

NSPS Office Reaches Milestone in Transition

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (OCT. 6, 2010)

Cheryl Pellerin

WASHINGTON—Three-quarters of employees under the outgoing National Security Personnel System have transitioned to the General Schedule system, the head of the office in charge of the massive effort said today.

John H. James Jr., director of the NSPS Transition Office, told American Forces Press Service that the milestone was reached by Sept. 30, as scheduled.

About 165,000 of 226,000 affected employees have made the transition out of NSPS.

"It has gone well," James said. "Initially we met with the [Defense Department] components and my staff to come up with a plan for transitioning, updating the information technology system, and putting in place project plans and information to inform employees about the transition."

Congress directed a repeal of NSPS and set the timeline for its completion. By law, NSPS terminates on Jan. 1, 2012. In the meantime, to assist employees in becoming familiar with the GS system, the NSPS website offers information and training tools, including "GS-101"—an application that James said has been named as a best practice by the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization based here.

"The Services and the [media] have been communicating down to the field activities and the other components," James said. "At the local level, those organizations have been holding commander's calls, webinars, and brown-bag lunches to make sure employees have an opportunity to sit down with their leadership to be informed about the process of transitioning out."

The priority for the transition, he added, is a smooth process that ensures, as Congress mandated, that no employee loses pay due to the transition.

Each position in NSPS—a system of broad pay bands that covers a range of duties and performance measures—is classified in terms of the General Schedule system, a system of discrete pay grades that includes regular pay increases, steps 1 through 10, based on performance.

"Once the classification is complete, an NSPS position is matched to a GS position," James said. "If the employee's salary is between steps, the employee is awarded the higher step. If an employee is classified at a certain grade and they

are below step 1 of that grade, the employee is awarded step 1 of that grade."

Employees whose salaries are higher than step 10 of a grade receive what is called retained pay. That process, he added, "pretty much ensures that employees will not lose any money upon transition."

"The General Schedule system is captured in law, and a part of that law dictates that you can't be paid above step 10 of your assigned grade," James said.

If that occurs, he added, "the only authority we have to maintain your pay above step 10 of your assigned grade is pay retention. That regulation dictates that you get to maintain your pay, but you're only authorized one half of a general pay increase authorized by Congress until the pay grade catches up with your salary."

Over the next several months, James said, the transition office will maintain its efforts to monitor employees who are transitioning from NSPS, but it is also looking to the future. "We're beginning to turn our focus to addressing the authorities in [the 2010 National Defense Authorization Act]," he said. These include designing a new performance management system, building hiring flexibilities into the new structure, and the possible creation of a civilian workforce incentive fund that could be used to reward high-performing individuals and teams or to attract and retain employees.

"We've had our initial meeting with the unions in Los Angeles where we had a very diverse group of 200 attendees at the conference who had a voice in what the next system should look like," James said.

"Our job now is to capture all that data and prepare for the design teams," he added. "We will engage the labor unions again on what the design teams will look like—the size, the theme, the scope—and we will begin the effort of designing and developing the new authorities."

Face of Defense: Civilian Opts for Deployment to Iraq

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (OCT. 7, 2010)

Elaine Wilson

WASHINGTON—After 33 years of service as a government civilian, Barbara Eberly easily could have called it a day. She could have let her career wind down and looked ahead to ticking off the peaceful days in her small home town in Pennsylvania.

Career Development

Instead, the 58-year-old volunteered to serve in Iraq. The decision, she said, was met with a combination of shock and awe.

"While my family and friends were supportive, they ... initially thought I was crazy to want to do this," she said.

But Eberly had all her wits about her when she signed up to deploy. For 22 years she had watched her daughter's Navy career unfold from the sidelines, offering unfailing support as her daughter headed out to sea for long periods of time or to new assignments across the nation. Her daughter, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Heather Kline, retires this month after a career that took her from enlisted to officer, from ship to recruiting office.

And Eberly patiently waited for her own adventure to begin.

"My mother always wanted to join the military, but she was a young mother and then became a single mom, so the opportunity didn't arise for her," Kline said.

That is, until now. Eberly, a mobilization planning specialist for Defense Logistics Agency Distribution in New Cumberland, Pa., learned about civilian deployment opportunities through a co-worker, who had deployed through the Defense Department's Civilian Expeditionary Workforce program. The program trains and equips civilians to deploy overseas in support of military members and missions worldwide.

Her supervisor, Sue Alpaugh, backed her immediately.

