

Award Recognizes Excellence in Installation Management

AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE (JULY 23, 2009)

Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden

WASHINGTON—The top installations from each military service and the Defense Logistics Agency received the Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence at a Pentagon ceremony July 22.

The award recognizes the efforts of those who operate and maintain military installations and who have best managed their resources to support the mission, said Dorothy Robyn, deputy under secretary of defense for installations.

"Those being recognized today represent the finest achievements in installation support by our military—accomplishing their mission while improving the quality of life for those who serve," Robyn said.

With military combat and humanitarian deployments under way across the globe, she said, "all of our installations are under extraordinary demands, which makes the accomplishments of our awardees all the more remarkable."

This year's awardees are: Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, Ga.; Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka, Japan; Hurlburt Field, Fla.; and Defense Distribution Depot San Joaquin, Calif.

Robyn's predecessor, Wayne Arny, was the ceremony's keynote speaker. He added to Robyn's sentiments, citing that those who operate and maintain military installations strive to be the best at what they do, because of how much installations mean to servicemembers' families.

"They ensure the water's clean, the air is fresh, the roads are safe, and that the facilities are maintained to the highest degree possible, all while maintaining military readiness," he said.

Arny lauded the winners for pioneering groundbreaking methods to achieve mission goals, for being leaders in stewardship of natural and cultural resources, and for improving cooperation within their local communities.

"You're developing and implementing best practices for improving quality of life for those living and working on or around your installation," Arny said. "Our defense organization is the best in the world, and our installations are the platforms from which America's military capabilities are generated, deployed, and sustained."

Army Maj. Gen. Tony Cuculo, commanding general of Fort Stewart and Hunter Army Airfield, accepted the Army's award for his coastal Georgia community. Fort Stewart, he said, is more than just a duty to his soldiers; it's home to their fellow soldiers and their families.

"Home is where the Army sends you, but home is just a word to a soldier and his family unless there's a feeling of warmth, welcome, and care behind it," Cuculo said. "It's not just the nice facilities and the manicured lawns, it's an attitude of service [and] a deep understanding of who is served."

President Ronald Reagan created the Commander in Chief's Annual Award for Installation Excellence in 1985. The Defense Logistics Agency was added to the competition in 1988. Award recipients receive a trophy, an "Installation Excellence" flag, and a letter signed by President Barack Obama.

Installation Acquisition Transformation Revises Implementation Plan

AIR FORCE NEWS SERVICE (AUG. 6, 2009)

WASHINGTON—Air Force officials recently completed a comprehensive restructuring of installation acquisition within the continental United States, dubbed Installation Acquisition Transformation, and adopted a revised implementation strategy.

The Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st century high-value initiative to expand strategic sourcing and increase personnel and resource efficiency was approved in August 2007.

The original construct, introduced five regional groups to handle the bulk of installation contracting and consolidated management and oversight under Air Force Materiel Command officials. During the implementation planning, several factors caused Air Force contracting leaders to relook the risks involved.

Lessons learned from other transformation efforts coupled with the economic downturn indicated few of the personnel needed to staff the regional groups would actually move. In addition, infrastructure and information technology upgrades failed to materialize, contracting operations and deployment tempo elevated, and key stakeholders, while agreeing on the need for Installation Acquisition Transformation, voiced concerns on the implementation.

In a joint memorandum released in early July, Air Force Secretary Michael B. Donley and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz described the transformation as "the most

expeditious approach for the Air Force to mitigate the risks of operating within the constraints of reduced installation budgets.”

Air Force contracting officials say the revised implementation plan will allow strategic sourcing benefits to be realized sooner and maintains a commitment to the mission and workforce. “The foundation of our transformation remains the same,” said Roger S. Correll, the deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for contracting. “What we are changing is how we reach the goal of strategically sourcing the enterprise.”

The revised implementation plan creates a new organization aligned to AFMC with a focus on enterprise strategic sourcing and will include current Air Force Commodity Councils and certain arms of specialized installation contracting. According to Stephanie Rohrer, the strategic sourcing lead for the deputy assistant security secretary for contracting, this organization will analyze the dollars spent and use market research to shape the right requirement and sourcing decisions.

