

Contracting Community Highlights



We are in an era of unprecedented transparency and reform that will change the way Army acquisition does business in the execution of contract actions. It is clear that the Army Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology Workforce needs to work smarter and more efficiently in obligating government funds. The federal budget is shrinking, so every dollar spent will be scrutinized. The message is clear: Spend each dollar like it is your own. Be vigilant in dealing with vendors to maximize competition and control costs.

In a Sept. 14, 2010, memorandum for acquisition personnel, Dr. Ashton B. Carter, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, provided guidance for obtaining greater efficiency and productivity in defense spending. Highlighting this guidance is an emphasis on targeting affordability and controlling cost growth, incentivizing productivity and innovation in industry, promoting real competition, and reducing non-productive processes and bureaucracy. In addition, there is guidance on improving the tradecraft in services acquisition, including requirements definition, market research, competition, fixed-price incentive fee contracts, and cost efficiency objectives (see related article on Page 46). Implementation instructions were released Nov. 3, 2010, to put this guidance in motion. For the complete text of the implementation directive, visit [http://www.acq.osd.mil/docs/USD\(AT&L\)_Implementation_Directive_Better_Buying_Power_110310.pdf?Transcriptid=4648](http://www.acq.osd.mil/docs/USD(AT&L)_Implementation_Directive_Better_Buying_Power_110310.pdf?Transcriptid=4648).

In my column in the April–June 2010 issue, I talked about “hot button” topics that are of key interest to the contracting community. While we are making progress in some areas by standardizing processes and getting the word out, a great deal of improvement is still needed in the following areas:

- Justification and Approval documentation is critical to telling the story of why we need to take a contract action. Rationales for your decisions and actions must pass the test of whether they make sense and are in the best interest of the government.
- A Quality Assurance (QA) program must be present on the contracts we write. Contractors must be held to performance, and the documented results of the QA inspections must be kept to help defend the government’s rights during a dispute.
- If a contracting officer’s representative is assigned to a contract, he or she must be trained and qualified to perform those duties.

- There are too many instances of inadequate government property administration when government-furnished equipment is given to a contractor. Property books need to be maintained to track our assets and to ensure that they are returned to the government at the completion of the contract.
- Cost and Price (C&P) analysis remains a focus area. It is critical to obtain the proper amount of C&P data to measure the contractor’s offer and document the analysis of the data that lead to a contracting officer’s decision to award.

The contracting community’s Procurement Management Review teams are instructed to measure the effectiveness of executing these critical functions during their reviews of operational contracting sites this fiscal year.

These are exciting times to be in the contracting career field. Each of you holds the key to our success in getting the best bang for the buck and still delivering weapon systems and services to the warfighter on time and on budget. Thank you for the professionalism and dedication you bring to work with you every day to accomplish this important mission.

Edward M. Harrington

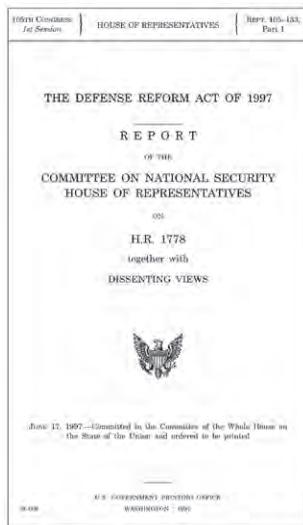
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army
(DASA) for Procurement

Editor’s Note: After more than 35 years of dedicated service to the U.S. Army, Mr. Harrington left government service in December 2010 to re-enter private life. Mr. Lee Thompson, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Strategic Communications and Business Transformation, has been named the Acting DASA for Procurement.

How Army Acquisition Is Evolving to Paperless Contracting

Steve A. White

As the Army fights terrorism and supports contingency operations around the world, the acquisition community is entrenched in providing warfighter support in an efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible manner. One of the means to achieve this is paperless contracting, which started as an initiative of the *Defense Reform Act of 1997* and has progressed throughout the acquisition environment, touching the requirement identification, contracting, finance, and logistics communities. The *Defense Reform Act of 1997* encompasses the whole process of acquisition reform, reporting, and transparency; a portion of the reform was initiated back in 1986 and has evolved into the current transparency request.



The paperless contracting initiative started as part of the *Defense Reform Act of 1997*. (Image courtesy of the Library of Congress.)

