

Face of Defense: Logistics Analyst Excels in Leadership Program

DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY NEWS RELEASE (JULY 28, 2010)

Dianne Ryder

FORT BELVOIR, Va.—When Betty Hoapili was selected to attend the Department of Defense's Executive Leadership Development Program, she got the chance to walk in a war-fighter's shoes.

The 23-year civil service veteran, a logistics program analysis officer on the Defense Logistics Agency's Air Force Customer Support Team in the Operations and Sustainment Division of DLA Logistics Operations, was looking to complement her career path when she responded to the program's call for nominations through DLA's Executive Development Program.

One of the program requirements was to complete a staff study. Hoapili's study focused on the Defense Department's acquisition community and its ability to handle the impending wave of retirements projected in the next five years.

"I looked at whether or not the [defense] acquisition career field is headed for...a 'brain drain' and developed possible courses of action," she said.

Hoapili said she prepared herself for the various types of training and temporary duty assignments, which took place one to two weeks each month for 10 months—a total of 95 days. She also needed to keep up with her regular workload, which she said helped her learn about juggling priorities.

At the program orientation, Hoapili said, her instructors told participants they were lucky to have been selected.

"One of the things they said to us was, 'You 61 people have won the lottery,' [because] there were 600 applicants," she recalled. The participants were split into six teams, including one military member per team, Hoapili said.

The first "deployment" was to core training at the Southbridge Conference Center in Southbridge, Mass., where Hoapili said team members were challenged physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Team members had to complete a fitness test—sit-ups, push-ups, and pull-ups—to ensure they could safely participate in the program's demanding activities.

"[Early] the next morning...those who had not passed any aspect of the physical testing had to report to the gym area and were going to focus on additional training," she said.

Although Hoapili and her teammates had passed the physical test, she said she went to the gym anyway to help other program members prepare for the re-test. It was a proud moment when those members passed the test too, Hoapili said.

At another deployment, she volunteered for a swimming challenge at the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL School at the Naval Special Warfare Center in Coronado, Calif. The challenge involved swimming in full military gear out to a Navy SEAL positioned in the ocean.

"It was very scary because of the significant undertow and the crashing waves...There was one point where I thought, 'I wonder if I'm going to drown.' [But] when I made it back to the beach and the rest of my teammates were cheering me, I knew I'd challenged myself to do my best. That's why I [volunteered]," Hoapili said.

One of the program's key tenets involves showing participants they can do more than they'd thought, she said.

"That's the starting point for any good leader...knowing your capabilities and pushing yourself...to see what you can do when faced with a tough challenge...to go one step beyond what you thought you could do," she said.

"How to adapt to changing circumstances is part of the skill set that this program was teaching me," Hoapili said.

After the swimming challenge, program members were required to drag an inflatable raft up and down the beach and then complete an obstacle course.

Despite being driven to physical exhaustion on that California beach, Hoapili said, her biggest challenge was yet to come at the U.S. Army Ranger School, at Fort Benning, Ga. Standing on top of a 75-foot tower and stepping off to rappel down was more of a mental challenge for Hoapili, one she wasn't sure she could do.

"That first step took a lot of faith on my part, [but I had] confidence in my equipment and confidence in the instructors that were there...assuring me they had my back," she said. During times when she was less confident in her abilities, Hoapili said, she repeated a mantra to herself.

"Leaders are tough; leaders are strong; leaders can do these things," she said.

Still, Hoapili credits her accomplishments to her team's never-ending support.



Betty Hoapili crawls through the mud at the Army Rangers' Malvesti Obstacle Course, Fort Benning, Ga., during part of the Defense Department's Executive Leadership Development Program. DoD photo by Dave Michael

"I was blessed with an amazing team of people. We called ourselves 'Team High Five'...Those 10 people became a family...We were there for each other. It goes back to working on behalf of warfighters; [they] were my warfighters, and I didn't want to let them down, and we refused to leave anyone behind," Hoapili said.

