



Army Contracting — One Community Serving Our Soldiers, Serving Our Nation

Meg Williams

Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Policy and Procurement (DASA (P&P)) Tina Ballard welcomed more than 400 contracting professionals to the first annual Procuring Contracting Officer Training (PCOT) Symposium, July 10-14, 2006, in Miami, FL. “Keep these words at the forefront of your mind,” Ballard said, as she repeated the conference theme — *Army Contracting: One Community Serving Our Soldiers, Serving Our Nation*. “We gather as one community to learn new skills and share experiences.”

Editor’s Note: Throughout this article are selected remarks from PCOT Symposium attendees.

Our vision is to be “One Community Serving our Soldiers, Serving our Nation” to ensure that wherever our troops put “boots on the ground,” the Army contracting community will be there alongside them to provide the necessary contractual expertise, decision authorities, procurement oversight and capacity to rapidly manage the U.S. Force’s and host nation’s contracting processes and contract infrastructure. These initiatives will help our Army field better equipped Soldiers who are more lethal, survivable and sustainable, regardless of where the mission or operational contingency takes them.

—Tina Ballard, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Policy and Procurement

“This is a chaotic time in the world, in the Army and at the Pentagon,” Ballard said. “It’s important for the contracting workforce to meet and discuss the issues that challenge us. As contracting professionals, it’s important for us to learn and share our knowledge as we perform our mission and provide for our ultimate customer, the Soldier.”



DASA (P&P) Tina Ballard welcomes attendees to the Army PCOT Symposium held July 10-14, 2006, in Miami, FL.

assembled to practice “deliberative speed,” as they carry out their duties. In the past 8 years, contracting officers (KOs) have been encouraged to get things done quicker and the quality of the deal has suffered as a result. What deliberative speed means is that KOs must be deliberate but quicker. Don’t bypass anything.

The PCOT Symposium resulted from efforts conducted by the Army Contracting Think Tank, formed by Ballard in March 2004. Its members are dedicated to the contracting workforce and excellence in business processes. “Army

The conference featured DOD and Army leaders who acknowledged the crucial role contracting plays in arming, feeding, housing, and taking care of Soldiers and their families. The symposium delivered instruction on contingency contracting, Lean Six Sigma and the acquisition process, fiscal law, Army source selection, ethics, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army’s guidance on service contracting and other critical topics. Following are highlights from selected symposium speaker presentations.

Assad is responsible for all DOD acquisition and procurement policy matters. He serves as principal advisor to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and the Defense Acquisition

Board for acquisition and procurement strategies for all major weapon systems programs, all major automated information systems programs and services acquisition.

“What are we trying to do as an acquisition and contracting community? Our vision is pretty straightforward,” Assad remarked. “It’s procurement and acquisition excellence, leadership and integrity. Every day. Our mission is to supply the Soldiers of the U.S. Army and the men and women of the

Armed Services with the goods and

I enjoyed the Small Business Administration workshop with Tracey Pinson, the panel and LTG Carl A. Strock. A lot of good is going to come from this conference. I’ll have a lot of interesting information to take back. Julie Bowell, KO, Directorate of Contracting, Fort Riley, KS.

leadership endorsed this event to every Army command,” Ballard emphasized. “This symposium sends a message to the entire Army that our leadership is dedicated to the contracting workforce. I hope each of you realizes how important you are to the Army mission.”

Deliberative Speed Is Necessary

Shay Assad, Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, was one of the conference’s most oft-quoted speakers when he urged those

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— Tina Ballard

The information being presented is relevant, really good. It's something you can take back home and apply, especially the changes to FAR Part 15 in the Source Selection Manual presentation. Where they've given references, I plan to go back and check them. Source selection is really important.

Clarence Hairston, Albuquerque District Corps of Engineers.

services that they need, on time, while being stewards to the taxpayer. And we cannot forget that we are stewards for the taxpayers."

