



Holistic Contract Administration

in Army Forces Abroad

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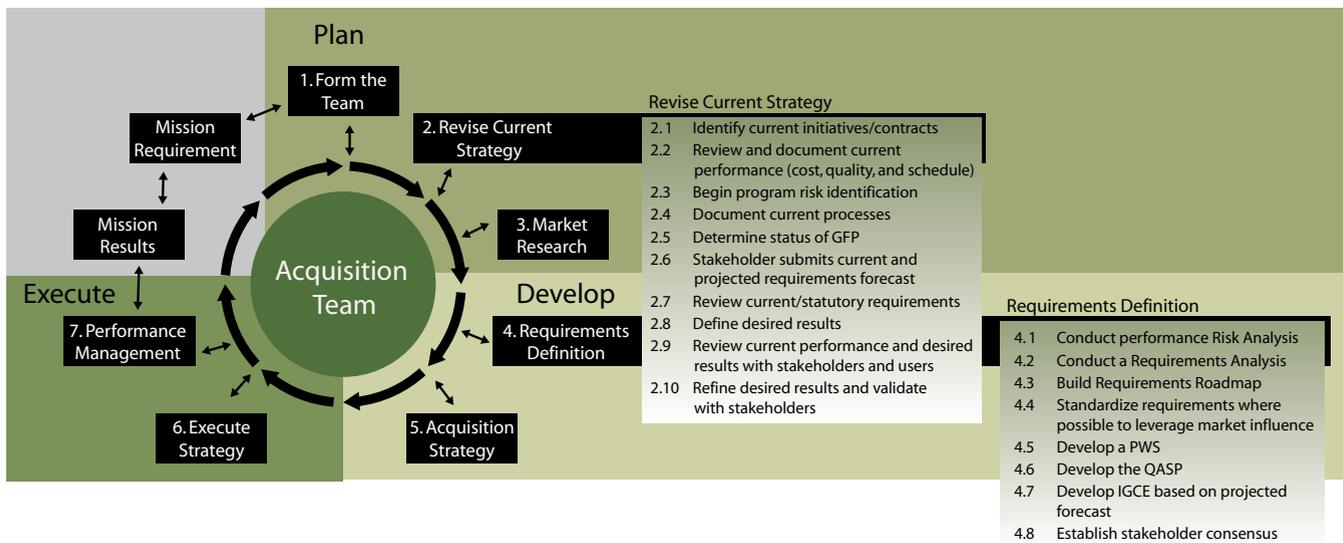
The U.S. Army's Expeditionary Contracting Command (ECC) Contingency Contract Administration Services (CCAS) mission in Kuwait and Qatar has demonstrated that many of the resources required to successfully administer service contracts in a contingency environment already existed within the command but were in need of a little "polishing" and realignment. Given the high stakes of the CCAS Mission, the Battalion set out to establish a solid foundation for effective contract management, thereby reducing risk to soldiers, the mission and funds.

The 926th Contracting Battalion (CBN) was deployed to the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility in November 2014 to augment the 408th Contracting Support Brigade (CSB) as the 408th CSB assumed responsibility for the Army CCAS mission from the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) on behalf of Army Contracting Command (ACC). It was tasked to conduct CCAS for contracts executed by ACC-Rock Island Contracting

Ramirez was the team leader and an administrative contracting officer for the 742nd U.S. Army Contracting Team at Camp As Sayliyah in Qatar. **Gatewood**, a U.S. Government civilian employee, was the lead quality assurance specialist for the 742nd Contracting Team, Camp As Sayliyah. **Kirkpatrick** was the noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC) and quality assurance specialist of the 671st Contracting Team at Camp Arifijan in Kuwait. **Menon** was the NCOIC of the 926th Contracting Battalion's Combat Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) inspection team at Camp Arifijan.

Figure 1. The Acquisition Process

Graphic by author Ramirez, based on the March 2012 DoD Guidebook for Acquisition of Services.



Center (ACC-RI) based in Rock Island, Illinois. An overall lack of post-award contract administrative experience presented the 926th CBN with a steep learning curve when it hit the ground in Kuwait and Qatar, but the battalion's soldiers and civilians were able to adapt quickly and discover a number of best practices for successful contract management—and, in doing so, they developed an entirely new perspective on the Army acquisition process as a whole.