Each year during graduation ceremonies, one class member is awarded special recognition. This year, Hoapili was awarded that distinction and presented the Rosemary E. Howard Leadership Award. She was unaware she would be receiving the peer-nominated award.

"To be nominated by your peers is an extreme honor," Hoapili said. "When I read the award's inscription: 'Based on Courage, Determination, Leadership, and Professionalism,' I was very humbled," she said.

Hoapili said she took two lessons away from her experience in the program. The first was a reinforcement of a lesson learned from her father.

"My dad is a retired Air Force chief master sergeant; he always taught me the backbone of our armed forces is our enlisted corps," she said. "That was reinforced to me...because at every deployment, the individuals who were teaching me...training me...equipping me were all [noncommissioned officers]."

The second take-away is the power of teamwork, she said.

"Not only did my teammates have my back, but trained, amazing warfighters had my back as well. [I value] the whole concept of courage and compassion and competence in terms of strong leadership and what's expected of us as future civilian leaders," she said.

Gary Gonthier, a performance-based logistics program manager in DLA Aviation's Strategic Customer Engagement Branch was also on Hoapili's team.

"Betty was a welcome member of the team...[She] is socially gregarious, which manifests itself in the precious attention she paid to both organizational and personal details," he said.

The combination of Hoapili's interpersonal style, which included offering praise and other affirmations to participants, set against a backdrop of structure, schedules, and order made her a compassionate leader, Gonthier said.

"She left no doubt when team members performed well, yet also made clear those instances when things didn't go so well. Betty always placed the concern of others above her own self-interest," he said.

This year marked the first occasion that program participants traveled to Kuwait. Though they spent just 72 hours there, both Hoapili and Gonthier agreed that the program instilled them with a greater appreciation for military service members.

Gonthier said the program provides civilian personnel with a hands-on approach to learning what warfighters do on a daily basis.

"The...members from each of the Services are truly dedicated to what they do and [are] wholeheartedly supported by the family that follows...them," he said. "They are highly trained and ready to do whatever it takes to defend this nation, including giving their lives. We should never forget that." Hoapili agreed and said it's an experience civilians rarely, if ever, get.

"It's invaluable in enhancing my understanding of what our warfighters go through, the sacrifices they make...on our behalf, and how important it is for us to do our jobs extremely well so they can do what we're asking them to do," she said.

Recently, Hoapili found out she was selected for another training opportunity—the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. She credits DLA for giving her the chance to display her leadership qualities in the ELDP. At DLA, developing employees' skills and abilities is a high priority—so high it falls into agency Director Navy Vice Adm. Alan Thompson's list of top initiatives.

"I'm anxious now to give back to DLA for having given me this opportunity," Hoapili said.

She added that she's a "huge proponent" of the ELDP program and noted that as the Rosemary E. Howard Award winner, she gets to go to orientation for next year's program and speak to incoming participants.

"In so many ways, I do wish I was doing it again—not so much the crawling through the mud...but it's a once-in-a-lifetime experience," she said. "I look at the pictures and think, 'How did I do that?' But you do it one day at a time and with a whole lot of help from your friends."

Nominations for the DoD Executive Leader Development Program are solicited annually around September through the DLA Executive Development Program. Information is available on the EDP Web page at www.hr.dla.mil/resources/workforce/executive.html.

Ryder writes for the Defense Logistics Agency Strategic Communications Office.

Aristotle Launched

DEFENSE TECHNICAL INFORMATION CENTER NEWS RELEASE
(AUG. 6, 2010)

FORT BELVOIR, Va.—The Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) launched Aristotle, a professional social networking site for the Department of Defense (DoD) science and technology (S&T) community. Aristotle provides a secure environment for scientists, engineers, researchers, and program managers to network, create, and collaborate with other experts in the S&T community.

Aristotle is a Web-based social media tool that adds a new dimension to professional social networking for DoD employees. Users not only network with other individuals; they can link to Topics, Projects, and Documents. Aristotle provides situational awareness of the larger DoD S&T community.