“Sourcing strategies will be a solution set that may result in new policies, standardization, process improvements, or demand management approaches. This solution set may or may not include a contract strategy,” Rohrer said. “The bottom line is using this best business practice will benefit the entire Air Force.”

Senior leaders from across the Air Force spectrum make up the integrated management framework for Installation Acquisition Transformation by serving on a tiered governance structure. Enterprise-wide strategic sourcing opportunities will be vetted through the Installation Acquisition Transformation governance structure.

In addition to the new organization, each major command will establish a dedicated strategic sourcing capability to seek out opportunities within their respective commands. While contracting squadrons will continue their buying missions at each installation, the entire contracting workforce will receive training in strategic sourcing.

“We must find savings and efficiency in everything we do,” Correll said. “The new IAT approach allows us to focus on what is important: strategic sourcing across our enterprise.”

Aberdeen Test Center Improves Business Processes Through Lean Six Sigma

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (AUG. 6, 2009)

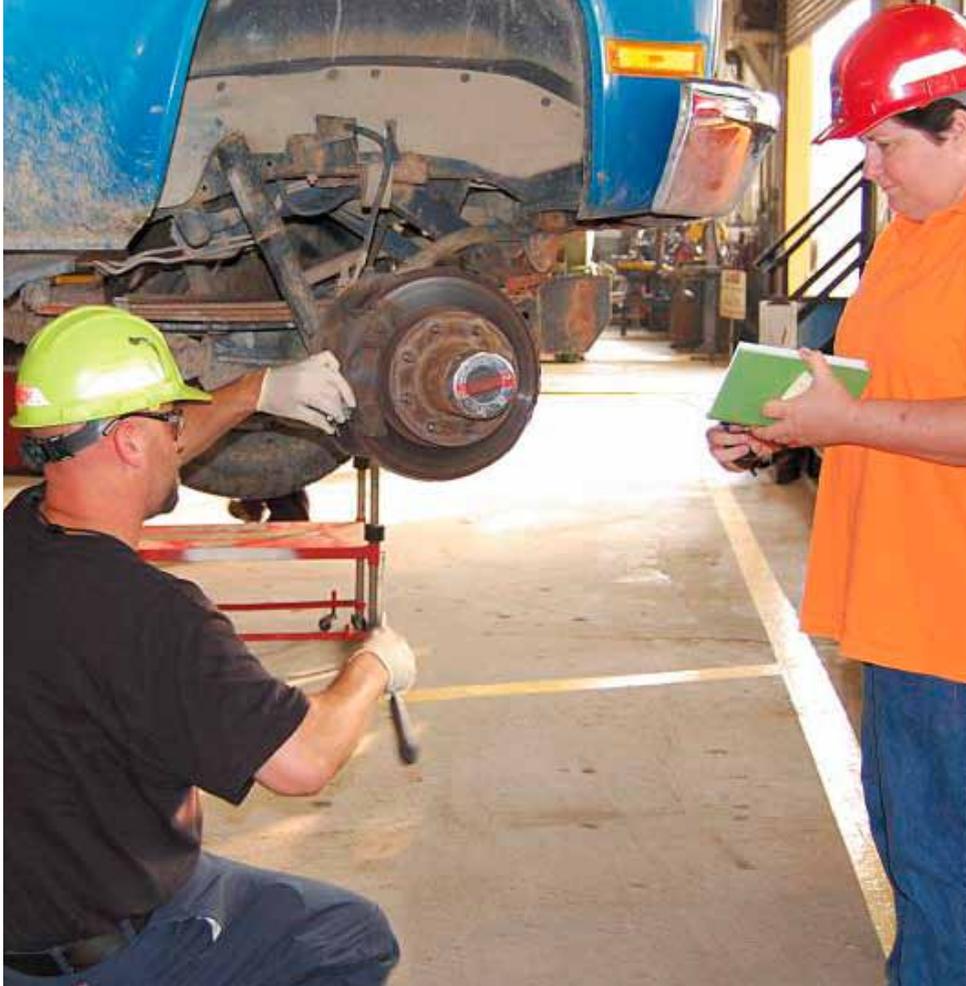
Mike Cast

By applying a business model developed in the mid 1980s by engineers at Motorola and adopted by Department of Defense in 2006, Aberdeen Test Center (ATC) has found the means to make its vehicle maintenance operations more cost effective and efficient while providing superior service to customers. A methodology known as Lean Six Sigma (LSS) made it possible for ATC to realize “a 40 percent improvement over the current process as far as cycle time, which means the time span from when a vehicle comes into the shop to the time it leaves the shop,” said ATC’s Deborah Furnari, who was responsible for the project. “By improving that process, we reduced the amount of money we are spending on it.”

