

# The Battlefield Contracting Community of Practice

BY PATRICK CONWAY

A LOGNet forum permits members of the contracting community to share knowledge, expertise, and experience between the institutional and operational forces.

In its October 2007 independent assessment, *Urgent Reform Required: Army Expeditionary Contracting*, the Commission on Army Acquisition and Program Management in Expeditionary Operations (also known as the Gansler Commission) presented the Secretary of the Army with a number of findings and recommendations for achieving “timely and efficient contracting for materiel, supplies, and services in support of expeditionary operations.” The assessment included, but was not limited to, the following major weaknesses—

- “Contracting should be a core capability of the Army, but it currently is treated as an operational and institutional side issue.”
- “[There is a] Lack of planning and training for expeditionary contracting and contract management.”
- “[There is a] Lack of recognition (by operators) of the impact of contracting and contractors in expeditionary operations (yet approximately 50[percent] of ‘force’ in Iraq is contractors).”

Certainly this study may drive a variety of much needed “big Army” transformational efforts, ranging from enhancing the quantity and development of contracting personnel to revamping regulatory policies and procedures. But many of these initiatives will take time. Obtaining and developing contract professionals requires a long-term investment. Restructuring the acquisition and contracting community to facilitate both continental United States and expeditionary operations will take years. Likewise, achieving the necessary legislative, regulatory, and policy support is a lengthy, laborious process. Clearly, these and other shortfalls identified must be acted on, but how long and what form implementation of any commission recommendations may take remains to be seen.

So what can we do now? More specifically, what immediate steps can be taken to improve contracting management and support within the current operational environment? Several Army organizations are now answering this call by capitalizing on the expertise within the Army Sustainment Command, Army field support brigades, and the acquisition, logistics, and technology community and by improving on the

contracting-related training and education provided at Army Training and Doctrine Command centers and schools.

However, this article focuses on a parallel initiative launched by the Army Combined Arms Support Command (CASCOM) to leverage the expertise and experience of the aforementioned organizations through a “battlefield contracting” community of practice (CoP).

The “Battlefield Contracting” CoP is a globally accessible discussion forum, where anyone with Army Knowledge Online (AKO) credentials can submit inquiries, initiate discussions, contribute content, and otherwise share questions, experience, and knowledge on the subject of contracting. It functions as an online workspace, where “virtual teaming” occurs between experts and novices and contracting professionals and customers (requiring agencies) converse about operational issues and concerns in the realm of contracting.

This forum provides three primary benefits. First, as opposed to individual email inquiries, questions asked and answered within the CoP are shared and viewed by all participants. This produces a “knowledge compounding” effect, resulting in subsequent group discussions that are of a higher caliber. Second, the CoP is more than a traditional website; it not only acts as a means to find “what” you need to know, but more importantly, “who” you need to know. Finally, the forum is powered by two-way dialogue, allowing members to disseminate institutional knowledge and gather relevant operational insights and observations. Coupled with other initiatives, the “Battlefield Contracting” CoP will provide a vital link between the institutional and operational Army and assist in correcting some of the shortcomings identified by the Gansler Commission.

As part of CASCOM’s Sustainment Knowledge Management (SKM) program, the “Battlefield Contracting” CoP (as well as many other sustainment and logistics communities) can be found on LOGNet, a subset of the Battle Command Knowledge System (BCKS). The forum currently includes topics on

## LOGISTICS BRANCH BECOMES REALITY

The establishment of the Logistics branch became effective 1 January. The new branch unites commissioned officers in the grades of captain through colonel.

According to the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff, G-4, Lieutenant General Ann E. Dunwoody, "The establishment of the Logistics branch . . . promotes the development of multiskilled logisticians, capable of anticipating requirements, planning, integrating, and executing all types of deployment and sustainment activities that enable our Nation's forces to initiate and sustain full-spectrum operations. As a result of Army transformation and modularity, Army logistics has shifted from a functional to a multifunctional focus. The reduction of functional logistics commands and the increase of multifunctional logistics commands at all levels make this a natural evolution for Army logisticians."

