

OSD Logistics Fellowship—A View From Above

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A friend and retired U.S. Air Force Command Chief would often use an analogy with young troops regarding the differences in their world views versus those of their leadership. “Your view of the ground (truth) depends upon the height of the branch in the tree upon which you are standing ...,” he would explain.

Nearly 3 million men and women make up the Department of Defense (DoD). How few truly have an opportunity to gain insight and understanding of the origins of legislation, budget, policy and oversight? The Office of the Secretary of Defense’s (OSD) Logistics Fellowship provides selected logisticians the opportunity to broaden their perspectives and consider other points of view.

The OSD Logistics Fellows Program is open to field grade officer (O4–O5) and DoD civilian equivalent (GS 13–14) logisticians. This 1-year, unit-funded “fellowship” is a developmental assignment, with a goal of providing an atmosphere that fosters learning, growth, and experiential opportunities. The program is administered by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Logistics and Materiel Readiness (ASD[L&MR]). Fellows have the unique opportunity to participate in policy formulation and DoD-wide oversight responsibilities.

Fellows are fortunate to travel and tour both the public and private sectors in order to observe, contrast and learn first-hand how logistics operations compare in private industry and then benchmark best practices. Fellows, through visits to Congress, gain exposure and insight into the legislative processes. They’re also able to attend national forums and engage in collaborative efforts with industry partners. Depending on their assignments, fellows may have the opportunity to visit and become familiar with other government agencies, as well. Perhaps even more important, the fellowship affords participants opportunities to observe and interact with both appointed and career senior executives, and flag officers—including, “one-

on-one” meetings with senior logistics leaders in the military departments, Joint Staff, OSD and agencies.

The insights and “big picture” knowledge to be gained are virtually endless, and the fellows determine much of their own training and class agendas. During my fellowship, I was tasked to resolve a longstanding logistics policy challenge within the DoD and was given considerable leeway to gain needed expertise and formulate a recommendation. That led to publication of a new DoD Directive. Other fellows led financial accountability program initiatives, participated in DoD-level awards processes, led worldwide maintenance symposiums, participated in source-selection committees and a number of other DoD-level initiatives.

Finally, there’s a fellowship component of the OSD Logistics Fellowship Program. Fellows share a common bond, form a support structure and face many diverse challenges together. The OSD Logistics Fellows Program provides an opportunity to forge lifelong bonds and friendships with other logistics professionals and build networking capabilities that will serve them for the remainder of their careers and beyond. Upon completion, fellows return to their sponsoring organizations or follow-on assignments with increased management skills, technical expertise and networks that span DoD logistics.

The OSD Logistics Fellowship Program provides DoD logisticians not only a rich experiential odyssey but, perhaps more important, the opportunity to obtain a deeper career understanding of the OSD perspective and how it affects the DoD enterprise.

NOTE: The selection process for the 2017–2018 OSD Logistics Fellowship Program begins in January, per the Office of the ASD(L&MR). More information can be found at http://www.acq.osd.mil/log/LMR/fellows_program.html. 

Jerkatis was a member of the OSD Logistics Fellows Class of 2015–2016. The author can be contacted at bryan.jerkatis@us.af.mil.