"When the [Civilian Expeditionary Workforce] light bulb went off for Barb giving her this great opportunity of a lifetime, she immediately signed up," she said. "For me, even though we miss Barb in the office and what she brought to the table every day, I am glad for her that she punched her ticket before she retires."

After attending a 2-week predeployment training for civilians at the Camp Atterbury National Deployment Center in central Indiana, Eberly flew to Iraq to support the 199th Garrison Command public works department at Camp Victory. She now wakes up each morning, not to the cool, lush landscape of the Northeast, but to the austere scenery and sweltering heat of the desert.

"U.S. citizens should count their blessings every day for their freedom," she said. "As the saying goes, 'You're not in Kansas anymore.'"



Barbara Eberly, a government civilian deployed to Iraq, poses with her daughter, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Heather Kline, who retires this month after 22 years of service. Eberly volunteered to serve a yearlong deployment through the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce, and is stationed at Camp Victory, Iraq. Courtesy photo

Although pushing 60, Eberly handles the hefty protective gear and physical demands her job requires without a problem. She's learned to "pack light or carry a heavy load," she explained.

"I love sharing the story," Kline said. "I still get raised eyebrows and 'Did you say your Mom is deployed?'"

"But I'm extremely proud of her," she added. "If anything happened to her I'd be crushed, but proud of her sacrifice. She's willing to put herself where others wouldn't. I love that about her."

As for Eberly, she's determined to live each day of her year-long deployment to the fullest.

"I wanted the opportunity to walk in a warfighter's shoes, and now I'm doing things most civilians only dream about," she said. "I'm truly looking forward to it being one of the most awesome experiences of my life."

Army and Industry Synchronize Workforce Development as Aberdeen Proving Ground Grows

U.S. ARMY RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND ENGINEERING COMMAND PUBLIC AFFAIRS (OCT. 14, 2010)

Deborah Elliott

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md.—The science and technology hub the Army planned when it placed these capabilities here through the Base Realignment and Closure Act of 2005 is now coming together as Army and industry open new facilities on the installation and put the hub structure in place.

Members of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association (AFCEA) engaged in the transformation of APG met Oct. 13 to hear how Army and industry can synchronize efforts to develop the workforce needed to bring the total change about.

Gary Martin, executive deputy to the commander at the Research, Development and Engineering Command headquartered at APG, made the lunchtime presentation.

“The Ordnance Center and School that was once such a prominent feature here at APG is gone,” he said. “The Army Environmental Command has moved to its new home at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. New organizations—the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the Joint Program Executive Office for Chemical and Biological Defense, and several others—either are here or are on their way.”

The ripple effect of BRAC at APG has been felt by everyone, said Martin—not only those whose mission was moved, but also those who remain.

“Members of the workforce who are staying here, who once were the intellectual capital and future workforce of their organizations, are moving on to new opportunities,” he said.

This presents a particular challenge to the APG community in terms of workforce development.

“The administrative-type positions that used to be here are being replaced by high-tech positions,” said Martin. “When all is said and done, there will be 23,000 positions here at APG.”

Of those positions, approximately 6,000 will be filled by Department of the Army civilians. The rest will be provided by government contract support.

Recruiting and developing this workforce is a priority and a challenge for the entire community, according to Martin.

RDECOM, the Army’s leader in science and technology development, has a well-established education outreach program that includes cooperative research and development agreements with universities; participating in national-level science, technology, engineering, and mathematics competitions and conferences; and mentoring grade K-12 students in community schools.

The command is also working to bring programs and training to the local community college tailored to the need for science and technology capability.

Martin said Army and AFCEA members together can maximize the impact of their respective education outreach efforts to meet workforce development needs.

“Right now we are all taking different approaches and working at different levels of engagement,” he said. “We need to standardize and strategize what we are doing.”

The Aberdeen AFCEA chapter would be a formidable ally in the effort. The chapter, which only a year ago had only 30 or so members, now has grown to well over 100, and is a microcosm of Aberdeen Proving Ground’s future.

Breathing New Life into Army Labs

UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON-NATICK PUBLIC AFFAIRS (OCT. 26, 2010)

Bob Reinert

NATICK, Mass.—How can one support the warfighter and attract the talent that will continue doing so for years to come at the Natick Soldier Systems Center?

Ask Carl Boquist, and he will tell you that lab revitalization is one way. Boquist, the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command facilities, logistics, and environmental director, came to Natick Oct. 20 for the Laboratory Revitalization and Recapitalization Program (LRRP) Workshop.