Major General Mitchell H. Stevenson, the commanding general of the Army Combined Arms Support Command, observed, "In the 21st century, we need logistics officers who are multifunctional—officers not just focused on particular fields in logistics, but who are competent in all those fields.

"No longer is it enough to be skilled in one particular area. We have got to be good across the board. And the more senior you get, the more we are going to focus you on enterprise organizations—where you are thinking not in terms of what is going on in your particular area of operation, but knowing how the entire supply chain works. You'll need to understand

contingency contracting, field ordering officers, contracting officer's representatives, and other important subjects related to operational contracting practices and procedures. Launched in November 2007, the community is led by a growing team of contracting subject-matter experts who are standing by to share and support others engaged directly or indirectly in contracting.

Those who wish to further explore this important capability should follow these instructions. If you are new to LOGNet, you must (1) sign in with your AKO credentials at <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/communitybrowser.aspx?id=239599>; (2) click

the effects of one part of the chain on another part of the chain."

The Army decided to begin multifunctional training at the grade of captain because that is the level at which their assignments require them to have broader capabilities than provided by their functional branch training. "What we find is that by the time you make full colonel, about 75 percent of the positions in the Army call for multifunctional expertise," said Major General Stevenson. "At the grade of captain, that number is already at about 50 percent."

Training for officers in the Logistics Branch will take place at Fort Lee, Virginia. Under the base realignment and closure process, the Ordnance Schools at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, and Redstone Arsenal, Alabama, and the Transportation School at Fort Eustis, Virginia, will relocate to Fort Lee, which is already home of the Quartermaster School.

For more information on the Logistics branch, see the interview with Major General Stevenson on page 1 and the July–August 2007 issue of *Army Logistician*.

## NEW ARMY RESERVE UNIT WILL PROVIDE AMC-ASAALT-DCMA SUPPORT TO THE FIELD

A new Army Reserve unit is being created to provide the expertise available from three Department of Defense organizations to support sustained contingency operations. The Army Reserve Sustainment Command Troop Program Unit (ARSC TPU) will consist of Army Reserve Soldiers drawn from the Army Materiel Command (AMC); the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology (ASAALT); and the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA). They will constitute a cross-trained, modular unit that

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on "Become a Member" to fill out required information; (3) activate your "Subscription"; and (4) click on the "Battlefield Contracting" folder. You then should follow instructions within the site for initiating discussions, finding resources, and making contributions. If you are already a LOGNet member, you can directly access the "Battlefield Contracting" CoP at <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=456816&lang=en-US>.

**ALOG**

*PATRICK CONWAY IS THE CHIEF KNOWLEDGE OFFICER AT THE ARMY COMBINED ARMS SUPPORT COMMAND AT FORT LEE, VIRGINIA.*

will be able to deploy or mobilize as needed to support troops in the field.

The establishment of the ARSC TPU will further the Army's goal of transforming the Army Reserve from a strategic reserve to an operational force. At the stand-up ceremony for the ARSC TPU in November, Major General Harry J. Phillips, the commander of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command, stated that the ARSC TPU will "capture AMC support along with DCMA support and ASAALT support in one unique organization, all focused on providing sustainment support to the warfighter, [which] is in perfect keeping with the mission we have to transform the Army Reserve into an operational, functional reserve . . ."

The ARSC TPU, headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, will consist of 383 Soldiers under the operational control of AMC headquarters at Fort

Belvoir, Virginia, and the administrative control of the 377th Theater Sustainment Command at Belle Chasse, Louisiana. It will have subordinate elements stationed at various AMC, ASAALT, and DCMA locations throughout the United States.

The unit will be fully activated by September 2009.