“ATC submitted their fleet vehicle maintenance LSS project to be placed on a storyboard for display at the annual DoD LSS Symposium,” said Cindy Sheppard, chief of the Developmental Test Command Process Improvement Office. “We did not know until we got there that we, the attendees—approximately 700 folks—would actually vote on the different LSS projects across DoD that were on display. ATC’s project was voted as the best project in the maintenance category. Deb Furnari, the Black Belt who ran the program, accepted a blue ribbon for the project.”

“When the process is completed, you put together a storyboard, which is all of the steps a process went through,” said Thea Fowler, who heads ATC’s Lean Six Sigma Division. “So we had to submit a storyboard to the Department of the Army in their Lean Six Sigma area and get it approved as a project for the conference. Deb completed the project, and I took her storyboard and submitted it through DTC to ATEC [Army Test and Evaluation Command]. They both approved, and I submitted it to the Department of the Army.”

Lean Six Sigma combines two methodologies that have merged over the past couple of decades. In essence, Six Sigma is focused on precision and accuracy, applying analytical methods that lead to data-driven decisions that improve business processes. Lean incorporates the principles of speed and efficiency. Proponents of the Six Sigma methodology assert that “continuous efforts to achieve stable and predictable process results are of vital importance to business success.” Furthermore, according to the proponents of this model, “manufacturing and business processes have characteristics that can be measured, analyzed, improved, and controlled.” But there must be a total commitment



Deborah Furnari, right, lead for a Lean Six Sigma project at the U.S. Army Aberdeen Test Center, discusses vehicle maintenance with Darrell Proechel, contractor.
Photo courtesy Aberdeen Test Center

within the organization, from junior employees to top-level management, for this methodology to be successful.

Like the practitioners of eastern martial arts, the people responsible for Lean Six Sigma process improvements become Green Belts and later Black Belts as they master the methodology. It increasingly is helping the Army to marshal its resources more effectively and do more with less, according to Fowler.

By attending four weeks of specialized training and completing her project, Furnari became a certified Lean Six Sigma Black Belt, Fowler added. Among other things, the training focused on the five steps of the Lean Six Sigma methodology—which are define, measure, analyze, improve, and control.

“It’s a data-driven, process-improvement methodology,” Fowler said. “At the end, you also look at data or statistics to determine that you’ve actually improved the process.”

The cost avoidance from the fleet vehicle maintenance project enabled money to be reallocated to other operations within ATC, Furnari said.

“This is just a major reallocation so we can accomplish more work,” Furnari added. “In the first year alone, the value was about \$390,000, but looking across the POM [Program Objective Memorandum], that value increases to \$3.4 million.”

The process improvement also reduced the backlog of vehicles in the shop for maintenance she said.

“During any given month, we had 85 to 100 of them,” Furnari explained. “The fleet vehicle maintenance process not only takes care of non-tactical vehicles but it takes care of anything from weed whackers all the way up to cranes. It’s an ever-changing number. We

also looked at how we utilize our fleet. We’re working on ways to increase utilization and to also look at where there is some under-utilization and reallocate those assets so we can better use them. So we’re looking at right-sizing our fleet and improving it as far as getting rid of some of the old clunkers that cost us a lot of money.”

Rather than using Lean Six Sigma as a tool to cut manpower, the Fleet Vehicle Maintenance Shop used it to allocate manpower in the most effective way, she added. The project also examined how maintenance personnel could be transferred from one location at ATC to another, to further improve the efficiency of operations, Furnari said. By shifting some employees from one part of the maintenance pipeline to another, ATC realized additional manpower and cost savings, she added. While there were bottlenecks in some places,

employees in other parts of the process were underutilized, she said.

