

An International Acquisition Career Path

D.T. Tripp and Roy Wood

Our Nation's leaders have set international cooperation in defense operations and system acquisition as a high priority. At a White House news conference, Nov. 4, 2004, President George W. Bush articulated three significant goals for his second term: fight terrorism, promote democracy, and build effective multinational and multilateral institutions that can support effective multilateral action when necessary. In October 2007, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates reinforced those goals at a speech delivered to the Association of the United States Army, by saying, "arguably the most important military component in the war on terrorism is not the fighting we do ourselves, but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern their own countries."

The IACP structure aligns the complexity of working in the international environment with the context of the primary functional disciplines of an acquisition workforce. Here, CPT Shari Carter, 401st Army Field Support Brigade (AFSB) (Forward) Logistics Officer, encourages U.S. Army civilian Leautry Pierce, 3rd Battalion, 401st AFSB, before he undergoes the Individual Skills Assessment exercise of the Combat Lifesaver Course at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (U.S. Army photo.)



Then-Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (USD(AT&L)) Kenneth Krieg captured the challenge this way: “Armament cooperation programs strengthen the military and industrial relationships that bind our Nation with our partners in strong security coalitions.” Indeed, DOD policy directs the acquisition workforce to “pursue international armaments cooperation to the maximum extent feasible, consistent with sound business practice and with the overall political, economic, technological, and national security goals of the United States,” (*DoD Directive 5000.01*).

Done well, international cooperation spreads the cost and risk of developing complex defense systems across several nations. It can also allow access to the best technology worldwide, ensure interoperability among allied and coalition warfighters, and encourage understanding and strengthen ties with our allies.

Yet international cooperation is complex. Programs must navigate a complicated and often confusing web of legal and regulatory requirements and processes. The transfer of defense technology to an international partner invokes regulations for arms

and technology transfers, which are subject to export control laws and require U.S. State Department permission. The sharing of dual-use technologies can also entail gaining the Department of Commerce’s permission. Even technical discussions among allies must be covered by appropriate legally binding agreements or other authorizations.

How, then, can the Defense Acquisition Workforce (DAW) navigate the maze of legal and regulatory requirements to support the international cooperation priorities set out by our national leadership? What

organizational support and training is available to equip the DAW to meet those requirements? DOD's track record suggests we have yet to overcome these hurdles and realize the goal of robust international cooperation in many of our major programs. Thankfully, things are changing.

Background

In 1990, the *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA)* provided a legal mandate to structure and provide the DAW with the best possible practitioner training. That training has been the foundation of an extraordinarily successful workforce management strategy.

DAWIA required the Secretary of Defense to designate all acquisition-related positions within DOD, specifically including positions within 11 functional career fields (contracting, program management, etc.). *DAWIA* also outlined the education, training, and experience necessary for acquisition certification and career progression within those functional disciplines.

Although "joint development and production with other government agencies and foreign countries" was among the functional disciplines identified in *DAWIA*, for 17 years, no separate, formal career path was established for international acquisitions. The reason for this is clear: managing a program — even without international partner involvement — requires a strong acquisition team; the peculiarities of an international acquisition simply add complexity for that team, from program management to contracting and business management. To be successful, each function of the acquisition team must understand the legal and regulatory implications of working with a foreign partner. Training in the nuances of international

cooperation should, ideally, be available across the multiple acquisition career fields.

Developing International Acquisition Training Within DAWIA

DAWIA's strength is based, in part, on identifying and developing specific training curricula that are linked to required career field "competencies" — the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for individuals to perform at the desired level of proficiency for a particular job. No unique competencies for international acquisition were initially identified in *DAWIA*; therefore, clear guidelines for effective training were not established. Intuitively, DOD recognized the need for international cooperation training, developed courses, and made them available to individuals who wanted to attend. Without an identified requirement, however, much of the curricula was ad hoc.

In June 2007, the USD(AT&L) directed the development of a new international acquisition career path (IACP). The terminology — "career path" versus "career field" — is important. The international career path eventually will be a supplement to other functional acquisition career fields. International competencies that are tailored to the different career fields will be identified, with appropriate training developed and ultimately deployed. The IACP structure aligns the complexity of working in the international environment with the context of the primary functional disciplines of an acquisition workforce.