Progression Since the '90s

A presidential initiative from the 1990s directed that government agencies set a goal of going paperless, and Congress provided the guidance and legislation to support this plan. In response, the Army contracting community created a paperless automated system that provides the entire contracting community with a way to create solicitations, solicitation advertisements, proposal, response, review, and award.

The paperless concept is evolving and expanding beyond the contracting community, allowing for seamless, undisturbed communication. Proposed expansion of the paperless process, both conceptual and real, is reflected within the acquisition process of requirement conception, award, receipt or acceptance, payment, performance evaluation, and closeout. At the front end, requirement generation and identification include the customer's participation. Business opportunities are identified, solicitations are disseminated, contractors are provided with information, proposals are delivered, awards are distributed, and notifications are made electronically. The contract specialist leverages preset templates generated from specific dollar limits tailored to specific needs, to produce a faster contract-building process.

Another available electronic tool for customers is the assignment of purchase cards that provide purchasing ability directly to the requiring office, making them invaluable in the contingency environment. Within dollar limits, customers can fulfill their purchasing needs and acknowledge receipt or acceptance via Web-based systems. Performance of receipt or acceptance is a seamless process because the contractor can submit invoices online for government review and approval. After electronic verification, the contractor is paid electronically. Customers gain real-time information to better enable future funding and other sourcing or requirements.

Contractor Requirements

The evolving paperless initiative requires all customers wanting to do business with the Army or DOD to register with Central Contractor Registration. Contractors must participate in the electronic acquisition environment as a primary requirement to do business with the government. Additionally, all contracts issued by the Army will contain provisions for electronic funds transfer to ensure continuity through the final stage of the paperless process.

Currently, the Army financial community has solidified its involvement with the acquisition community with the development and deployment of the General Funds Enterprise Business System. This paperless system communicates with the contracting community to bridge any gap between the contracting community and the requiring and resource office for general fund actions.

The Paperless Future

The contracting community is not resting on its accomplishments. We continue to actively seek and plan ways to increase our effectiveness and efficiencies and to further develop paperless contracting beyond the acquisition community.

The automated paperless environment has become an invaluable tool to support President Barack Obama's transparency initiative. The contracting community continues to explore all possibilities to provide the best value to the warfighter, as well as the best support. The paperless process continues to evolve with technical development and creative thinking from our workforce, customers, and industry.

Steve A. White is a Procurement Analyst with the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army for Procurement, Enterprise Business Directorate. He holds a B.A. in advertising from Howard University and an M.S.A. in procurement management from Webster University. White is an Executive Leadership Program graduate from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School and is certified Level III in contracting.

Program Executive Office Simulation, Training, and Instrumentation Takes Acquisition Interns to New Heights

Kristen A. McCullough

Interns from Program Executive Office Simulation, Training, and Instrumentation (PEO STRI) experienced firsthand the life of a Soldier while witnessing how PEO STRI training devices are used, as part of the PEO's fourth Acquisition Academy, Sept. 7–9, 2010, at Fort Benning, GA.

After a 7-hour bus trip from Orlando, FL, the day before, the interns started their first morning as "students" in Airborne

School. Two of the 20 interns had the opportunity to jump from a plane with Fort Benning's Silver Wings precision parachute team. One of the jumpers described her reaction. "I can honestly say I wasn't too nervous until I was all strapped in and they opened the bay door for my jump. But it was too late to turn back—not that I wanted to," said Sarah Weston, a systems engineering intern.

The other intern jumper was also nervous at first. "For someone who has a fear of heights, I was scared before the jump, and I even dreamed about it the night before," said Shi Deng, a budget analyst intern. "But once I leaped out of the plane, it was the best adrenaline rush I have ever experienced."

Although only two interns had the opportunity to parachute from the plane, they all were able to jump from Fort Benning's famed 34-foot tower. The tower exercise is part of the Airborne School's Tower Week, which validates jumpers' individual skill training in properly and safely exiting an aircraft.

Nealie Page, an operations research analyst intern, explained her experience. "After a few inching-forward and stepping-back attempts, I was able to timidly tuck my head and jump out of the tower in a direction perpendicular to that of the zip-line route," she said. "I'm sure I was screaming, but I was also smiling the whole way down."



Nealie Page, an operations research analyst intern attending PEO STRI's Acquisition Academy, jumped from the 34-foot tower at Fort Benning's Airborne School Sept. 8, 2010. (U.S. Army photo by Thomas Kehr.)