“Lab [revitalization] is a major success story for us,” said Boquist, who reminded those in attendance that 11,450 of the Army’s 17,000 engineers and scientists work for RDECOM. “They are the leading experts in their field,” said Boquist, “and we want to continue to maintain that and to improve on that. One of the issues is attracting the right people. Lab [revitalization] is a portion of that.”

Those experts work mostly in seven major laboratories and research centers across the country.

"We do everything from aviation and missile research all the way to simulation and modeling centers, and the soldier and support functions that are done here in Natick," Boquist said.

That includes 1,200 research projects under way with 326 universities.

"We're technology-driven and warfighter-focused," Boquist said. "We have folks that are forward deployed at activities and agencies all around the world."

The LRRP increased the minor construction limit per project from \$750,000 to \$2 million.

"It enables more projects with higher valuations to be approved at the local level and with funds other than Military Construction, Army, which makes them significantly easier to plan for and execute," said Hugh Hardin, U.S. Army Garrison Natick deputy garrison commander.

Boquist said \$22.3 million worth of lab revitalization was done in the first year. Another \$22.94 million is in the pipeline for 12 projects from FY10 to FY12. Two of those projects are at Natick.

"Lab revitalization is a vitally needed effort on Natick," Hardin said. "We are competing with the best research companies in America for top scientific talent, and we need to be able to offer facilities that can compete with theirs."

Boquist said the LRRP began 2 years ago.

"We started implementing right away," Boquist recalled. "There's been a little bit of a learning curve. We've moved forward. In the R&D world, it's really difficult for facilities guys to assess what the needs are beyond what the condition is from an infrastructure standpoint."

Boquist pointed out that lab revitalization wasn't intended to modernize the entire infrastructure or to buy equipment.

"It's not a panacea to fix all our problems out there," said Boquist, adding that the program instead responds to "immediate needs."

Bill Allen of the Facilities Policy Division at the Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management, agreed.

"Laboratory [revitalization] is just one tool in the engineer's toolbox to try and help the laboratories work," Allen said. "It's all about the soldier when it comes right down to it. It's all about the soldier."

DoD Launches New Website to Help Youth Explore Pathways for Their Future

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PUBLIC AFFAIRS (Oct. 27, 2010)

The Department of Defense Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies (JAMRS) program announced it has launched www.myfuture.com, a new website to help America's youth explore opportunities for their future. Myfuture.com provides comprehensive, unbiased information about career, education, and military options for young people, ages 16 to 24.

Powered by information from the Departments of Defense, Education, and Labor, myfuture.com provides young people with a resource that helps them formulate a plan for their future by establishing goals and identifying and understanding the steps necessary to reach those goals. The website brings clarity to the process by connecting visitors with factual, practical information and tools.

"People may wonder why the DoD is launching an exploration website for young people who are considering their options for the future," said JAMRS Director Matt Boehmer. "The fact is, we found existing career and/or college exploration websites not affiliated with the DoD provide little, if any, coverage of the military and its career opportunities. Myfuture.com helps inform young adults who might not normally consider service about the benefits of a military career. By placing the military side by side with college and career opportunities, the website allows them to explore all possibilities and gain insight into each option. We also make the point that the three do not have to be mutually exclusive."

Myfuture.com provides a breadth and balance of information not available anywhere else, allowing visitors to discover possibilities and opportunities that appeal to their own unique personality and goals. The website provides details on more than 1,000 civilian and military career fields and nearly 7,000 accredited colleges and trade schools. In addition to college admissions details, average salaries and employment trends, myfuture.com provides advice on everything from taking the Scholastic Aptitude Test to interviewing for a first job to preparing for basic military training. Step-by-step planning checklists are also provided as a guide for users, and favorite job and school information can be saved for return visits.

Army Interns Learn About Agency Operations

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY NEWS RELEASE (OCT. 27, 2010)

Dianne Ryder

Defense Logistics Agency officials hosted seven Army officers from the Joint Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense at the McNamara Headquarters Complex Oct. 22.



Director of DLA Logistics Operations Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar provides an overview of DLA operations to interns during an orientation for Army interns at the McNamara Headquarters Complex Oct. 22, 2010.

Photo by Teodora Mocanu

The officers, all captains and majors, are participating in the three-year JCS/OSD Intern Program. During their visit, they learned about DLA's mission, operations, and leadership, and were encouraged to ask candid questions about the organization in an open forum.