Organizational Structure

The 926th CBN deployment was one of the first modular deployments executed by ECC. The modular structure, in which contracting teams of 51C Acquisition soldiers drawn from several different contracting centers were combined with a battalion headquarters, had a number of distinct advantages over the system of individual augmentee deployments that previously was common practice within ACC. The battalion headquarters and individual teams came to the mission with professional relationships and administrative processes already established. With much of the “forming, storming and norming” phases of the team-building process largely completed by the time they were ready to deploy, the teams were able to hit the ground running and move directly into the “performing” phase.

The battalion's 51C soldiers, who had a wealth of pre-award contracting experience but lacked quality assurance and property administration experience, were augmented by personnel within ACC, including 920A or property accounting warrant officers, 92Y or supply specialist noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and Department of Defense (DoD) civilian personnel—i.e., 1910 Quality Assurance Specialist, 1102 Contract Specialist, and 1103 Industrial Property Management Specialist. All of these brought much-needed skillsets to the mission. The 51C NCOs proved their versatility and adaptability by performing as quality assurance specialists alongside

their 1910 civilian counterparts, while 51C officers received training and mentorship on administrative contracting officer duties from seasoned DCMA and Army 1102s. The battalion staff task organized itself based on mission support by creating five sections led by a battalion commander and senior enlisted advisor (SEA): These sections were Data Collection and Analysis, Contracting Officer Representatives (CORs), Management, Combatting Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) Team, Property and Operations.

Best Practices for Administration of Services Contracts

Balanced Contract Administration Team

Once on the ground, the 926th was able to leverage its soldiers' diversity of experience from a variety of branches and military occupational specialties. Many of the soldiers in the battalion previously served in military career fields such as logistics, transportation, and maintenance, which provided operational experience that allowed them not only to better understand their supported organizations' contract requirements but also gave them unique insight into their customers' needs and priorities. The natural rapport that developed between the CCAS teams and their customers because of their shared background and organizational culture facilitated trust and communication between them. This positive relationship allowed the Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO), Quality Assurance Specialist (QAS), and CORs to work closely together in a “hands on” approach to contract administration, coordinating their efforts to provide effective contract oversight and present an accurate picture of contractor performance to the procuring contracting office.

Lesson Learned. To meet Army requirements, creating a contract administration team comprised of personnel possessing both operational Army and contracting experience will allow for stronger contract oversight. We must not be afraid to give

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up a little contracting experience for invaluable Army operational experience.

Synergizing the Acquisition Team

A Multi-Functional Integrated Process Team (MFIPT) consists of the requiring activity, resource manager, legal advisor, contract execution team, contract administration team, and others. The diversity of roles and geographical dispersion, within the acquisition team, presented significant challenges to synchronizing team members' activities. As the “boots on ground,” the CCAS team was a natural fit to take lead in coordinating and aligning the activities of the acquisition team.

Prior to deployment, 926th CBN personnel established professional relationships with the procuring contract officers (PCOs) and contract specialists at ACC-RI by conducting face-to-face desk-side training at Rock Island Arsenal. During the deployment, in-person interaction between the CCAS team and customer organizations created similar working relationships that would have been difficult to duplicate without face-to-face interaction. The customer organizations whose leaders visited ACC-RI PCOs in person or who otherwise remained regularly engaged with the PCOs were, generally, better able to set their acquisition priorities in a more accurate light, thereby allowing the contracting team to align its priorities with those of the customer. In organizations whose mission footprints encompass a great deal of contractor activity, leadership that is not regularly engaged with the acquisition team often gives contract requirements a lower priority, and the organization may pay a price for the leader's lack of awareness. For example, the slow approval and late submission of requirements packets can cause the unnecessary expenditure of millions of additional dollars to pay for unnegotiated extensions and bridge contracts.

Lesson Learned. The CCAS team's efforts toward building and synergizing the MFIPT paid dividends by pulling all team members into one common operating picture (COP) and engaging the leadership of the supported organizations. This allowed the acquisition team to do everything from providing more effective COR management to ensuring that critical acquisition milestones for new requirements were met.

CCAS Team Early Engagement in Acquisition

With the acquisition team members usually operating separately during the acquisition process, the contract administration team for services typically did not engage in the process until the execution phase. With this approach, post-award members were not heavily involved in writing performance work statements (PWSs), performance requirements summaries (PRs), or quality assurance surveillance plans (QASPs), all of which are critical to achieving results through strong performance management.