Furnari said the Lean Six Sigma project also examined the advantage of conducting onsite repairs because limited shop space is one of the challenges confronting ATC, and hauling a vehicle into the shop for repairs and then sending it back out to the range was an inefficient use of resources.

"ATC has a very large range, so if you have to go out to the range and pick something up, then take it all the way back to the shop, that is a lot of non-value-added time," she explained. "So it's easier and more efficient to send a mechanic out there, have him fix a problem on site, and be done with it."

To underscore its commitment to the Lean Six Sigma methodology, ATC's leadership decided to stand up a Lean Six Sigma Division in May 2007, an organization which Fowler heads. Helping employees master the methodology and become Black Belts has been a command priority, Fowler added.

"We communicate with our senior leaders. They are very involved and very interested," she said. "Because of their interest, other people are taking on that interest. We have a monthly in-process review ... and a weekly meeting with our technical director, where a Belt who is working on a project presents the project to him. It's got a lot of visibility, and people are held accountable for getting things done. We may expand the training so we get as many people as we can trained to be Green Belts. They're not expected to do that full time. They work a project and then go back to their original duties. One indicator that we're having some success is that in people's regular duties they may find something that regularly irritates them, so they will call us and say, 'Hey, can we get this as a Lean Six Sigma project because it needs to be fixed.' It is good to hear that communication from regular workers."

Cast writes for U.S. Army Aberdeen Developmental Test Center.

DoD to Award \$14.1 Million for Science and Engineering Research

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE NEWS RELEASE (AUG. 7, 2009)

The Department of Defense announced Aug. 7 the awarding of 28 grants totaling \$14.1 million as part of the fiscal 2009 Defense Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (DEPSCoR). The grants will enhance research and engineering capabilities at 20 academic

institutions in 14 states in scientific disciplines critical to national security and DoD.

The list of projects selected for fiscal 2009 DEPSCoR funding is available online at <www.defenselink.mil/news/Aug2009/DEPSCOR.pdf>.

The awards are the result of a merit competition for DEPSCoR conducted for the DoD research and engineering directorate. The Army Research Office, the Office of Naval Research, and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research solicited proposals using a defense-wide broad agency announcement. The solicitation was published on the Internet and available at <www.Grants.gov>. The fiscal 2009 program solicitation received 131 proposals.

Academic researchers in Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, U.S. Virgin Islands, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming were eligible to receive awards under this competition.

The average award is approximately \$504,372. All awards are subject to the successful completion of negotiations between the DoD and the academic institutions.

2009 Maintenance Awards Winners Announced

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE NEWS RELEASE (AUG. 17, 2009)

The Department of Defense on Aug. 17 announced the 2009 winners of the Secretary of Defense Maintenance Awards for the depot and field levels. These awards are presented annually to recognize outstanding achievements in military equipment and weapon systems maintenance.

The Robert T. Mason Depot Maintenance Excellence Award recipient is the Army's Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) program at Red River Army Depot, Texarkana, Texas. The program provided exceptional and responsive support for the fielding and sustainment of the MRAP vehicles while providing unit embedded maintenance support teams to numerous sites in Iraq.

The depot-level award is named in recognition of Robert T. Mason, a former assistant deputy under secretary of defense for maintenance policy, programs, and resources. Mason served as the champion of organic depot maintenance for three decades, while helping to transform DoD organic depot-level operations.

There are six field-level awards presented in the categories of large, medium, and small units (two each). The recipients of this year's Secretary of Defense Field-level Maintenance Awards are as follows: for the large category, the Army's 1st Squadron, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, Multi-National Division—North, Fort Hood, Texas, and the Navy's *USS Harry S. Truman* home ported in Norfolk, Va. Winners in the medium category include the Navy's *USS Frank Cable* home ported in Apra Harbor, Guam, and Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, Marine Corps Air Station, Miramar, Calif. Small category winners include the Air Force's 31st Munitions Squadron, Camp Darby, Italy, and the 6th/927th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla.