He counseled the procuring officers foremost to lead their own people. That includes making sure there are assets available to train and develop the workforce. "Be thinking how you can be a more effective leader, whether you're leading an entire contracting command, leading your branch or leading a negotiating team. It's all about leadership coming forward," Assad directed. "The Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines planned to gather in late July to examine human capital strategy and overall capabilities of the Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Workforce.

They will also look at how to improve gaps in competencies, one of which is a lack in cost and pricing analysis skills, a problem across all the services," Assad continued.

"One of the most important things is to recognize what your weaknesses are and do something about them," Assad explained. "In the case of cost and pricing, we are going to improve the community in general in terms of these capabilities — whether it be major systems acquisition or whether it be our field commands in understanding what it takes to adequately price services contracts."

"We are going to turn services contracting on its head," Assad promised.

"We're going to do it more effectively and we're going to give you the tools you need to effectively do it," he said. "We're stepping back and, really, everything is on the table — what should we purchase from the General Services Administration?

How should we do services contracting? Should we be looking at a cost department? Should we decide that we have

one particular technique that makes sense? Should it be service centric? Should it be command centric? We're going to explore all of those ideas."

As far as best practices are



LTG Strock spoke about USACE's role in disaster relief operations (DROs), explaining the new "push system" the Corps has implemented in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

concerned, Assad says there is no need for acquisition reform. There is an incredible set of best practices that must be put into play across all four services. Assad has spoken to the U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Life Cycle Management Command (CELCMC) about its contracting analysis tool. Meanwhile, he said, the Navy is purchasing services contracting in new ways.

This is probably the best acquisition conference I've ever attended. All workshops have been well attended, well thought out and well put together. My only comment to one of the speakers this morning is that there is another area in SWA where folks can deploy — Kuwait. My folks have had a great experience meeting other MACOM people here at the conference.

COL Robert Kendrick, PARC SWA.

Contingency contracting is another area in which KOs from each service are trained differently, use different methods and work from different operating plans. Assad is assisting MG Darryl A. Scott, Commanding General (CG), Joint Contracting Command-Iraq/Afghanistan (JCC-I/A), in improving contingency contracting training.

"And finally, I'd like you to remember why you're all here," Assad reminded the audience. "It is a privilege to serve the men and women of the U.S. Army. It is a privilege to serve the men and women of our Armed Forces. Be



A warranting ceremony was held the night before the PCOT Symposium began and 21 KOs were presented with their warrants. From left: DASA (P&P) Tina Ballard; PCO Craig Robinson, Surface Deployment and Distribution Command, after receiving his warrant; and Director of Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy Shay Assad.

proud and thankful that you have the opportunity to do so. I certainly am.”

USACE Support During DROs and Reconstruction

LTG Carl A. Strock, CG and Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), praised Ballard for putting on a well-received and successful PCOT Symposium. “I’m delighted that so many Corps of Engineers contracting personnel are here to share in this experience and learn how to do things better,” he told the audience. “Everyone knows it costs money to put on a conference, but in the long run, I think we will save money for the Army and avoid costs. Thank you, Ms. Ballard, for having the courage to stand up for doing things the right way and push for this conference.”



October, USACE comprises 9 divisions that are geographically based, and within the divisions, 45 districts.

Military support is USACE’s primary mission, which in the past year has primarily encompassed facility construction in Iraq. The secondary mission is civil works. USACE is Joint, supporting the Air Force and Navy. It works with other federal agencies and is international with a footprint in 90 countries.

Function (ESF) #3 (public works and engineering) and supports ESF #6 (temporary housing/roofing and human services).

During a natural disaster, the Corps is the primary agency responsible for ice, water and temporary power. Also, the Federal Emergency Management Agency assigns the Corps to remove debris following disasters. In the future, the Corps will already have contracts in place for ice, temporary power and water through the Advanced Contract Initiative (ACI). These indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contracts are competitively awarded ahead of time so that the Corps can rapidly respond to emergency situations when disaster strikes.