Working with the contract execution team based in Rock Island and the requiring activities in-country, the 926th CBN was able to bring real-time contracting, quality assurance and property administration knowledge that it gained from the CCAS mission to the requirements development and planning phases of the acquisition process. This drastically decreased rework by allowing the team to produce consistently better products based on recent lessons learned. Once the requirement entered into the contract administration phase, the post-award team did not have to revamp ambiguous contract documents that lacked critical performance requirements.

Lessons Learned. With all team members reviewing and assisting the requiring activity to develop a strong acquisition packet, documents crucial to successful pre- and post-award were synchronized. This resulted in a better product, written to support strong contract oversight, in less time.

COR Buy-In

The 926th quickly learned that the best way to promote excellent contractor performance and document deficiencies was through strong COR oversight. The teams noticed that, all too often, CORs viewed their contract oversight duties as a lower priority than their “regular” jobs. By empowering CORs with quality training, access to key documents, and regular contact with collocated Army contracting professionals, the 926th witnessed a marked transformation through achieving COR buy-in to the acquisition process. Once CORs realized that the mission accomplishment and risk mitigation depended on effective contract oversight, they became much more active and confident.

Lesson Learned. Properly trained CORs who are given easy access to all the resources they need to perform their duties usually will buy into the acquisition teams and realize the importance of their missions. However, CORs sometimes lack motivation to perform their duties when doing so will not be reflected in their evaluations. Generally, the amount of effort

that a COR will exert in performing contract oversight duty is related directly to the emphasis given those duties in their performance evaluations (known by the abbreviations OERs, NCOERs, TAPES). The CCAS team should take advantage of opportunities to engage customer organizations' leadership in order to emphasize the importance of the COR's role in effective contract administration.

Widening the Window for Contract Administration

Better Buying Power 3.0 lists strengthening of contract management outside the normal acquisition chain through improvements using standard processes, appropriate training and appropriate oversight.

Although it was important for the contracting teams to establish the limits of their contract administrative duties, it was just as important for them to know the organizations and contracts surrounding them so they could see the big picture. Additionally, with contracts that provide support to large diverse populations, such as base operations support services, the contracting teams experienced a number of issues between the contractor, customer, and other organizations. The issues arose mostly due to a lack of training, standard processes and understanding of the contract footprint.

Lessons Learned. The lack of contract continuity was the biggest complaint from commanders, so the contracting teams began to establish CCAS Handbooks and External Customer Standard Operating Procedures to align and train all entities the contract touched. This was done to ensure that everyone from beginning to end understood the contracting processes. Within SOPs, a contracts roadmap would be highly effective; with so many contracts aligned side by side, leaders and entities needed to be able to clearly articulate any problems they were having by knowing whom to address and where one contract ended and the other began.

Expanding the Scope of Quality Assurance

Personnel charged with administering service contracts tend to heavily emphasize ensuring contractor compliance with the requirements of the PWS. In a contingency environment, there are additional risks that may not be readily apparent. The 926th QASs had to look beyond the PWS to ensure contractors complied with all contract requirements. The battalion expanded its QASPs to provide for systematic surveillance of contractor compliance with contract clauses related to CTIP, host nation labor laws, and sexual harassment and response prevention training. CTIP was a particularly pressing concern given some of the past issues related to pay, housing and working conditions for other-country nationals (OCNs) working for contractors in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility. OCNs often comprise the majority of the contract labor pool in contingency areas and are vulnerable to abuse. The battalion's CTIP team conducted more than 150 audits to assess contractor compliance with contract CTIP requirements and host nation labor and housing laws.



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Lesson Learned. Just like a military presence patrol in a counterinsurgency environment can serve as a deterrent to hostile forces while providing reassurance and security to the local populace, battalion CTIP audits deterred unethical contractor labor practices while providing contractor employees assurances of fair treatment. A well-written QASP will encompass systematic checks to ensure all requirements of the contract are adhered to by the contractor—not just the PWS.

Challenges

Training Shortages

During the deployment, the contract team ACOs and contract administrators experienced some training deficiencies. Because there are very few 1103-series civilian property administrators throughout ACC, the battalion experienced difficulties hiring for these positions during its deployment. Often lacking adequate property administrator support, ACOs were required to execute a number of detail- and time-intensive property management tasks. Counting on 1103 support, ACOs received minimal property training prior to deployment. This proved to be a major setback as ACOs struggled to understand these tasks and processes.