Additional information regarding the 2009 DoD Maintenance Symposium and Exhibition can be found at <www.sae.org/dod>.

MC4 Honored with Two Industry Awards for Electronic Medical Record Impact

MEDICAL COMMUNICATIONS FOR COMBAT CASUALTY CARE (MC4) PRODUCT MANAGEMENT OFFICE NEWS RELEASE (SEPT. 1, 2009)

FORT DETRICK, Md.—Last month, the Army's Medical Communications for Combat Casualty Care (MC4) program earned two of the most prestigious government information technology honors—the *Government Computer News* (GCN) Agency Award and the *Federal Computer Week* (FCW) Rising Star Award. Both accolades recognize MC4's role in expanding and supporting the electronic medical recording (EMR) mission on the battlefield, and most recently expanding MC4 use to garrison battalion aid stations. Acknowledgement of Louis Carrion, a longtime MC4 systems administrator and trainer, highlights MC4's unique role alongside users in the combat zone to provide onsite 24-hour technical support and help implement EMR best practices.

MC4 was one of 10 agencies to earn the 22nd Annual GCN Agency Award for Outstanding Information Technology Achievement in Government. This year's winners were selected from nearly 100 nominations. The MC4 program team will be formally honored at the GCN Awards Gala, Oct. 22, 2009, at the Hilton Washington in Washington, D.C.

At the same event, Carrion will be one of 28 individuals to receive a 2009 Rising Star Award. The award, in its fourth year, honors up-and-coming employees in the public and private sectors who have made an early—and substantive—contribution to the government information technology community. This year's judges considered 160 nominations. Carrion, who is currently heading a massive EMR software upgrade in Iraq, will be recognized for expanding the MC4 system to the

Air Force and for helping Task Force 61 launch a battlefield EMR best practice initiative.

"These honors are shared with the medical forces who remain dedicated to the EMR and medical logistics missions at home and abroad," said MC4 Product Manager Army Lt. Col. William E. Geesey. "Their commitment and progress using MC4 technology has improved tactical healthcare and provided better decision making. This ongoing effort will significantly impact servicemembers' lives for years to come."

With 10 years of experience managing the DoD's first and most comprehensive battlefield medical recording system, MC4 has enabled the capture of more than 11.5 million electronic patient encounters in the combat zone since 2003. MC4 has also trained 40,000 deployable medical professionals and fielded 30,000 systems to 750 units with medical personnel, to include Stryker Brigades, Army National Guard and Reserves, and all active divisional units throughout 14 countries. For more information on MC4, visit <www.mc4.army.mil>.

Ten Best Technologies Recognized by Army

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (SEPT. 21, 2009)

C. Todd Lopez

ARLINGTON, Va.—Combat gauze, the Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, and a new machine-gun cradle were among technologies recognized by U.S. Army Materiel Command during the "Top 10 Great Inventions of 2008" event at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Va.

The event, held yearly since 2002, celebrates the best technological advances in the Army. Criteria for being selected include impact on Army capability, potential for benefit outside the Army, and inventiveness. Additionally, all the technology nominated must have been fielded during 2008.

It's actually soldiers in-theater who pick the winners.

"We have soldier panels, from the active divisions of the Army ... review all the nominations and vote on them," said Donald W. Matts Jr., of Army Research, Development, and Engineering Command, who headed up the "Top Ten" program this year.

This year it was soldiers from the 1st Armored Division, the 82nd Airborne Division, and the 25th Infantry Division who participated in the voting, Matts said.

"Each of the winners gets a trophy and plaque for their team, and even the ones that haven't won in the top ten—they are



The Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, or CROWS, was one of 10 Army technologies chosen as the "Top 10 Great Inventions of 2008."

U.S. Army photo by C. Todd Lopez

winners too—they've all fielded products the soldiers are using in the field today."

The Common Remotely Operated Weapons System, or CROWS, was one of the 10 chosen this year as the best. The system amounts to a gun, mounted on a remotely controlled swivel, with multiple cameras. What it does is keep soldiers inside a vehicle, while the remotely controlled weapon does the dangerous work on the outside—exposed to insurgents and their improvised explosive devices.

