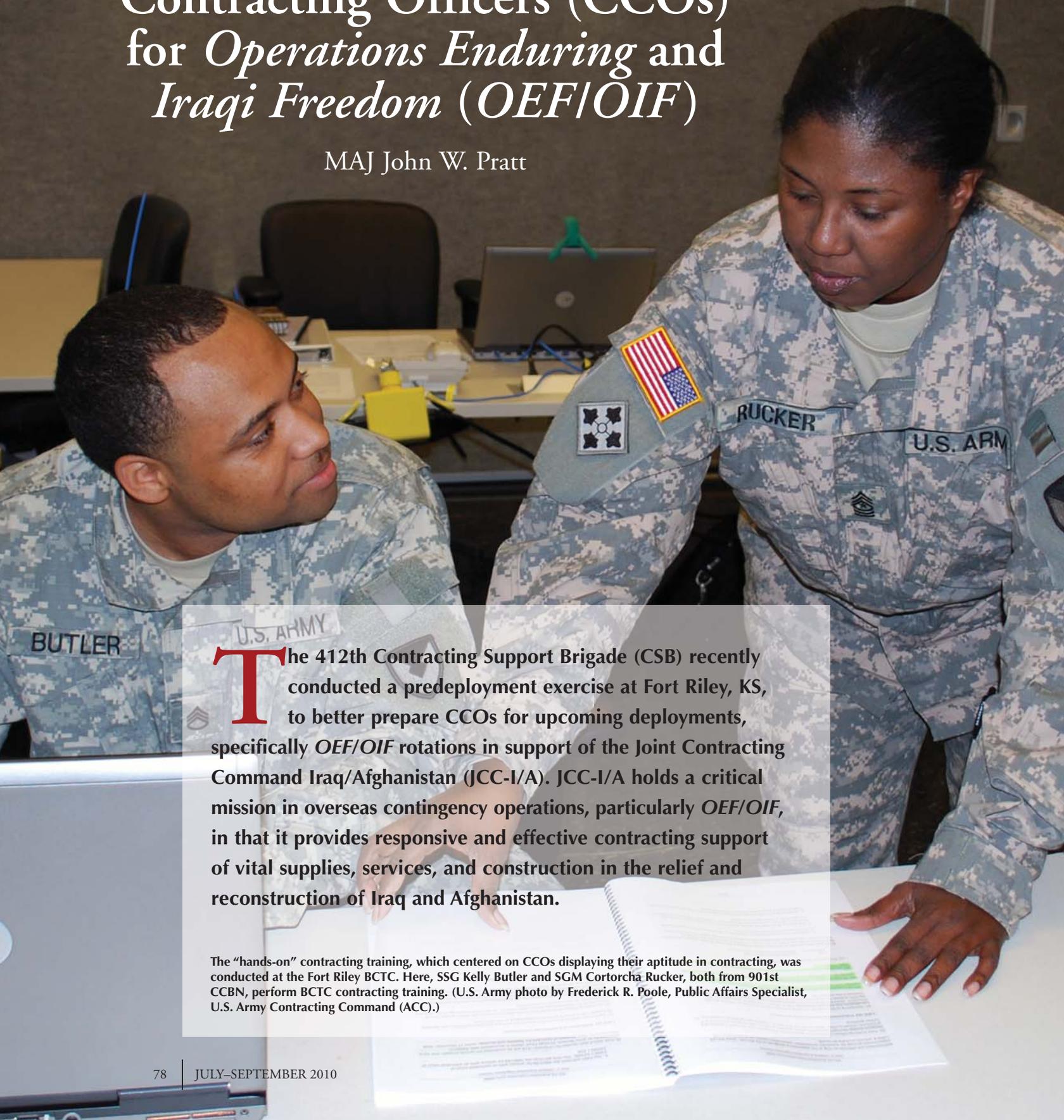


Operation Bold Impact (OBI) Prepares Contingency Contracting Officers (CCOs) for *Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)*

MAJ John W. Pratt



The 412th Contracting Support Brigade (CSB) recently conducted a predeployment exercise at Fort Riley, KS, to better prepare CCOs for upcoming deployments, specifically *OEF/OIF* rotations in support of the Joint Contracting Command Iraq/Afghanistan (JCC-I/A). JCC-I/A holds a critical mission in overseas contingency operations, particularly *OEF/OIF*, in that it provides responsive and effective contracting support of vital supplies, services, and construction in the relief and reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The "hands-on" contracting training, which centered on CCOs displaying their aptitude in contracting, was conducted at the Fort Riley BCTC. Here, SSG Kelly Butler and SGM Cortorcha Rucker, both from 901st CCBN, perform BCTC contracting training. (U.S. Army photo by Frederick R. Poole, Public Affairs Specialist, U.S. Army Contracting Command (ACC).)

