

From the Army Acquisition Executive

## The Importance of a Highly Skilled Army Acquisition Workforce



The Army has acquired weapon systems, equipment, goods, and services by working in partnership with private contractors and commercial industry since the Revolutionary War. While this issue of *Army AL&T Magazine* does not take us back to the beginning of our Nation's history, it focuses on several decades of Army acquisition and even includes an article on the U.S. Army Signal Corps, which was created in 1860. It was the Signal Corps that awarded the first Army contract on December 23, 1907, to Wilbur and Orville Wright for the "purchase of one heavier-than-air flying machine." In 1909, the Wright Military Flyer became the world's first military airplane.

With our entry into World War I and World War II and the introduction of new and major weapon systems such as the tank and long-range, heavy-payload bombers, the need for massive manufacturing capability gave rise to a domestic defense industry. No longer could the government rely on its own shipyards and arsenals to meet our warfighting needs. To manage the weapon systems and equipment being built by industry, the government required a highly skilled civilian and military procurement workforce. These efforts extended to space as the Army Ballistic Missile Agency launched the first U.S. satellite, Explorer I, into orbit on Jan. 31, 1958. This workforce grew in strength and complexity during our involvement in Korea and Vietnam and ebbed only as the Cold War ended. Our acquisition workforce, which now totals roughly 43,000 professionals, is down from a Cold War high of more than 100,000 members.

Several studies and commissions during this period recognized the need for a smaller, well-trained, well-educated, highly motivated workforce for efficiency and innovation. In particular, I am reminded of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, which was led by David Packard. The commission's findings influenced the passage by Congress of major workforce

reform legislation, including the *Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act of 1986* and the *Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act of 1990*.

It is clear that the dramatic reduction in workforce numbers, along with the loss of acquisition knowledge and expertise acquired over a lifetime of work, contributed significantly to the problems we have witnessed in the past 15 years.

At present, we are working with Congress, DOD, and others to strengthen and rebuild a skilled acquisition workforce. The candid and comprehensive report by Dr. Jacques Gansler and the members of his Commission on Army Acquisition and Program Management in Expeditionary Operations has given us insights for the way ahead. By the end of this year, we will have hired and in-sourced 1,791 civilian acquisition workforce members. Our goal is to hire 1,885 people and in-source 4,041 professionals, for a total of 5,926 new members. We are also addressing the need to expand, train, structure, and empower our acquisition experts to better support joint expeditionary operations. We are changing our culture to recognize the essential nature of contracting. We are also improving professional development, certification, education, and acquisition experience opportunities at all workforce levels.

Our efforts are aimed at improving our ability to attract and retain the best possible people to perform our vital mission—to provide our Soldiers a decisive advantage in any mission by developing, acquiring, fielding, and sustaining the world's best equipment and services and by leveraging technologies and capabilities to meet current and future Army needs. Our acquisition workforce is dedicated to meeting the needs of our Soldiers around the clock and around the world, and I am dedicated to ensuring that they have the right skills and training to successfully perform their jobs.

## From the Army Acquisition Executive

The Army is committed to continually improving the process of developing, procuring, and sustaining our weapon systems. Likewise, we are committed to investing in cutting-edge technologies that provide our Soldiers with the decisive edge in battle.

The Army compiled a list of my predecessors within the Research, Development, and Acquisition community—now Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology—and I want to share their names with you. Their leadership and the achievements of their acquisition teams contributed significantly to our Army, the world's most capable, powerful, and respected force. Now, it is our time.

The Army is committed to continually improving the process of developing, procuring, and sustaining our weapon systems. Likewise, we are committed to investing in cutting-edge technologies that provide our Soldiers with the decisive edge in battle. The Army's decision in 1999 to combine logistics, the largest portion of total life-cycle costs for weapon systems and equipment, with acquisition and technology reflects the importance of all communities working together for our warfighters.

We are also fully committed to delivering better value to the taxpayer and the warfighter by improving the way we do business. Next to supporting our forces at war on an urgent basis, this is President Barack Obama's and Secretary Robert Gates' highest priority for our acquisition professionals. As Secretary Gates has said, one dollar of waste in our defense budget is a dollar we can't spend to support our troops, to prepare for future threats, or to

protect the American people. While we have a continuing responsibility to procure the critical goods and services

our forces will need in the coming years, we will not have ever-increasing budgets to pay for them. We must do more without more. Since June, the senior leadership of the acquisition community—the Component Acquisition Executives, senior logisticians and systems command leaders, Office of the Secretary of Defense officials, program executive officers, and program managers—have met regularly with Dr. Ashton B. Carter, the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, to inform and craft the guidance for realizing greater efficiency. The Army has been fully engaged in the entire process. We agree that a capable, qualified, and appropriately sized acquisition workforce will be the key to its success.

I recall reading testimony by Norman R. Augustine, a former Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development, and Acquisition, Under Secretary of the Army, and defense industry leader, to the House of Representatives' Armed Services Committee earlier this year on the Defense Department's acquisition challenges. He

stated, "The bottom line for the acquisition enterprise is to recognize and reconstitute a professional acquisition workforce working side-by-side with its contractor support—and, most importantly, its operational counterparts."

### Army Acquisition Leaders

Willis M. Hawkins	1963–1966
Russell D. O'Neal	1966–1968
Robert L. Johnson	1969–1973
Norman R. Augustine	1973–1975
Edward A. Miller	1975–1977
Percy A. Pierre	1977–1981
Jay R. Sculley	1981–1989
Stephen K. Conver	1990–1993
Gilbert F. Decker	1994–1997
Paul J. Hoeper*	1998–2001
Claude M. Bolton Jr.	2002–2008
Dr. Malcolm Ross O'Neill	2010–

\* Title Change: Assistant Secretary of the Army for Research, Development, and Acquisition was redesignated as Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology effective Feb. 16, 1999.

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