Additionally, within large contracts, the ACO takes on a large responsibility to ensure contractor purchase requests adhere to fiscal law rules, even though that area is not their specialty. With Army requirements, organization's lawyers review requests for government contract purchases to ensure fiscal law compliance. For contractor purchases, those same checks and balances are managed by the ACO. Contractor requests to purchase items directly linked to the contract requirement may not always comply fully with fiscal rules. ACOs need to be able to identify questionable purchase requests to seek clarification from acquisition lawyers.

Lesson Learned. With the property administrator shortages for the foreseeable future, 1102 and 51Cs should try to complete applicable Defense Acquisition University industrial property management courses. To strengthen fiscal law understanding, they should cross into the Army financial management courses, such as Comptroller Fiscal Law, provided by the Army Judge Advocate General School, or more advanced courses such as Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution. Not only will property accountability and fiscal law training assist in post-award management, they also will significantly assist contracting officers and specialists during the pre-award phase.

Blurred Lines of Responsibility

On a number of occasions during the deployment, personnel from organizations outside the requiring activity (safety inspectors, environmental compliance officers, etc.) arrived unannounced at the contractor’s on-post facilities to conduct inspections or surveys without the ACO’s prior knowledge or approval. Since many of the contractor’s facilities in a contingency environment are located on military installations and there is a sort of joint government-contractor occupation of the facilities, it can prove difficult to determine responsibility for oversight of support functions, such as safety or environmental compliance. External personnel visiting the area often do not understand that their presence can disrupt the contracting process, affect the contractor’s performance, and even cause the government to incur unauthorized commitments.

Lesson Learned. Due to the specialized expertise of higher headquarters personnel, their support can help ensure contractor compliance with Army, local and host-nation laws and regulations. However, this engagement must occur within the framework of an established process: The personnel can be appointed as alternate CORs, which will give them the authority to conduct contractor surveillance in accordance with AR 70-13, *Management and Oversight of Services Acquisitions*. With establishment of an advance notification process, the ACO can review these visits properly and give contractor notification. The process should also require discussion of all findings with the ACO and quality assurance surveillance personnel who will make final decisions on changes required of the contractor to come into compliance.

Leveraging Lessons Learned and Challenges

Ultimately, soldiers serving on a CCAS mission return to their home stations with robust post-award contract administration experience. This affords them a unique understanding of what happens to a requirement after it is awarded. As the Army acquisition workforce continues to gain experience in post-award activities, it may ultimately overcome the “fire-and-forget” mentality that is a product of the disproportionate organizational emphasis on contracts awarded and dollars obligated. Greater emphasis on the post-award phase and the use of holistic contract administration will build an efficient and knowledgeable acquisition team that is able to reduce risks to soldiers, the mission and DoD funding. 

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MDAP/MAIS Program Manager Changes

With the assistance of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Defense AT&L* magazine publishes the names of incoming and outgoing program managers for major defense acquisition programs (MDAPs) and major automated information system (MAIS) programs. This announcement lists all such changes of leadership, for both civilian and military program for May and June 2016, with an update for March.

Army

COL Charles Worshim relieved **COL Terrence Howard** for the Cruise Missile Defense Systems on June 15.

COL Troy Crosby relieved **COL Michael Thurston** for the Mission Command Program on June 15.

Navy/Marine Corps

CAPT Todd St. Laurent relieved **CAPT Leon R. Bacon** as program manager for the T-6B Joint Primary Aircraft Training System program (PMA 273) on March 4.

CAPT Kevin Smith relieved **CAPT James Downey** as program manager for Zumwalt Class Destroyer DDG-1000 (PMS 500) on May 23.

CAPT Keith Hash relieved **CAPT John Lemmon** as program manager for the E-2D Advanced Hawkeye Program (PMA 231) on May 26.

CAPT Anthony Rossi relieved **CAPT William Dillon** as program manager for the Multi-Mission Maritime Aircraft Program P-8A Poseidon (PMA 290) on May 30.

CAPT Kevin Byrne relieved **CAPT Theodore Zobel** as program manager for the Surface Ship Modernization (PMS 407) on June 21.

CAPT Theodore Zobel relieved **CAPT Casey Moton** as program manager for the Littoral Combat Ship Mission Modules (PMS 420) on June 21.

Air Force

Col. Brian Henson relieved **Col. Jeffrey Sobel** as program manager for the Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missile program in May 19.

Fourth Estate

None