## ARMY ANNOUNCES STATIONING DECISIONS

In December, the Army announced stationing and force structure plans geared to meet the President's plan to increase the Army's strength by 74,200 Soldiers, 65,000 of whom will be active-duty Soldiers, by 2010. Based on the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Act of 2005 decisions, the plan ensures growth capacity not only for the additional Soldiers but also for possible future Army expansion. It takes

***The 5th Quartermaster Company, a unit of the 21st Theater Sustainment Command (TSC), hosted the first jumpmaster's course held in the U.S. European Command at Rhine Ordnance Barracks last July. Conducting the course in Europe allowed the Army to train units, including the 21st TSC, the 10th Special Forces Group, and the Air Force's 786th Security Forces Squadron, without the cost of having to send them back to the United States. In the photo, Soldiers mark a drop zone. (Photo by PFC Stephen Decatur, 21st Theater Sustainment Command PAO)***



into account rail, air, and port systems needed to move troops.

The stationing plan includes six infantry brigade combat teams (BCTs), eight active-component support brigades, and other, variously sized combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) units. Support brigade plans include—

- Activating an expeditionary sustainment command headquarters at Fort Lewis, Washington, and a sustainment brigade at Fort Hood, Texas, in fiscal year (FY) 2011.

- Activating a maneuver enhancement brigade at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, in FY 2009.

- Moving a maneuver enhancement brigade to Fort Richardson, Alaska, in FY 2010.

- Restationing a maneuver enhancement brigade to Fort Drum, New York, in FY 2013.

Approximately 30,000 CS and CSS Soldiers will be stationed throughout the United States and overseas to support the six BCTs and eight support brigades.

The plan will enable construction of new facilities, limit the use of temporary relocatable facilities, and permit necessary maintenance and repair of existing facilities. The goal of the plan is to bring the Army's stretched forces back into balance. It will greatly aid in improving Soldier and family readiness during this era of constant conflict.

### **AMC CREATES A NEW ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT CHEMICAL DEMILITARIZATION**

The Army Materiel Command (AMC) has activated a new organization to support the Department of Defense's Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives (ACWA) program. The U.S. Army Element, Assembled Chemical Weapons Alternatives, is structured as an AMC separate reporting activity. The AWCA program formerly was aligned with the Army Chemical Materials Agency.

The AWCA program was created by Congress to develop alternatives to incineration technology for destroying assembled chemical weapons. Successful demonstration of alternatives has shifted the program's focus to managing the design and construction of neutralization pilot plants at Pueblo Chemical Depot, Colorado, and Blue Grass Army Depot, Kentucky.

### **NEW PBUSE GUIDES RELEASED**

Revised Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced (PBUSE) Survival Guides have been prepared by

students in Warrant Officer Advanced Course 001–2008. The new guides have a new format that provides easier reading, including “Chief's helpful hints” and changes from the recent PBUSE software update (1CP 6.2, September 2007), and have new sections such as “An Overview of the Requisition Process.”

The guides are not designed to replace regulations and software end-user manuals but to provide a tool, which is based on the experience of those who have used it before, to help the user use the system and the regulations that guide it. The guides can be accessed on line as follows—

- Unit Supply-Enhanced Survival Guide for the New Commander and Primary Hand Receipt Holder: <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=425831>.

- Unit Supply-Enhanced Survival Guide for the New Unit Supply Sergeant: <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=425830>.

- Property Book-Enhanced Survival Guide for the New Property Book Officer: <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/secure/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=426355>.

### **COMMANDER OPENS ARAP DEBRIEF TO ENTIRE BATTALION STAFF**

The commander of the 78th Signal Battalion at Camp Zama, Japan, invited all Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, contractors, and local national employees to participate in the battalion's Army Readiness Assessment Program (ARAP) debriefing in 2007. This marked the first time that an entire battalion was included in this process, which was conducted by video teleconference.

The ARAP is a 63-question assessment that captures a unit's posture on command and control, standards of performance, accountability, and risk management. This process gives unit members and employees the opportunity to inform the battalion commander about what is happening within the organization. The information gathered there allows battalion commanders to address the root causes of accidental loss by focusing on the organization's safety climate and culture.

Since the inception of the ARAP, more than 2,690 battalion commanders (1,837 Active Army, 180 Army National Guard, and 673 Army Reserve) have registered for the assessment. Assessments involved 853,321 service members, with 343,482 (40 percent) completing assessments.