"It's all about soldier protection," said Michael Scott, of RDECOM. "It definitely saves soldiers' lives. The thought is to get the soldier under armor and let him fire his weapon from the safety of being buttoned up in the vehicle."

The CROWS is now on more than 700 vehicles in both Iraq and Afghanistan, including the mine-resistant ambush protected vehicle, the humvee, and the Abrams tank, Scott said. New systems are being fielded at a rate of about 20 a week.

With that exposure in the field, Scott said, evidence has come back that shows it does what it's meant to do—save lives.

"With IED blasts, this system has come back basically in a bucket," he said. "If a soldier was up there out of the hatch and his gun up on a pencil mount, he would be taking the

shrapnel, not the system. So, the feedback is pretty good."

Also protecting soldiers is a new set of armor for the MRAP. The "Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle Expedient Armor Program Add-on-Armor Kit," or MEAP (AoA), was meant to protect MRAPs from explosively formed penetrators. The EFP [explosively formed penetrator] is a new, deadlier weapon employed by insurgents, said Debbie DiCesare with the Tank Automotive Research, Development, and Engineering Center.

"We have a charge to provide protection against medium explosively formed penetrators in theater in Iraq," she said. "And it's a particularly lethal threat."

DiCesare and her team, without manufacturer-provided engineering data for MRAP, devised for the vehicles a new form of protection to save soldiers' lives.

"We fabricated the parts and integrated it onto the vehicle and did all that in six weeks," she said.

A lot of testing went into the armor stateside, and today it's fitted to some 550 vehicles. But DiCesare said the real measure of success comes from the field.

"In my mind, it's when you get the e-mail back from the soldier that says thanks for doing this, because it saved my life," DiCesare said is the best reward. "We've gotten e-mails and some letters. That's probably the most rewarding part."

When soldiers do get hurt, there's Combat Gauze—an inexpensive, lightweight, effective way to stop arterial bleeding. The gauze is impregnated with kaolin, a type of clay, known for the way it helps the body clot faster—and stop bleeding.

"It's a hemostatic dressing, a very simple device, easy to use," said Dr. Michael Dubick, Army Institute of Surgical Research. "The important thing is that unlike other products that have been deployed, this one will stop an arterial hemorrhage. It's effective, and it seems to be safe."

Fielding on the Combat Gauze is pretty new now, Dubick said, and not a lot has come back from theater. But Dubick says he's heard of at least one report from soldiers that it was effective—and three additional reports from civilian trauma centers, who are also using it.

A total of 10 technologies were named this year as the 'Top 10 Greatest Inventions of 2008.' Each team was presented with a trophy and a plaque, commemorating their effort. The winning technologies and teams include:

- XM-153 Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS); U.S. Army Armament Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Projectile Detection Cueing (PDCue)-Common Remotely Operated Weapon Station (CROWS) Lightning; U.S. Army Armament Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Light Machine Gun & Medium Machine Gun Cradle; U.S. Army Armament Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Overhead Cover for Objective Gunner Protection Kit; U.S. Army Armament Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Enhanced Mobile Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment Vehicle; U.S. Army Aviation and Missile Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Whisper; U.S. Army Communications-Electronics Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- Combat Gauze for Treating Hemorrhage in Injured Soldiers; U.S. Army Institute of Surgical Research
- Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected Armor Weight Reduction Spiral Program; U.S. Army Research Laboratory
- Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected Expedient Armor Program Add-on-Armor Kit; U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development, and Engineering Center
- One System Remote Video Terminal A-kit; U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development, and Engineering Center.

T&E Acquisition Workforce Competency Assessment Effort

The office of the director, developmental test and evaluation, is beginning the competency assessment of 100 percent of the T&E acquisition workforce. The under secretary of defense for acquisition, technology, and logistics has directed the assessment of all T&E acquisition workforce members. The Defense Acquisition University is implementing the assessment, and the Center for Naval Analysis is providing the team to conduct the assessment.

The assessment process consists of five phases. The first two phases consist of identifying the competency framework

and subject matter experts to validate the framework. Phase III is competency model testing and refinement. Phase IV is conducting the competency assessment of the workforce, and Phase V is identifying the organizational development learning interventions. Phase V results are expected to influence DAU T&E course design, scope and content, and possibly, T&E certification standards. A CNA brief providing an overview of the assessment process, including the planned products, may be downloaded from <www.acq.osd.mil/sse/docs/TE-Competency-Assessment-Process-12Aug09.pdf>.