This powerful application helps S&T professionals do their jobs more efficiently and effectively. Users can organize and share information, and collaborate with colleagues around the world on projects; gather, prioritize, and utilize information; and keep up-to-speed on developments in areas vital to their work. Through Aristotle, users have access to DTIC's technical reports and research summaries.

Federal Government and DoD employees and their contractors must register with DTIC to access Aristotle. In addition to the security provided by the requirement to sign on with a userid and password or by using a registered Common Access Card, users can assign permissions to everything they create in or upload to Aristotle.

To access Aristotle, visit <https://www.dtic.mil/aristotle>. To register for DTIC, visit www.dtic.mil/dtic/registration/.

DTIC is a DoD Field Activity aligned with the Director, Defense Research and Engineering (DDR&E). The premier provider of DoD scientific and technical information, DTIC has served the information needs of the defense community for 65 years. Media contact is Sandy Schwalb, 703-767-9205, PAO@dtic.mil.

Army Contracting Rebuilding Workforce

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (SEPT. 16, 2010)

Matthew Hickman

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Army has changed hiring practices, emphasized recruiting, and initiated training programs in order to meet the demand for contracting specialists in Iraq and Afghanistan. Army Contracting Command and the Corps of Engineers have been tasked to rebuild a workforce—which has experienced losses from Base Realignment and Closure—needed to complete a massive workload.

"We've been working very vigorously over the last few years in trying to rebuild our contracting workforce both on the civilian side, and just as importantly, on the military side," said Jeffrey Parsons, executive director, ACC.

Skilled contracting specialists are a necessity in Iraq and Afghanistan, especially when a military build-up occurs, but a combination of civilians declining to work in a combat zone and a lack of high-quality applicants for those positions has left a smaller workforce with heavy responsibilities, he added.

"We're probably 70 to 80 percent staffed; we usually don't get above that point," said Kim Denver, director of contracting for the Corps of Engineers. "We are meeting the demand of the workload, but we're not exactly where we'd like to be."

The scarcity of skilled contracting specialists can be traced to the government's decision to downsize the federal workforce in the 1990s, which led to skill-set gaps and had adverse consequences when Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom commenced, said Edward Harrington, deputy assistant secretary of the Army for Procurement.

"Over the years of downsizing, the majority of those folks that left our Service were mid- and senior-level, seasoned, experienced contracting professionals," Harrington said. "The last eight years...we've had a tremendous increase in workload."

Complicating the issue is BRAC, and now the task of rebuilding a skilled workforce has been stressed with the task of replacing skilled personnel. ACC and the Expeditionary Contracting Command are moving to Huntsville, Ala., next summer, and a contracting center in New Jersey is moving to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., at the same time.

"As in any move, there's a large challenge associated with that, especially moving out of the Washington, D.C., area because there are so many opportunities for people to go to other organizations," Parsons said.

The struggling economy has been a bittersweet boost for Army contracting because skilled workers that once applied their trade in the private industry are now being recruited to use those skills in the military.

"We have picked up quite a few individuals that have been buyers in the auto industry, or the steel industry, or the aluminum industry, that we've brought into contracting," Parsons said, adding the Army participates in job fairs and advertises heavily in cities like Detroit.

Advanced training and continued education are two benefits that come with working in Army contracting. As the military environment changes, Harrington said contracting specialists must adapt, and resources and funding have been set aside to provide employees with the opportunity to learn new skill sets.

"It's a lifelong learning experience along with a work experience," he said. "We support master's degrees completion; we support advanced training and advanced education for these folks because it's absolutely necessary, as part of the professional qualifications, to have that type of training."

Army contracting is invested in its internship program, which it looks at as a training regimen for future leaders in the field. Interns can come right out of college, provided they meet certain qualifications, and in the last three years more than 800 interns have been hired.

"It's a very critical program for us in order to establish that base because if I'm losing 500 people a year due to attrition, retirements, and people moving around, ideally I would like to have a pool of people that are graduating out of that intern program to move into the positions that I will then have open throughout my organization," Parsons said.