Understanding PEO STRI Products

The next day the interns visited with the Soldiers and garrison staff to see some PEO STRI products, including the Close Combat Tactical Trainer (CCTT) and the Digital Multi-Purpose Range Complex (DMPRC). The interns received an in-depth briefing on the CCTT, so comprehensive that they learned about Army-level issues the program faces. From the briefing, the interns now know the importance of integrating the dismounted Soldier into the CCTT; the concerns associated with its relocation from Fort Knox, KY, to Fort Benning; and the magnitude of making the CCTT interoperable within the live, virtual, and constructive training domains.

Although the interns did not get to see the trainer in action, they were able to see one of the CCTTs up close and personal. "I managed to squeeze myself into the gunner seat. I was surprised with the level of detail in the trainer. It definitely gave me more of an appreciation for what PEO STRI does for our Soldiers," said Jon Katz, a contract specialist intern from U.S. Special Operations Command.

The interns received a comprehensive overview of the DMPRC, which went through the Government Acceptance Test Sept. 25–30, 2010. The result was an Initial Operational Capability, conditional on the contractor making necessary fixes before the first exercise in late November. Not only did the interns learn about the significance of this test, but they also learned about the many issues facing a range of this size (1,600 acres) and funding (\$6 million).

After seeing some of the PEO STRI products, the interns attended a graduation ceremony for more than 400 Soldiers who had completed basic training. They also ate lunch in the dining facility with Soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 507th Parachute Infantry Regiment.



Shi Deng, a budget analyst intern attending PEO STRI's Acquisition Academy, jumped out of a plane with Fort Benning's Silver Wings precision parachute team Sept. 8, 2010. (U.S. Army photo by Thomas Kehr.)

Lessons Learned

The interns' experience at Fort Benning was strengthened by the mentorship provided by four PEO STRI leaders who accompanied them. One of those leaders, Scott Pulford, a retired Army colonel who serves as PEO STRI's strategic integrator and assists with the Acquisition Academy, said, "It's critical that we indoctrinate the members of this class with a feeling of what it's like to be Soldiers—the same Soldiers they are going to support with training devices when they graduate and join their project teams. Bringing them to Fort Benning gives us the perfect opportunity to not only see PEO STRI systems in use, but it gives them a chance to see what life looks like through the eyes of a Soldier."

Aside from the many lessons the interns learned about Army living and Soldier training, perhaps the greatest lesson they learned is about PEO STRI's importance to the Army.

"As a new federal employee with no military background, I found it extremely educational and important that I used this trip to assimilate myself [into the life of a Soldier], so that I could better understand our purpose at PEO STRI in supporting the warfighter," said Michael Glazer, a contract specialist intern.

A Successful Retention Tool

The PEO STRI Acquisition Academy was created 3 years ago to help meet a need for DOD contracting personnel by bringing in new people and training them to be proficient federal government contracting professionals. Classes are hosted on an as-needed basis, with class size ranging from 14 to 21 students.

Since then, the Acquisition Academy has evolved to include interns from a number of acquisition career fields. Ninety-six percent of the interns who completed the three previous classes are still with PEO STRI.

Programs similar to the Acquisition Academy are conducted throughout the Army acquisition community to provide civilians with the experiences Soldiers encounter.

For example, the Communications-Electronics Research, Development, and Engineering Center (CERDEC) operates a Greening Course, designed to ensure team building and Army Team camaraderie. The course familiarizes civilians with Army operations in a field environment. Past participant Jack S. Li, an engineer with the CERDEC Software Engineering Directorate, commented, "It's good for a civilian to understand the military operation environment, which I haven't dealt with much in the past. I know my stuff, computer science and electrical engineering, but this helps me apply it to the military operation."

In May 2010, PEO Soldier sent three product engineers to the Joint Training Readiness Center, Fort Polk, LA, to participate in "grounding," working alongside Soldiers as they planned and conducted dismounted maneuvers. The engineers saw firsthand the gear with which the Soldiers operate.

Mary Harwood, Human Factors Engineer for PEO Soldier's Product Manager Soldier Clothing and Individual Equipment, said being able to observe Soldiers using the equipment in a simulated environment is one of the best ways to gauge results. "No matter how many user evaluations you do, there's nothing like the real thing—doing what Soldiers do in the gear that PEO Soldier provides," she said.

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Interns from PEO STRI's fourth Acquisition Academy class experienced a "day in the life of a U.S. Soldier" at Fort Benning, Sept. 7–9, 2010. The class poses in front of the "Follow Me" statue, the infantry branch's signature icon. (U.S. Army photo by Thomas Kehr.)