“One of the lessons learned after Hurricane Katrina was that we in the federal government must anticipate switching to a ‘push’ system during a natural disaster the magnitude of Katrina because the state doesn’t even know what it needs and can’t ask for help,” Strock said. “Beginning this year, we are ready to push.”

Lessons learned after Katrina include pre-training and planning exercises with ACI contractors; becoming more consistent with Army practices; leveraging existing contracts; planning for sole-source

I liked hearing from senior leaders about their philosophy and what direction they’re taking. It was also good to hear the perspective of contingency contracting because it affects everyone whether you’re there or not. It’s been a real shot in the arm. It’s great to be thanked by our senior leaders. Stephen Foster, Contract Specialist and PCO, Yuma Proving Ground, AZ.

USACE operates on a reimbursable basis. “When the Corps comes knocking on the door to help you, we also put our hand out to be reimbursed,” Strock said. “We’re a public agency that acts like a busi-

ness. We don’t have excess capacity. We do only what people need from us and pay us to do.” Key to this business model is the Corps’ contracting and acquisition professionals who help expand the capacity, through industry, when the need arises. USACE also works through local sponsors and federal agencies to execute that effort.

USACE is one of the Army’s specialty contracting agencies. As an Army major command (MACOM), soon to become a Direct Reporting Unit in

Strock spoke about USACE’s role in DROs. During a domestic disaster or terrorist act, USACE follows the National Response Plan and has responsibility for Emergency Support

Overall, the conference was very good. They picked current topics for KOs right now. I liked that they are hot topics. I would have liked to hear about special acts that we have to comply with like the Buy American Act or the Service Contract Act. Nancy Norton, S3 KO, CELCMC Acquisition Center.



PARC Jim Loehr advocated better integration between contracting and the warfighters that the community supports.

letter contracts; employing small, local businesses; and deploying internal review and auditors early.

USACE Task Force RIO

The PCOT Symposium featured a “Serving Our Soldiers Panel,” in which BG Robert Crear, President-designee, Mississippi River Commission Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, USACE, outlined a few of the many projects KOs have helped USACE with.

Crear was in charge of Task Force RIO to restore oil production following the outbreak of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. USACE contracted with KBR and Parsons to put out fires. “It is unbelievable the work they did under those conditions,” Crear recalled.



first day. Not only was this contract looked at by the U.S. Army Audit Agency and Defense Contract Management Agency, the FBI and the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command were also involved — and the KBR contract withstood all scrutiny. “It shows the integrity of the people and processes involved,” Crear said.

U.S. Army Sustainment Command (ASC)

Jim Loehrl, Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC) for the U.S. Army Field Support Command (AFSC), explained that as the Army

contracting authority from Johnson and are under his authority.

Some of the issues Loehrl would like to see improved are:

- Better integration between contracting and the warfighter. JCC-I/A has improved on this greatly already and the AFSBs are helping with this as well.
- Establishment of a requirements review board that can help ensure that what the commander wants and what the commander can afford are clear. This would help contracting professionals set priorities and allocations correctly.
- Ensure that contingency contracting strategies fold into operational strategies. Contingency contractors should participate in exercises so that they can understand Soldier needs and requirements better.

“I personally feel there is not a military officer today who can execute his mission without some support from contracting,” Loehrl proclaimed. “We need to make sure that the institutions that train our officers give more exposure to contracting so that they have a better understanding of contracting. At

All of the topics were pretty good and extremely relevant and current. The Source Selection Manual workshop was very important. I was previously a Navy civilian for 7 years, and I’ve never been to a conference like this with all of the leadership here sharing ideas. James Watkins, KO, U.S. Army Medical Materiel Agency, Fort Detrick, MD.

When KBR’s ties to the vice president and its noncompetitive cost-plus-fee award contract were questioned at election time, Crear was called to testify before Congress. “We made the decision to use KBR for all the right reasons,” Crear said. “We used all the right processes, the Justification and Approval was approved. Ballard was right there with us, testifying and supporting us,” he remarked.