Interns complete three levels of certification during the three-year program, receive on-the-job training in a contracting environment, and are assigned a mentor, who will guide entry-level employees and help them develop essential skills.

"They have a six-week training period when the intern comes on board," Harrington said. "Along with the formal classroom training, they are initially exposed to the actual work environment every day."

The typical hiring process can take up to six months to complete, but the Army has given ACC and other contracting centers the ability to cut that time significantly. They can also make tentative offers to prospective employees while required paperwork is completed.

"We've used things like expedited hiring authority to bring over about 155 people in the last couple of years in the journeyman level—people that have had some experience," Parsons said, adding that finding applicants with experience can be difficult.

The Army recently established a website to help ACC in recruiting and hiring to attract qualified civilians to fill the ranks. Armyhire.com details the benefits of working as a

contracting specialist, the locations an employee could work, and the opportunities for college graduates up to current contracting professionals.

“We’re using that website, quite frankly, to also advertise positions for our own workforce,” Parsons said. “Within our enterprise, what we’re trying to encourage is movement to get different types of job experience.”

Army contracting buys construction projects, items critical to operate installations and major weapon systems, all in direct or indirect support of the soldier. Army contracting is an exciting career field, Parsons said.

“Our workers really have a sense of pride and fulfillment when they know they’re in direct support of our warfighters, who are putting their lives at risk every day in theater,” he added.

Hickman writes for Army News, Office of the Chief of Public Affairs.

Air Force Under Secretary Reinforces Value of Acquisition Estimate Tool

AIR FORCE NEWS SERVICE (SEPT. 15, 2010)

WASHINGTON—The Air Force relies on numerous vendors for critical supplies and everyday items, and the Long-Range Acquisition Estimate helps ensure that the Air Force gets the highest quality products and services at the lowest prices.

Through better requirements identification and planning, and use of the LRAE, Air Force officials are more effective in communicating needs to the marketplace. As a result, the LRAE helps the small business community better understand Air Force requirements and increases competition among suppliers to meet the Service’s needs. The LRAE is also an important market research tool in the development of acquisition strategies.

Under Secretary of the Air Force Erin C. Conaton recently signed a memorandum supporting the LRAE.

“One of the most valuable tools the Air Force has to communicate with industry regarding future mission requirements is the LRAE,” Conaton wrote. “To assist with planning and locating additional sources of supply, it is important to develop long-range acquisition estimates and make them available to industry by using the LRAE tool.”

The Air Force Small Business Programs Office recently completed updates to the LRAE content management system to make the tool more user friendly. The estimate meets the

intent of the Small Business Act requirement to prepare a forecast of expected contract opportunities, and the tool is a critical resource for companies interested in doing business with the Air Force.

Companies are able to search the LRAE using several variables, including type of procurement, contract value, purchasing organization, and solicitation type. Additionally, small businesses can rely on information contained in the LRAE to perform advance planning, helping to unlock the potential of small businesses that might not otherwise be developed.

But to be most effective, LRAE data must be input when the requirement is identified, and the data must be subsequently updated as projections change. As a result, acquisition planners, contracting officers, and small business specialists have been asked to establish processes optimizing LRAE use in forecasting and maintaining up-to-date records. The LRAE may be accessed through the Air Force Small Business website at www.AirForceSmallBiz.org.

Courtesy Air Force Small Business Programs Office.

Army Continues to Expand Contracting Workforce

ARMY NEWS SERVICE (SEPT. 20, 2010)

Kris Osborn

WASHINGTON—Army leaders testified before the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan at a Sept. 16 hearing that the Army continues to make great strides to expand its contracting workforce and improve oversight of the billions spent on warzone contingency contracts.

Army authorizations for deployable contracting soldiers continue to grow—from a total of 160 in 2002 to 1,113 across the Army by the end of 2013—Lt. Gen. Bill Phillips, principal military deputy to the assistant secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology, told the commission.

