

From the DACM

Rebuilding and Rebalancing the Army Acquisition Corps



This edition of *Army AL&T Magazine* inaugurates what I hope will be a productive forum for me to share my perspectives as Principal Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology and Director of the Army Acquisition Corps. My goal is to engage and inform you, the members of the AL&T Workforce, on issues of the highest priority, starting with the need to rebuild and rebalance the U.S. Army Acquisition Corps.

In our Army, there's one centerpiece of what we do every day, and that is Soldiers and how we support Soldiers. In the case of our mission in AL&T, it's what capability can we provide Soldiers on the shortest timeline that gives them the ability to execute the mission, and then one day after they've executed the mission efficiently and effectively, to come home safely to their Families and their friends.

A top priority that I work toward in this job is the acquisition workforce and taking care of the people who work so hard to execute our AL&T mission. It requires rebalance and growth across the acquisition workforce for us to continue building a world-class, professional corps of civilians and military members focused on our mission. That's what I see as my No. 1 challenge, because helping Soldiers and getting capability into their hands isn't going to happen efficiently or effectively without the acquisition workforce.

During my tenure as Principal Military Deputy to Dr. Malcolm Ross O'Neill, Army Acquisition Executive, rest assured that I'm going to focus on rebuilding and growing the Army Acquisition Corps. This includes AL&T, and most importantly the contracting workforce.

The continued growth of contracting remains our greatest challenge. We have made progress, but there is still much more to do! We're going to add more than 1,600 contracting professionals—military and civilian—over the next several years to our contracting workforce. And they are absolutely essential. I believe that our contracting workforce, at least in previous years, is the most under-appreciated skill in the Army.

We absolutely have to rebuild the skill. It takes, in my opinion, a minimum of 5 years, but more realistically 8 to 10 years, before you have a highly qualified contracting officer who can take on almost any task at hand and execute that most complex contract.

Another of my top priorities, and this applies throughout the AL&T community, is communications. As you're working your task, if you're not communicating, you're probably making a mistake and not taking advantage of an opportunity. If we are going to be successful today in the acquisition business, it requires that we be inclusive in the process for building our programs. Programs today are part of a system, and very rarely will you find a program that can be viewed and executed in isolation. To be successful today, program managers must seek partnership and support from those who are stakeholders in their systems, and the basis for any successful partnership is clear, consistent communications between parties.

It is more important than ever that our acquisition team seek to work effectively with others to figure out how to increase system capabilities.

I am very serious about certification and professional development of our professional corps members. If you're a member of my, of our, Acquisition Corps and you're not driving toward being certified in the skills the Army has asked you to be certified in, I want to seek you out and provide guidance. Seeking to become certified is simply being a "professional"—it is expected and actually "required." So, become certified in the shortest time possible!

It is often stated that the acquisition system hasn't responded appropriately to the needs of warfighters. We sometimes focus on what might be considered as having not gone so well. At the heart of this is ensuring that we're doing all the right things to support our warfighters. As we have executed programs and learned from those that have "not gone so well," it remains important that we learn from the mistakes we have made in the past, seek to change our processes, and not make the same mistakes again!

The Army is executing an acquisition study led by Mr. Gil Decker, former Army Acquisition Executive, and retired GEN Lou Wagner, former Commander of U.S. Army Materiel Command. Secretary John McHugh has brought them in to charter a study of the acquisition system. We will soon receive the final outbrief and the complete report, which we expect to provide us with a blueprint to seek continuous improvement of the acquisition process.

It's also important that we remember the many actions that we've executed well across acquisition, such as aviation modernization, Stryker BCTs, Blue Force Tracking, MRAP/M-ATV, the Rapid Fielding Initiative, short-notice Foreign Military Sales support for Iraq's and Afghanistan's requirements, and many others.

We have many new challenges as well. First is the building of the network and network synchronization, the most important program within the Army today. Lightening our Soldiers' load is another area where we are putting a lot of effort. Finally, we must be looking across the board at efficiencies. In order to continue supporting our Soldiers with the very best capability, we will absolutely have to become more efficient. Our Soldiers are depending upon each of us to do our part!

I talk about these priorities, successes, and challenges in the recent interview I had with *Army AL&T Magazine*. The interview begins on Page 11 of this edition.

Finally, we have an incredibly talented, dedicated, and hardworking Army AL&T Workforce. Dr. O'Neill and I have the utmost confidence that as we continue to support our Soldiers in overseas contingency operations, you will rise to every challenge and will succeed in executing the Acquisition Corps' mission, as the true professionals that you are.

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