Contact the DT&E staff with any comments or questions you may have on the assessment. If you are occupying an AT&L T&E acquisition coded position, please e-mail the DT&E staff, SSEWebmaster@osd.mil, with your position title, organization, and e-mail address. This will help DT&E staff to ensure that as many T&E acquisition workforce members as possible are included in this important assessment effort.

Air Force Leaders Emphasize AFSO21

AIR FORCE NEWS SERVICE (SEPT. 28, 2009)

Carl Bergquist

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala.—In a joint June 2009 memorandum, the secretary and chief of staff of the Air Force pointed out the importance of Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st century, or AFSO21.

"AFSO21 represents a fundamental transformation in how airmen work," Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley and Air Force Gen. Norton Schwartz said in their memorandum. "We must take advantage of every opportunity to use AFSO21 principles to improve the processes we perform."

They said the AFSO21 program, a process very similar to the Department of Defense's "Lean Six Sigma," has shifted the focus of airmen beyond applying unique skills to getting the mission done to continually improving mission performance. They also said AFSO21 identifies performance gaps; allows airmen to find innovative and effective ways to accomplish the mission; and brings everyone together to solve problems, exploit opportunities, and maximize efficiencies.

Schwartz went on to say in a separate memorandum that throughout the Air Force's history, the Service has implemented innovations to establish its position as the world's premier air, space, and cyberspace power.

"The Air Force has committed to AFSO21, a critical and enduring journey of innovation that we must all embrace across our total force," he said. "We must make difficult decisions to meet future technological advances and the asymmetric methods of our foes."

Gen. Stephen Lorenz, commander of Air Education and Training Command, said the AFSO21 program has generated improvements throughout the Air Force, and in some cases, the improvements have been dramatic.

“As I have said on a number of occasions, AFSO21 is about efficiency and effectiveness,” he said. “I feel strongly that a core desire each of our airmen has is to improve their processes and work environment to make them more efficient and effective. AFSO21 brings airmen tools to do this, and that is why I’m 100 percent behind it.”

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—Gen. Stephen Lorenz, USAF
Commander, Air Education & Training Command

“Structured problem solving leveraged with tools like lean process improvement, Six Sigma, and theory of constraints are powerful in any venue,” he said. “It just takes some creative and critical thinking, sometimes with the assistance of expert consultation, to adapt and use these tools in the transactional business of teaching and learning.”

Chansler said Air Force members and employees should remember that AFSO21 and LSS are here to stay and are becoming more institutionally a part of Air Force culture.

Lt. Gen. Allen Peck, Air University commander, echoed Lorenz’ view on AFSO21 that the program is about improving efficiency and effectiveness in the Air Force’s day-to-day work processes.

“We simply must get past thinking that the structured problem-solving tools, such as the 8-Step Problem-Solving Model, are something we do in addition to doing our real jobs. Process improvement is a core component of our responsibilities,” he said. “I challenge all Air University airmen to use this problem-solving process and adapt its tools to their own work processes as an integral part of their current jobs. As we get more and more familiar with these tools, we will devise new and better ways of applying them.”

Dr. Phil Chansler, director of Air University’s Lean Six Sigma Business Office, identifies the eight steps to problem solving as: clarify and validate the problem; break down the problem; set an improvement target; determine the root cause; develop countermeasures; see countermeasures through; confirm results and the process; and standardize successful processes. He describes “Lean” as a mindset that strives to remove waste from processes, while “Six Sigma” is a quantitative procedure to reduce variations in processes.

Peck said the improvement tools of AFSO21 are “dismissed by cynics” as not being applicable for the educational environment at Air University, but he feels they should reconsider that position.

“We are trying to make the Air Force a culture of problem solvers, and the foundation for this is the 8-Step Problem-Solving Model. What we do at Air University to assist airmen in their work is to provide them with professional military education,” he said.

Bergquist writes for Air University Public Affairs.