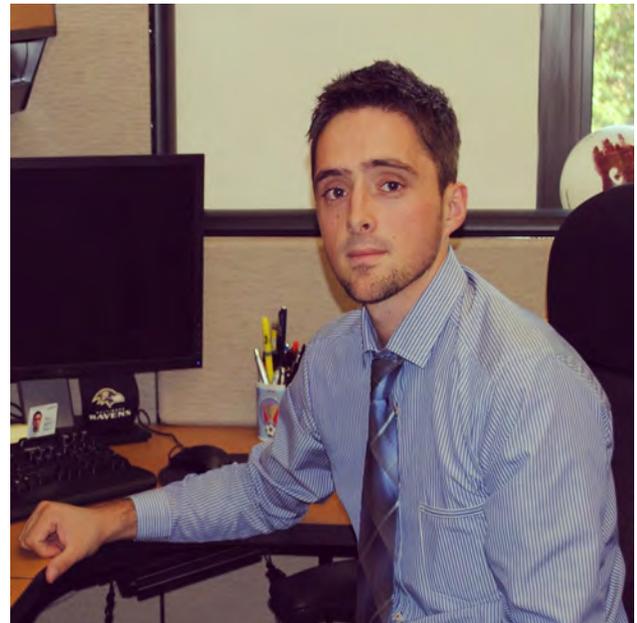


Members of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-West Point with items they’ve collected for a local family in need. (U.S. Army Photo)

Work is payback for opportunities given!



The Shabani family met with President and Mrs. Clinton during their visit to the Macedonia refugee camp in 1999. He is pictured to the left and immediately behind his brother who is holding the president's hand (circled) - Shabani today



By Betsy Kozak
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For Labinot Shabani, growing up in southeastern Europe in the late 1990s meant a childhood filled with both pleasant and horrific memories.

Shabani, a contracting specialist with the Army Contracting Command- Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., was born as an Albanian Kosovar in the city of Gjilan in eastern Kosovo. "It's a nice place and despite the conflict, I have a lot of fond memories from my childhood," recalled Shabani.

The origins of the conflict between Kosovo and its northern neighbor, Serbia, began many years before Shabani was born.

According to Britannica Encyclopedia, interethnic tensions resulted between the largely Muslim ethnic Albanians which outnumbered the predominantly Eastern Orthodox Serbs in Kosovo. And in 1998, an ethnic Albanian-led secessionist rebellion escalated into an international crisis, which culminated in 1999 with the NATO-led air bombardment of Serbia and Montenegro to stop the ethnic cleansing and the killing of Albanian Kosovars.

"As a child, I watched the continual violence on TV," Shabani said. "I could hear the bombings nearby and reports of burning villages."

In the spring of 1999, he received the news of his grandparent's

home being set on fire and his grandparents killed.

"My parents were increasingly concerned for the safety of me and my two brothers," he said.

The United Nations provided humanitarian aid due to the escalation of violence and suffering in Kosovo and many people were transported to refugee camps in neighboring countries.

In the early summer of 1999, Shabani left the only home he had ever known and headed to a refugee camp in Macedonia.

"We left with a couple of suitcases," Shabani said. "We went to a bus station near the Macedonia and Kosovo border to obtain transportation to a refugee camp. We spent the night at the bus station,

sleeping in the lobby, and waited for clearance to enter Macedonia. The next day, we boarded a bus en route to a refugee camp not far from the Kosovo border. I witnessed refugees leaving Kosovo in cars, buses, tractors or whatever transportation they could find.”

The Shabani family was assigned to a family tent within the camp. There, his family was provided food and other amenities to include schools and playgrounds for the children.

It was here that Shabani met President Bill Clinton, accompanied by his wife, Hillary, and his daughter, Chelsea, during their visit to the camp.

The family was offered the opportunity to seek refuge in the United States and was instructed to complete an application and the interview process.

“The camp was fine. I did miss my home and I knew my stay at the camp was temporary,” he said. “I remember President Clinton’s visit and how we all followed him around the camp. We idolized him. When President Clinton learned of our ordeal and my grandparent’s passing, he asked to meet with my family. Through interpreters, my father described our story and of the other atrocities.”

After a month in the Macedonia refugee camp, he and his family returned home.

“Once Kosovo was cleared of hostile forces and land mines, we were able to return,” Shabani recalled. “We were apprehensive about what we would face when we returned to Kosovo. Many families had items stolen, burned or lost all of their belongings. Most of the damage was done in the surrounding towns and villages. Thankfully my home was not touched.”

The family was offered the opportunity to seek refuge in the United States and was instructed to complete an application and the interview process.

“It was a difficult decision for my father,” Shabani said. “Kosovo was our home where our friends and family lived. In the end, my father decided to do what he felt was best for me and my brothers. He wanted to give us an opportunity to be safe, receive a good education and live the American dream.”

With the decision made, the Shabani family applied for passports, completed the appropriate paperwork and was assigned a sponsor. On Aug. 2, 1999, the family

boarded a plane headed for New York City en route to Baltimore, Md.

“We lived in a townhouse in Baltimore City,” said Shabani. “It was a difficult transition and we didn’t like it at first. I was the only one in the family who spoke English at the time and I had limited fluency.”

The Shabani family had to adjust to the American way of life. Their father found work and Shabani and his brothers enrolled in school. They had to learn American customs, master a new language, comprehend the health system, develop community bonds, and understand the educational system.

The Shabani’s met another family from Kosovo who lived nearby and through their encouragement, the Shabani’s moved from Baltimore to Aberdeen, Md.

“Language was the key barrier for me and my brothers,” stated Shabani. “School was difficult and I was enrolled in an ‘English as a second

language’ course to help with the adjustment. Once I overcame the English barrier, I did well in school.”

