

Introduction

In January 2002, the Secretary of the Army and the Chief of Staff of the Army directed Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASAALT) Claude M. Bolton Jr. to develop a plan to establish an Army Contracting Agency (ACA) that would support the centralized installation management plan and save the Army financial resources. The ASAALT was also directed to establish a specialized information management and technology contracting activity. With this guidance, the ACA transition team was off and running.

The Army Contracting Agency was activated Oct. 1, 2002, as a Field Operating Agency under the Office of the ASAALT (OASAALT). Headquartered in Falls Church, VA, the ACA is responsible for more than \$5.5 billion in annual obligations. In addition, the ACA is one of the three largest contracting organizations in the Army in terms of dollars obligated and personnel assigned—more than 2,300 military and civilian employees worldwide. One of the ACA's primary functions is providing contingency contracting operations support to warfighters.

Vision/Mission

The ACA's vision is to lead the Army in efficient and effective contracting, with a professional team committed to continuous innovation and process improvement. It is a customer-support organization focused on the successful achievement of command missions and the Objective Force.

The ACA's mission is to provide command and control of the regional headquarters, contracting centers, and installation directorates of contracting; the Information Technology E-Commerce and Commercial Contracting Center (ITEC4); the overseas contracting activities; and the contingency contracting function. The overarching goal of the ACA is to provide customers with a substantial return on investment by obtaining goods and services on time and at the lowest total ownership cost. Additionally, there are six specific goals as follows:

Supporting The Warfighter . . .

THE U.S. ARMY CONTRACTING AGENCY

Suellen D. Jeffress

- To consolidate requirements and centralize the award of contracts in excess of \$500,000 (total contract value including options) per established policies and guidance;

- To integrate and synchronize with the Installation Management Agency (IMA), reshaping in a manner that is transparent to the customer;

- To exploit current technology to the greatest extent possible;

- To centralize personnel management and contingency contracting processes;

- To ensure compliance with small business statutes and guidance; and

- To put more expertise to bear on complex contracting.

anticipated workforce changes and maturity.

Metrics

The following five metrics will be used to evaluate the progress and success of the ACA:

- *Customer Satisfaction.* This is the ACA's top priority and will be measured by the Interactive Customer Evaluation Web site at <http://ice.disa.mil>, where customers can rate the ACA and provide feedback to key personnel.

- *Elimination Of Redundant Effort.* This will be measured by contract action reporting tools, which are part of the Federal Procurement Data System.

- *Contracting Professionalism.* The ACA will measure the extent to which it meets the Army contracting community's Professional Executive Committee goals, including Defense Acquisition University certifications and university degrees.

- *Socio-Economic Goals.* Advance acquisition planning will be used as a key tool to ensure achievement of assigned goals.

- *Purchase Cardholder Spans Of Control.* The ACA goal is no more than one billing official for every seven cardholders.

Small Business

A very robust small business program was established to ensure that small business goals and targets remain a priority in ACA procurements. Particular attention will be focused on advance acquisition planning efforts to advocate small business set-asides, partial set-asides, and small business subcontracting plans. A network of

Savings

The ACA will generate savings by eliminating duplicative overhead, obtaining greater efficiencies from regionalized contracts, and exploiting procurement initiatives. Further savings will be obtained by leveraging technology to create a more flexible and agile workforce. The ACA will work closely with the newly established Network Enterprise Technology Command (NETCOM) and the IMA to reduce Army overall operation and maintenance costs.

There are no reductions in force or downgrades in the ACA's plans to reshape its workforce. Reshaping will be accomplished by attrition, with no mandatory civilian permanent change of station (relocation) planned. Because 50 percent of the Army contracting workforce will be eligible to retire within the next 5 years, this is a proactive strategy for addressing the Army's needs in conjunction with

ASAALT
Claude M.
Bolton Jr., left;
Secretary of
the Army
Thomas E.
White; and
Acting Director,
ACA Sandra O.
Sieber uncase
the ACA flag.



senior small business specialists will oversee the program.

Customer Organizations

The ACA supports the Army component of the warfighting commanders-in-chief and provides direct mission support to three Army major commands (MACOMs): the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), the Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), and the Military District of Washington (MDW). In addition, the ACA directly supports the IMA, providing the base operations contracting support within the Directorate of Contracting for all training and warfighter Army installations both in and outside CONUS. ACA's establishment of the ITEC4 provides an organization to implement an Army enterprisewide buying capability for common-use information technology (IT).

The ACA will perform mission contracting for MDW, FORSCOM, and TRADOC using established contracting offices and existing expertise, located in close proximity to the MACOM headquarters. Liaison officers were assigned to MDW, FORSCOM, and TRADOC to ensure that command-unique mission and contingency requirements are appropriately addressed. Liaison officers are also assigned to the IMA regional headquarters. OCONUS contracting activities

will perform mission and contingency contracting for their respective MACOMs.

The ACA provides contracting for IT and commercial product support to the Chief Information Officer, G-6; NETCOM; and the Program Executive Office, Enterprise Information Systems. Transparency is achieved by maintaining the existing customer-contracting office relationship.

Other Responsibilities

The ACA is the Department of Defense Executive Agent for management of the Purchase Card Program. As such, the ACA ensures that the Purchase Card Program supports the acquisition excellence and financial management objectives set by Congress and the Secretary of Defense. In addition, ACA will have Armywide responsibility for the Standard Procurement System, Procurement Management Assessment Program, Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program, and other programs where it is designated as the Army proponent.

Only the installation and information management contracting functions within the following specialty commands will be incorporated into the ACA: the Army Materiel Command, the Military Traffic Management Command, the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Guard, the Army Medical

Command, the Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, the Army Space and Missile Defense Command, and the Army Intelligence and Security Command. The Defense Contracting Command-Washington is a specialized contracting agency in FY03, but it is being reviewed for possible inclusion in the ACA in FY04.

Specialty commands retain their currently assigned contracting functions—to include contingency contracting mission—except for selected installation missions and the common-use IT and commercial products mission.

Conclusion

The ACA was successfully created on a greatly accelerated 9-month schedule. This new organization has great promise for superior customer service for installation and common-use IT procurements. Reshaping the workforce to better serve soldier needs will save the Army long-term financial resources by exploiting technology and leveraging economies of scale while maintaining vigilance in its responsibility to the small business community. For more information, visit the ACA Web site at <http://aca.saalt.army.mil>.

SUELLEN D. JEFFRESS is the Acting Deputy Director of OASAALT's Army Contracting Agency. She has a B.A. from Grove City College in Pennsylvania and an M.B.A. in procurement and contracting from The George Washington University. In addition, she attended the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the Harvard University Program for Senior Executive Fellows. She is a Certified Professional Contracts Manager, a member of the Army Acquisition Corps, and is Level III certified in program management and contracting.