After this experience, Crear advised the KOs to always review their documentation, to ensure their processes are beyond reproach and to have inspectors and auditing personnel there from the

becomes modular, units in the field will no longer have embedded KOs. Those positions will now be tied to the seven Army Field Support Brigades (AFSBs), based in Southwest Asia (SWA), Iraq, Europe, Korea, CONUS East and West, and Pacific.

As the AFSC transitions to ASC, four OCONUS PARCs will now report to MG Jerome Johnson, ASC CG. These four are the PARC Americas, PARC Korea, PARC Europe and PARC Kuwait. During peacetime, PARCs obtain their authority from the U.S. Army Contracting Agency (ACA). When they are deployed, they get their



From top left, Contingency Contracting Officers SFC Venus Griffin and MSG Cortorcha Rucker, and Procurement Analyst Charlene Wilson, all of whom serve with the SWA PARC at Fort McPherson, GA, networked with fellow KOs at the PCOT Symposium.



From left, Tina Ballard, DASA (P&P); Jeffrey P. Parsons, Army Materiel Command PARC; and MG Jerome Johnson, ASC, CG; discuss contingency contracting operations during the July PCOT Symposium.

the same time, the onus is on us to make sure that they understand what we do.”

Join the Team

MG John M. Urias, former CG, JCC-I/A, presented lessons learned during his command tour. He explained that when he arrived in Iraq in January 2005, there were great folks doing great things. However, there was a lack of contracting centralization and synchronization, duplication of effort, and limited efficiencies and economies of scale. “Generally, there was warfighter frustration because the warfighter had to focus on contracting,” Urias said. “One of our first jobs was to make contracting transparent to warfighters. Organizationally and doctrinally, we weren’t structured to do that. So in 2005 we formed the JCC and CENTCOM [U.S. Central Command] loved it. They loved it so much they added Afghanistan to our mission.”

When the JCC was formed, it became one of six major subordinate commands under Multi-National Force-Iraq CG GEN George W. Casey Jr. and CG Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan LTG Karl Eikenberry — a tremendous step forward in centralizing under one command. “Many of you supporting from the rear, who I never saw, I want to thank each and every one of you for what you did during my watch,” Urias said. “You are combat multipliers.”

Urias saw to it that KOs were where the work was being performed and that they established habitual associations with unit commanders so that the commanders knew who to go to when they needed something from day one during their time in the desert. KOs on the ground were empowered to make instantaneous decisions at high-dollar thresholds so warfighters could be supported very quickly.

During his tour of duty, Urias worked with U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command PARC Jim Warrington and ACA-The Americas PARC COL Tony Bell on \$6 billion in contracts that were let during the reconstruction efforts.

Some of the contracts JCC-I/A oversaw provided what Urias termed “capacity building” — reconstruction contracts in which Iraqis and Afghans were trained in rebuilding efforts and how to form contracts, manage a workforce, and engender fair and

open competition. “We’ll never make them clones of us,” Urias said, “but we need to teach them and give them a framework in which to conduct their business. We made a lot of headway in that end.”

Urias related how the JCC model worked in combat environments and must be institutionalized. He believes it could work in DRO environments as well. He urged those present to volunteer for service overseas. “There is no better place to serve than in direct support of warfighters in Iraq and Afghanistan,” he said. “We need more government civilians. I highly encourage you to join the team. It will change your life.”

Editor’s Note: An additional article from the PCOT Symposium about business writing by Richard Zimmerman can be found online at <http://asc.army.mil/events/conferences/2006/pco/briefs.cfm>. All PCOT Symposium photos by Meg Williams.



COL Ted Harrison from JCC-I/A gave me answers to questions I’ve had regarding contracting in theater opposed to contracting for them from our local office. I really enjoyed U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command agent Richard Drill and his presentation of different cases and how you should maintain your integrity and not be pushed into things that you know aren’t right. Sheryl Calderon, KO, Contract Administration Division, Contracting Command, Fort Hood, TX.

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