As the newest CSB with the largest contingent of CCOs in the U.S. Army Expeditionary Contracting Command (ECC), an essential 412th CSB task was to ensure the readiness of its CCOs and their ability to deploy fully prepared to provide contracting support from the start. COL Jeff Morris, 412th CSB Commander, shared his guidance and the intrinsic need for brigade-level predeployment training of its CCOs. Morris looked to the 901st Contingency Contracting Battalion (CCBN) to develop a realistic training event that prepared Soldiers for deployment into theater as members of JCC-I/A. Although that is a relatively simple mission statement, it carried a lot of implied tasks. At the very top level, there is the requirement to provide the latest training on critical warrior tasks they will need in theater, as well as mission-specific contract training. “Although I have no doubt that any of the battalions could have excelled in this effort, I gave the mission to LTC Tonie Jackson because he is the senior battalion commander today,” Morris stated.

Jackson, Commander, 901st CCBN, Fort Hood, TX, and his staff had recently redeployed from *OEF/OIF*. Assigned to JCC-I/A, Jackson and his staff possessed the most up-to-date knowledge of the changes and trends in requirements for *OEF/OIF*. Upon his return, Jackson realized that there was a need to change the way contracting support was conducted both at home and when deployed. His vision for the changes was in “Bold Shift,” the initial transformation concept that evolved and subsequently led to the creation and implementation of the Contingency Contracting Exercise, later named OBI. OBI was the 412th CSB’s showcase comprehensive predeployment exercise for all deploying CCOs in support of JCC-I/A’s mission. Jackson stated, “There needs to be a change in the way contracting support is conducted. Bold Shift is a dramatic



The MSTC was one training aid that provided CCOs very realistic training in a simulation environment. Left to right: SFC Doug Collins, 902nd CCBN; MAJ Jim Clift, 901st CCBN; LTC Tonie Jackson, 901st CCBN; and SFC James Illes, 412th CSB, train using the MSTC. (U.S. Army photo by Gale Lynne Smith, Public Affairs Specialist, ACC.)

change in how we conduct contracting support to the warfighters. This is a paradigm shift from the way we used to train our CCOs and how we support warfighters prior to and during deployments.”

OBI helped prepare 30 CCOs from across the ECC for the upcoming deployment rotations to gain confidence in their ability to conduct their wartime mission and validate their competency in 51C Soldier’s Manual of Common Tasks (SMCT), as well as a number of Abbreviated Warrior Trainings (AWTs) with an emphasis on Theater-Specific Individual Readiness Training (TSIRT). SFC Wanda Knight, 410th CSB, went to the predeployment exercise with the expectation “to learn more about the contracting aspects of the deployment arena and to get a refresher on my medical skills, to make

sure that I’m able to take care of myself and help my battle buddy.”

Experienced CCOs, such as SFC James Illes, who for the last 2 years has served on the 412th CSB staff, sought to get an update on current changes in contracting as well as reinforce his warrior tasks. “For me, this is more of a refresher,” said Illes. “I’ve been working on the brigade staff for the past couple of years, so this will basically reinforce my medical readiness as far as being able to save a fellow Soldier’s life, and also reinforce any contracting changes that came about. ... So in keeping up with the local changes in policy and contract clauses and things of that nature, this is really going to be training in epic proportion for me and the other CCOs who are training here with us.”

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Training

The initial 4 days of OBI training focused on maintaining basic soldiering skills, specifically on critical warrior skills that all Soldiers must know and obtain a certain level of proficiency, especially in a deployed environment. The AWT/TSIRT training included 25 core warrior tasks and 10 battle drills. These intrinsic tasks were the same that any Soldier, regardless of occupational specialty, would receive before a deployment. Normal equipment assigned to CCOs does not facilitate being able to practice many of the warrior task training required of Soldiers. In an effort to fill the void and lack of organic equipment, the use of simulators was the best tool to do the job. Simulators provided realistic training and met a variety of warrior task trainings. The training was then tailored to the specific warrior task that CCOs must know and practice to prepare them for deployment. Additionally, the various simulation centers on Fort Riley were key components supporting the execution of OBI's AWT/TSIRT portion.

Having the onsite experts reviewing contracts and giving immediate feedback to CCOs was invaluable to CCO contracting training.