In addition to learning a new language, the youth explored other avenues to adjust.

“I found the best method for integrating into my new school was through soccer,” he said. “I played soccer in Kosovo, so I knew the sport. This is how I became involved and met friends. I was captain of the Aberdeen High School soccer team in my senior year.”

Shabani graduated from Aberdeen High School and attended the University of Baltimore, earning a bachelor of science degree in finance and applied to ACC-APG as a contracting intern.

“I entered the intern program in 2009 and graduated last year,” he said. “I have enjoyed the time here greatly. I get to work in a friendly environment where people respect each other and expect great things from everyone. It is very rewarding to know that what I do affects the Soldier in theatre and it underscores the importance of how effective I need to be on the job.”

“I received great training that has allowed me to do my job efficiently. Throughout my three years with ACC-APG, I’ve experienced many types of acquisitions which have broadened my knowledge of the process,” Shabani said. “I also consider my work at ACC-APG as a way to pay back.”



Sgt. Inna Lloyd living out her lifelong dream as a member of the U.S. Army. (Photo courtesy of Inna Lloyd)

A supervisory contract specialist with the Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground, Huachuca Division at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., Inna Lloyd has come a long ways from her days growing up in the Soviet Union. (Photo courtesy of Inna Lloyd)



Soviet turned American citizen excelling for her new homeland

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Some children aspire to become athletes, astronauts, doctors or lawyers. For a young Inna Lloyd, her distant dream was to serve in the military, something women were forbidden to do in her Ukrainian homeland.

Born in the former Soviet Union, Lloyd wondered why women were not afforded an opportunity to join the military.

“At that time it was only a dream, but I knew in my heart that one day I would be able to achieve it,” said Lloyd, a contracting officer with the Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground’s Fort Huachuca Division at Fort Huachuca Ariz.

“In the Ukraine, males are subject to mandatory military service for two years,” Lloyd said.

“Unless they were a full-time student or for medical conditions, they had to serve.”

Growing up in Sumy, Ukraine, Lloyd lived in an environment where once the Soviet Union was dissolved, the former Soviet republics proclaimed their independence and sought to reestablish their own national identities.

Before she was born, her mother’s family had been thrown out in the streets by the Bolsheviks when her grandfather spoke out against the political ideology. For his rebellion, he was imprisoned in labor camps for 15 years.

Despite growing up under the watchful eyes of the Bolsheviks, Lloyd’s parents went on to graduate from college and become university professors in the Ukraine. Lloyd

herself went on to graduate from Sumy University with a bachelor’s degree in teaching and later earned her master’s degree in public administration from Bowie State College, Md. Today, she is a doctoral candidate at North Central University, Ariz.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and armed with a degree and a desire to explore the world, Lloyd accepted an invitation to visit her sister in the Czech Republic.

“When the Soviet Union fell apart, the national borders became open to everybody,” Lloyd said. “I was a young, freedom-seeking individual who was ready to explore the world.”

After several weeks into her visit, Lloyd decided she was ready to go

“I joined the U.S. Army in 2000 after about a year of being married. My husband was surprised, but at the same time supportive of my intent,” said Lloyd, who went to Fort Jackson, S.C., for basic and advanced individual training.

home, but there was a catch.

“Little did I know that she bought me a one-way ticket,” Lloyd said. “She said that I would have to figure out how to earn enough money to buy my own return ticket.”

Three years later, Lloyd saved the money but had decided to remain in the Czech Republic, in part, because she had started her career as an assistant contract manager

“By then, I had a good life and career in the Czech Republic so I decided to stay,” said Lloyd, who is fluent in Russian, Czech, Ukrainian and English and is conversational in German.

Her life took a dramatic change in 1999 when she met and fell in love with an American Soldier traveling in the Czech Republic. After dating for about a year, Lloyd and the Soldier were married and she moved to Germany where her new husband was stationed. While stationed in Germany, Lloyd realized she had an opportunity to fulfill one of her life’s dreams and talked it over with her husband.

“I joined the U.S. Army in 2000 after about a year of being married. My husband was surprised, but at the same time supportive of my intent,” said Lloyd, who went to Fort Jackson, S.C., for basic and advanced individual training.

According to Lloyd, basic training

for her was somewhat easy. She didn’t understand the slang many of the drill instructors used when they were upset and she didn’t miss out on what she considered luxuries.

“When the drill sergeants were yelling I knew they were mad, but I wasn’t sure what some of the words meant,” she said. “Some of the trainees were crying about the drill instructors and others about not being able to eat at McDonalds or go buy a Coke. None of that hurt my feelings because it was pretty close to the environment I had left in Europe.”

During the rest of her four years of military service, her European accent drew some, but not a lot of attention.

“I met a lot of people who were curious and wanted to learn more about my heritage, but I don’t believe people treated me differently because of my heritage,” said the former human resources noncommissioned officer who, during her enlistment, deployed to Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Balad and Camp Victory, in Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“My parents always wanted me to do the right thing and make the right choice no matter what. Serving my newly adopted motherland, the United States of America, was my honor and my personal tribute to the

freedoms we all enjoy,” she said.

Lloyd applied for U.S. citizenship in 2001 taking advantage of an executive order designed to speed up citizenship proceedings for non-citizens who had served in the U.S. military since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. After her paperwork was lost numerous times, she finally was granted citizenship in 2005.

Always looking to improve, Lloyd said her military experience taught her personal discipline, the ability to function under stress, and understanding the importance of team work and leadership.

“It also taught me to always be aware of internal and external aspects of our operational environment, and how ongoing changes can potentially affect the nature of the execution of our contracting mission,” said Lloyd.

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