Mike Van House, deputy chief of the Military Service Support Division in DLA Logistics Operations, said the event is one of many orientation courses DLA offers to its customers and students of various service schools.

During the first year of the JCS/OSD Intern Program, officers attend Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and in the second year go on to internships with JCS or OSD. In the final year, the officers serve as interns on the Army Staff and are assured exposure to and involvement in critical decision making at the highest levels within the military and Department of Defense.

"It's a learning environment for them; they're competitively selected for this position," Van House said.

Director of DLA Logistics Operations Army Brig. Gen. Lynn Collyar welcomed the interns and provided an introduction to DLA's global operations and organizational elements.

While discussing the recent *We Are DLA* campaign, in which many organizational names were changed, Collyar told the interns they had likely interacted with DLA more than they were aware. He explained that the initiative more closely

identifies agency divisions as being part of DLA than in the past.

Collyar, who has been in his current position with DLA Headquarters since August, gave a brief history of his own career, including his time as commander of what is now DLA Distribution. He reviewed the various field activities in the supply chain and agencies associated with DLA, speaking about the importance of DLA's overall mission.

"Again, [it's] really logistics support ... but it's anywhere, anytime. Everything we do is really geared toward our support to the Services [or the combatant commands] in one way or another," he said.

Collyar also advised the interns to learn from various leaders they will encounter.

"In your job now, as an intern—really, all this is doing is putting rocks in your rucksack. The [important] part is what you do after you leave these positions and how you take that back out to your units," he said. "Because everybody won't have [the same] experience, and we're all products of our own experience."

213 Soldier Jobs Shift To Civil Service

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (OCT. 28, 2010)

James Brabenec

FORT SILL, Okla.—Equipment maintenance is a huge undertaking at Fort Sill, and to better manage that critical function

the post is moving to civilianize 213 maintenance jobs that support the three training brigades here.

The change from soldier to civil service maintainers came about from an agreement reached between the commanding generals of the Army's Training and Doctrine, and Materiel commands and will enable TRADOC to focus on its core competency—to train soldiers.

"This is a win-win across the board for the Army," said Kirby Brown, Fires Center of Excellence and Fort Sill deputy to the commanding general. "Because this equipment is used for training and is not deployable, we can match up civilian workers who won't deploy, providing more continuity and stability, and freeing up soldiers for other duties."

Upon completion, slated for Oct. 1, all civilians will work for AMC. Soldiers will leave for assignments to other Forces Command units or to TRADOC instructor positions here. Others will separate or retire and may apply for positions through the normal hiring process.

Bob Griffin is the Fleet Management Expansion director who oversees maintenance in support of the three training brigades on post: the 6th Air Defense Artillery, and 428th and 434th Field Artillery brigades.

Having served as a chief warrant officer for 30 years active duty service and now 3 years with Civil Service, he knows well the merits of civilian or soldier maintainers.

"Soldiers did a great job maintaining all the equipment that brigades used to train up soldiers," he said. "With the arrival of a Civil Service workforce, Fort Sill will have a dedicated force that doesn't have a lot of additional duties and responsibilities that will take it away from performing maintenance. They will also come with a greater depth of experience, and by potentially staying here longer, benefit TRADOC's mission as well."

The scope of maintenance extends across a broad spectrum to include ground, artillery, missile, and communications equipment. This includes 12,000 pieces of communications equipment and night vision goggles, 8,000 weapons, 600 vehicles, and about 250 trailers and generators—all of which support the training needs of about 30,000 soldiers each year.

Serving as the senior maintenance officer on post, Chief Warrant Officer Todd Metcalf has overseen the process from the beginning.

He said the shift in responsibility keeps all maintenance within AMC's sphere of influence.

"Army Materiel Command has all the resources, parts, contracts, and item managers so it makes sense for maintenance to come from within the command, too," said Metcalf, Fort Sill Logistics Officer for Maintenance. "This way maintenance can secure parts and equipment as needed from within the command and realize faster fix actions."

Part of this inherent speed in repairs is due to an increased maintenance time on equipment as compared to soldiers. Metcalf cited a soldier's day is usually divided up between work, physical training, details, formations, and other matters. This decreases their maintenance time down to an average of 5 to 6 hours per day. Civilians on the other hand should average 7 to 8 hours on the job, with a 1-hour lunch break.

Officials expect focused maintenance should result in an increase in equipment readiness. To help maintain this readiness, a fleet maintenance officer is assigned to each brigade and will be the liaison to make sure assets and backups are available as needed.