Also, Army leaders testified that the Service is implementing all 22 of the Army-specific recommendations contained in the October 2007 report by Dr. Jacques Gansler titled “Urgent Reform Required: Army Expeditionary Contracting.”

“We are implementing the recommendations from Dr. Gansler and we are continuing to grow our deployable contracting workforce,” Phillips said.

The commission—which was created by Congress in 2008 to examine contingency contracting for reconstruction, logistics, and security functions—questioned Army and

Pentagon decision makers regarding efforts to increase the number of overall personnel and general officers working in contingency contracting.

“When you consider that the Department of Defense spent \$384 billion on contracts in 2009—more than double the level of 2001—while its organic acquisition workforce actually declined, you are forced to suspect that opportunities for waste, fraud, and abuse have multiplied,” said Commission Co-Chairman Christopher Shays. “Before current operations cease, before memories fade, and before the sense of urgency dissipates, we need to be sure that the problems revealed and the lessons learned in Southwest Asia are addressed in reforms of the federal contingency acquisition workforce.”

Shays, other members of the commission, and the expert witnesses all referred to the drawdown of thousands of contracting professionals across the services during the 1990s following the end of the Cold War—underscoring the need to rebuild the bench over time to meet the fast-growing needs of the current wars.

Witnesses testifying before the Commission emphasized that while much progress has been made, it takes time to reverse the trend. One of the many Gansler recommendations pursued by the Army was to stand up an Army Contracting Command; ACC was stood up in October 2008, and now has more than 5,000 employees at more than 117 locations worldwide.

“Army Contracting Command is working to help facilitate a cultural change in the Army,” Jeff Parsons, director of Army Contracting Command, told the commission.

Parsons outlined five ACC strategic priorities to include growing the workforce, focusing on customers, acquiring and maintaining resources, and enhancing the quality of life for personnel.

Commission members said they wanted to help ensure that an emphasis on contingency contracting and needed personnel does not diminish as a result of anticipated reductions in defense spending.

“Historically, reductions in force structure are disproportionately allocated to combat service support and the acquisition community. How do you change the culture of realizing the goal of increasing the acquisition workforce? How do we institutionalize some of this momentum we have built up?” asked Commissioner Grant Green.

Army contracting leaders assured the commission they would work to retain the Army’s emphasis on contracting, build on the current momentum, and work to institutionalize the important changes taking place.

“We will continue to give the chief of staff of the Army our feedback on the importance of having contracting general officers. We will make sure it stays on the radar. You need to have the capability so that when they ask you to deploy—you are able to deploy,” Phillips told the commission.

Among the panel of expert witnesses was Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, who told the commission that the corps continues to expand as well. “We have requested an additional 358 contracting positions to be phased in over fiscal years 2011 to 2014. The first 100 of these positions have been approved,” Van Antwerp told the commission in prepared testimony.

Since 2001, the Army Corps of Engineers has managed more than 6,000 projects in Iraq and Afghanistan with a construction cost of about \$17 billion. Overall, the corps has had nearly 10,000 personnel deployments in support of these missions. In addition, the Army Corps of Engineers has deactivated a district headquarters in Iraq as the military forces have drawn down there and also added a second district in Afghanistan to assist with reconstruction efforts there, Van Antwerp told the commission.

Members of the commission also asked about contingency contracting requirements and expressed interest in having contracting teams in close proximity to the operational units they support. Phillips told the Commission that resourcing teams will continue to be co-located with regional contracting teams in theater.

“There has to be a habitual relationship between the regional contracting command and the brigades’ area of operation. They are very close. In Iraq and Afghanistan we set up regional contracting centers that were tied to brigade combat teams. When the 101st went into Herat in Western Afghanistan, we immediately deployed a contingency contracting team that went into Herat,” he said. “You can’t separate requirements from acquisition and resources. They all have to be synchronized.”

Commission members and witnesses alike expressed the sentiment that contingency contracting is an inherently valuable element of the ongoing war effort.

“Contracting is now part of the warfighting—it is not an afterthought,” said Commissioner Robert Henke.