The use of the High-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle Egress Assistance Trainer, Engagement Skills Trainer, Reconfigurable Vehicle Simulator (RVS), and Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) systems were all key tools that aided in training on warrior tasks. These training aids provide very realistic training in a simulation environment, mimicking what Soldiers would experience in combat just as if they were in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The second portion of OBI centered on CCOs displaying their aptitude in contracting. The "hands-on" contracting training was conducted at the Fort Riley Battle Command Training Center (BCTC). Scott Fellows of the 1st Infantry Division and his staff were

instrumental in supporting OBI. Morris commended the BCTC and the level of support given to the 412th CSB. "The warrior task training support SGM Cortorcha Rucker coordinated from the BCTC and Fort Riley was simply outstanding," he said. "It was state-of-the-art training, and our Soldiers received the same quality as a brigade combat team Soldier deploying."

The BCTC duplicated a typical contracting environment that most CCOs will deploy to in either Iraq or Afghanistan. CCOs were tested on their ability to operate in a forward deployed environment on many required 51C SMCT contracting-specific tasks. The 36 individual contracting tasks are the building blocks of a CCO. CCOs were



SFC Eric Sears, 900th CCBN, uses the RVS trainer, a key tool that aids in training on warrior tasks. (U.S. Army photo by Gale Lynne Smith, Public Affairs Specialist, ACC.)

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divided into teams of four, duplicating that of a modular Contingency Contracting Team (CCT). CCOs were tested on their ability to execute an acquisition strategy, prepare a contracting plan, and award contracts based on actual requirements from warfighters. Mentors, who were former Regional Contracting Center Chiefs, were assigned to each team to monitor and provide guidance throughout the exercise. The heart of the contracting portion was the White Cell, exercise controllers that managed nearly all aspects of OBI contracting training. From issuing requirements to responding to CCO inquiries, the White Cell carried the role of many key players that a CCO would normally interact with in JCC-I/A, from the customers and vendors to the Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting-Iraq/Afghanistan (PARC-I/A) staff.

Programs and Tools

To ensure the realism of CCO contracting training, incorporating the use of the Procurement Desktop-Defense (PD2) program, a subprogram of the Standard Procurement System (SPS), was a key factor for CCOs in understanding the overall contracting process. Dan Stock, former JCC-I/A SPS administrator, ensured that the software was installed properly for all participating CCO deployment computer notebooks and that the PD2 program was executed smoothly. PD2 is the fundamental instrument for contracting officers operating in theater. Input of requirements, contract award, and contract administration are all done using the PD2 network. The realism was enhanced by the use of actual

contracts from theater and processing them through PD2 as a training tool at the BCTC. The CCOs were given a realistic example of what kind of requirements are coming out of theater and how they are processed via automation.

An excellent tool to review CCO contracts and ensure that they were producing sound contracts was the Procurement Management Review (PMR) audit, which maintained the realism of OBI and simulated a deployed environment. PMRs are necessary tools that are designed to provide reviews of contracting elements to assist CCOs with improving operational contracting efficiency and effectiveness. The PMR is designed to provide CCOs with onsite assistance and training. The 412th CSB solicited the help of Paul Kennedy, former JCC-I/A Policy and Strategic Sourcing, and U.S. Air Force COL Roger Westermeyer, former JCC-I/A PARC-I, to collectively provide expertise in reviewing CCO contracts and conduct an abbreviated PMR. Having the onsite experts reviewing contracts and giving immediate feedback to CCOs was invaluable to CCO contracting training. This PMR took the contracting training to higher levels than any previous training the Army has been able to offer CCOs before deployment.

OBI's Purpose

CCOs must be prepared to do their wartime mission immediately versus subjecting to any lag time associated with "ramp-up" learning once a CCO arrives in theater. OBI serves as a foundation and model for future

predeployment training and preparing CCOs to deploy. Morris summed up his future for OBI: "We have to institutionalize this training. We need to capture the things that work and find ways to replicate them while improving on those areas where we can improve. Part of the way we will make this better is by expanding the number of participants to include members of the reserve component and the Air Force while also including more Soldiers from the 412th and ECC. We may be able to get more Air Force participation as mentors so our Soldiers are better prepared for the joint environment. I think that we are going to see a much more confident Soldier ready to start performing on day one in JCC-I/A."

OBI changed the way that the Army trains CCOs by giving them the opportunity to receive a firsthand look at what capabilities they possess and how they can apply the contracting skills they have learned thus far. OBI should be written as a required event for all CCOs before deployment as it serves as a culminating event where CCOs take all they have learned in school and on-the-job at their respective Mission Installation Contracting Command locations or contracting center locations. To be able to actively practice what is learned and receive real-time feedback on individual CCO performance in a realistic environment just before deployment is invaluable to the contracting community and the warfighter CCOs' support.

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