Metcalf noted interest in the positions is high. Officials just went through the hiring process for one position and received 46 résumés, not only from the immediate vicinity, but from throughout the country. Jobs range from basic "wrench turner" wage grade employees to wage leads and supervisors. Some government service positions in management or staff functions will also be filled.

"We made sure we had the right mix of technical proficiency represented to meet the maintenance needs of Fort Sill," he said.

The methodical plan includes a hiring board that meets every two weeks as soldiers come up for assignments and become losses. Based on these losses, job openings will be announced and filled to maintain a one-for-one replacement of the workforce.

Soldiers still awaiting assignments will remain with their respective brigades and continue working in maintenance. Some may stay awhile to meet time on station and other requirements, said Metcalf. Once they receive assignments, these soldiers will stay in maintenance, filling available slots in Forces Command units.

Some facilities may still have contract workers, but Griffin said those contracts will not be renewed. These workers may

then apply for the Civil Service positions once the contract runs out.

Brown said the majority of applicants so far have come from the immediate area. Because of this, he's not sure there will be much of an influx of new people moving to the surrounding communities. Regardless, Fort Sill does not house civilian employees on post; those who do come may be more likely to be home buyers and people who remain in the community.

Brabenec is with the Fires Center of Excellence, Fort Sill, Okla.

DLA Prepares to Train Managers in Interviewing Skills

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY NEWS RELEASE (NOV. 22, 2010)

Dianne Ryder

Defense Logistics Agency Human Resources officials are working to instruct supervisors in the art of interviewing job candidates through Behavior-Based Interview techniques. Officials recently put the finishing touches on a one-day training course in BBI techniques for the agency's supervisors, said Janet Lynch, a human resources specialist in DLA's Human Capital Program Development Division. The course is intended for new supervisors and supervisors who have never been trained in these interview techniques.

"Anybody who becomes a supervisor, who moves from a nonsupervisory position to a supervisory position [here in DLA], or who comes into a supervisory position from outside the agency will be required to take this course," she said.

During the class, supervisors learn that instead of asking nebulous interview questions like, 'What are your goals in 5 years?' they will use what Lynch calls the behavior-based interview format, the outcome of which is a "STAR" response.

"Situation, task, action, result—we ask [applicants] to include in their answer all those components," she said.

By narrowing the duties of the job to certain desired competencies, the interviewer is able to better assess candidates based on their answers, she said.

Lynch said it may be a challenge to train all agency supervisors, but added that the collaborative relationship her team has with personnel at the DLA Training Center in Columbus, Ohio, will help in these efforts.

"The DLA Training Center has also trained and certified a cadre of 28 trainers across the agency that will be initially responsible for ... training the approximately 1,200 supervisors

within DLA that have not had any form of the BBI training," Training Program Manager Napoleon Walker said.

"BBI is a structured, practical, standardized approach to interviewing. [It's] considered a best practice for assessing candidates based on the competencies needed to do the job," he said.

Walker said BBI is an important method of interviewing because the questions make it more difficult for a candidate to give a response that contradicts his or her usual behavior. "It also allows the interviewer to determine if the candidate is possibly exaggerating his or her knowledge and skills through the use of probing questions that get to more [verifiable] details," he said.

Walker said there is no specific date that DLA instructors expect to have all supervisors trained.

"This will be dependent on the trainers, and the supervisors' availability," he said. "But ... when the supervisors attend select LEAD [Leadership Education And Development] training classes, [we plan] to add a day at the end of the week to conduct BBI training, taught by the local facilitators."

Walker said it's important to identify the goals of an effective selection system because of the major investment involved in hiring new personnel.

"The potential for significant expense in not hiring the right candidate for the job is high," he said. "Having a good candidate selection system is critical to organizational success. The main key to the BBI process is to 'hire hard, manage easy' by using sound concepts and procedures during the selection phase to obtain the best candidate. The supervisor can make a good hiring decision based on past performance data."

The BBI interview is one component of the DLA hiring process. The recommended process includes assessment questions in conjunction with the announced vacancy, a thorough résumé review, a BBI interview, and reference checking, Lynch explained.

By conducting thorough reference checks as part of the selection process, a supervisor can glean more information about a potential applicant, she said.

"Hiring a good candidate that can do the job and fits well within the corporate culture will allow a supervisor to direct future efforts toward work accomplishment instead of personnel matters," Lynch said.