IACP Deployment

As a first step, USD(AT&L) decided to develop and deploy an IACP within the program management career field. An integrated process team (IPT) was formed to identify the appropriate

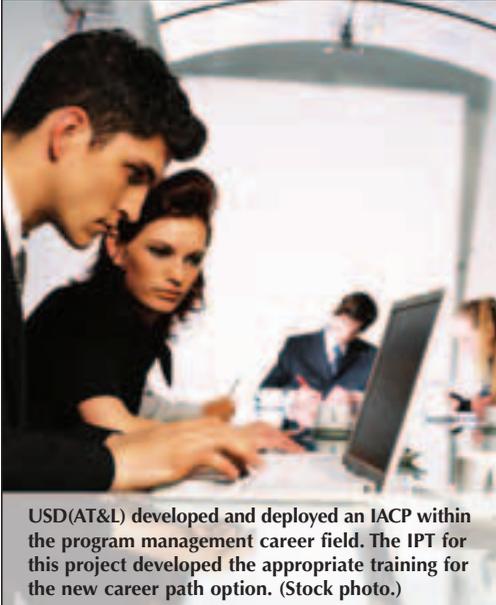
international competencies that program managers must possess if they are to effectively work within an international environment. The IPT then developed the appropriate training for the new career path option.

The IPT included representatives from the Office of the USD(AT&L) (OUSD(AT&L)), the Army, U.S. Navy (USN), U.S. Air Force (USAF), Missile Defense Agency, Defense Technology Security Administration, and the Defense Security Cooperation Agency as represented by the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management and the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). This team forms the core of an ongoing working group that supports the OUSD(AT&L) Director for International Cooperation, who is the functional advisor for the new career path and ultimately responsible for implementing and overseeing it.

IACP Applicability

Current guidelines require that the IACP be applied to acquisition personnel within the program management career field who support international acquisition programs or technology projects for which more than 50 percent of the work is international-related. Here, "international-related" means:

- A program that has been designated by the USD(AT&L) or the component acquisition executive as an international program, or one that has high potential for future foreign military sales or international direct commercial sales.
- A program with a technology development strategy or acquisition strategy that identifies a potential international system or cooperative opportunity.
- An existing program with an international agreement that is pending or is in force.



USD(AT&L) developed and deployed an IACP within the program management career field. The IPT for this project developed the appropriate training for the new career path option. (Stock photo.)

- A program associated with an international sale, lease, or logistics support of U.S. defense equipment.

These criteria are the guidelines of a survey being circulated in the next several months. The responses to that survey will more accurately characterize the number and position of people along the IACP.

DAU IACP Training

The new program management IACP has three levels of international training courses offered at DAU. Three online training modules are required at Level I: *International Armaments Cooperation*, Parts 1, 2, and 3. Each of these self-paced modules is approximately 2 hours in length. Level II training requires the completion of two additional online modules and two 1-week residency courses. The 2-hour online modules are *Information Exchange Program DOD Generic for RDT&E* [Research, Development, Test, and Evaluation] and *Technology Transfer and Export Control Fundamentals*. The residency courses are the *Multinational Program Management Course* (PMT 202) and *International Security and Technology Transfer/Control Course* (PMT 203). Level III

of the program management IACP requires the completion of a 1-week residency course, *Advanced International Management Workshop* (PMT 304). (The 2009 DAU catalog, available at www.dau.mil, contains the additional course training requirements for the program management IACP.)

It is important to note that these courses for the IACP are in addition to all training requirements for the program management career field. However, the IACP course requirements represent only 10 hours of online training and 3 weeks of resident training to attain IACP Level III competency.

IACP Utility

By establishing the IACP, specific acquisition workforce billets can be coded as international program management positions, thus requiring individuals to possess both career field and IACP qualifications to fill important positions within international cooperative programs. It also gives certified personnel significant prominence and helps senior management select appropriately qualified individuals to lead those international programs. This should effectively solve the historical problem of insufficient training and enable tomorrow's acquisition teams to be more proactive when seeking allied participation in important defense programs.

Adapting IACP Elements to Other Career Fields

The program management IACP is the first step in addressing international acquisition disconnects across the DAW. The long-term objective is to assess the competency requirements and training needs within the remaining nine acquisition career fields identified in *DAWIA*. When complete, the expanded IACP will enable and

empower the entire acquisition workforce through improved training and career development, making them more knowledgeable of the processes and implications for international programs.

The educational structure is in place to implement the new career path, and elements will evolve over time as the needs of international acquisition professionals are refined. The IACP is sure to improve acquisition outcomes and meet the policy intent of greater cooperation with key allies. In the end, effective sharing of the advantages and burdens of defense developments with international partners will benefit the American taxpayer, as well as U.S., allied, and coalition warfighters.

D.T. TRIPP is the Director of International Programs for DAU. He holds a B.S. in civil engineering from the University of Wyoming and an M.P.A. from Troy State University. He is Level III certified in program management and has experience in both security assistance and armaments cooperation. He is a retired USAF colonel fighter pilot.

ROY WOOD is the Dean of the Defense Systems Management College, School of Program Managers at DAU. He has a B.S. in computer science from Texas A&M University, an M.S. in electrical engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School, an M.B.A. from the University of Phoenix, an M.S. from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and is completing his doctoral dissertation for a Ph.D. from Capella University, expected in 2009. He is Level III certified in program management and systems planning, research, development, and engineering. Wood is a retired USN engineering duty officer and a DOD Acquisition Corps member.