

# SPS Users Meet for Second Joint Conference

## Forum Encourages Sharing of Ideas and Solutions

LINDA POLONSKY-HILLMER

The second Joint Standard Procurement System (SPS) Users' Conference, held April 23–25 in San Antonio, Texas, attracted more than 325 users from around the world. Hosted by the Air Force and sponsored by the SPS Joint Program Management Office (JPMO), this year's event introduced several new tools to SPS users, including the latest version of SPS—Procurement Desktop-Defense (PD<sup>2</sup>) version 4.2 Increment 1.

Version 4.2 Increment 1 was delivered on schedule to the government and is currently undergoing testing. "The testing is going very well at this time," reported Army Col. Jake Haynes, SPS Program Manager. "We haven't found any major discrepancies, which is good progress and probably means we'll deploy on schedule."

This latest version of SPS is scheduled to begin deploying to Army post, camp, and station environments in late summer/early fall of 2002. And according to Army Desk Officer George Chavis, "The Army is ready for this product. We're gearing up for it now and we're looking forward to implementing v4.2."

### Something for Everyone

While v4.2 was a hot topic of conversation (with busy demonstration tables), the Conference offered a diversity of top-



**“At a very high level in the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], this is a purple program and we have a very serious commitment to do things smarter ... the senior leaders in OSD are business people—they demand we embrace transformation.”**

—Col. Maureen Clay, USAF  
Chief, Contracting Operations  
SAF/AQCK

ics—something for everyone in attendance. Tom Bayless, Director, Air Force Contracting Information Systems Program Office, opened the Conference and encouraged everyone to “learn while you’re here. Don’t reinvent the wheel... and take what you learn here back to your office and share it with your co-workers.”

Putting his words into action, Bayless created an environment—from the speakers to the breakout sessions to the networking breaks—where ideas, experiences, and lessons learned were traded and repeated across the Military Services and Defense Agencies, all of whom were represented at the Conference.

### Embracing Transformation

Air Force Col. Maureen Clay, Chief, Contracting Operations, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary (Contracting), Assistant Secretary of the Air Force (Acquisition), kicked off the Conference and told attendees that they can expect to see “some fairly significant changes in the next three years, but I’ve sat where you are about 100 times and I know you always hear there is going to be significant change.” She estimated that only 35 percent of predicted changes actually happen, but she said the 35 percent that will happen in the next few years will make a difference.

“At a very high level in the OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense], this is a purple program and we have a very se-

*Polonsky-Hillmer is President, CorpComm, Fredericksburg, Va. She has worked with the SPS Program since its inception.*

rious commitment to do things smarter,” said Clay. “The senior leaders in OSD are business people ... they demand we embrace transformation.”

Some of the transformations Clay said will be coming involve increasing use of global supplier agreements and commodity councils. Technology will help these tools evolve so they’re almost second-nature to everyday business decisions in the Pentagon, she predicted.

### Transformation of Core Elements

Haynes echoed Clay’s call for transformation, but at a more specific level. “We’re transforming some core elements of the SPS program,” he said. “Specifically, at the process level, we’ve made significant changes to two processes that directly affect user satisfaction: the requirements process and the testing process.”

Haynes explained recent changes to the Joint Requirements Board that ensured every issue that is presented (whether to the Help Desk, Desk Officers, Component Management Offices, or JPMO User Satisfaction Manager) is considered as a requirement for future versions of the software. He has also hired an Independent Validation and Verification (IVV) contractor to oversee the testing process and “make sure we get what we need to make this program successful.”

One issue Haynes repeatedly emphasized was the fact that he works for SPS users. “I work for you,” he told the audience. “It’s my responsibility to put all of the resources entrusted to me by the government to use for you, the SPS users.”

Haynes mentioned several communication avenues that were in place such as the direct e-mail at [spscommunications@hq.dcma.mil](mailto:spscommunications@hq.dcma.mil) and the monthly SPS Newsletter at <http://home.dcma.mil/sps-jpmo/spsnewsletter>.



**“SPS will help us place orders across the entire Department and collect data that will help us make smart business decisions that benefit the warfighter ... It’s truly time for us to focus as one DoD on the warfighter. We need to use less contractual vehicles and we need to use them wisely to realize discounts for the volume we purchase across the DoD.”**

—Deidre Lee  
Director of Defense Procurement

One of the tools about which he is particularly enthusiastic is the upcoming Center of Excellence (COE). The COE is a Web portal that provides a personalized environment to the user, allows for sharing of information between users, and would ideally tie into existing SPS sites managed by the Military Services and several contractors (including the SPS Knowledge Base). Haynes encourages users to provide feedback through sharing their thoughts and suggestions about the portal.

### From the User Perspective

Viewing the demonstration of the COE, Major Command Functional Review Board member Stephen McLaren said, “This is the single most important and exciting thing the government has spent its money on in years! It’s about users feeding information into a system and helping each other.”

His comments were indicative of most users who saw the demonstration. And because of the enthusiasm of users like McLaren, Haynes said he is pursuing turning the Center into reality by mid-summer.

A New Communications Tool  
Director of Defense Procurement Deidre Lee was a key participant and speaker at the Conference. Lee unveiled a new communications tool she is implementing that will encourage direct communication between her office and anyone and everyone in the procurement community.

“Let us know if a clause needs to be changed. Let us know how we can make things better. We’re asking for your input,” said Lee. “We write the FAR [Federal Acquisition Regulation] and the DFAR [Defense FAR], so we can make changes to them. We just need to know what changes you’d like us to make.”

Lee has set up an e-mail address for users to reach her office with ideas and suggestions: [front-line.solutions@osd.mil](mailto:front-line.solutions@osd.mil). She said users who send in suggestions will definitely receive a response and may be recognized through public forums.

Lee emphasized the importance of SPS to DoD's end-to-end procurement process. "SPS will help us place orders across the entire Department and collect data that will help us make smart business decisions that benefit the warfighter ... It's truly time for us to focus as one DoD on the warfighter. We need to use less contractual vehicles and we need to use them wisely to realize discounts for the volume we purchase across the DoD."

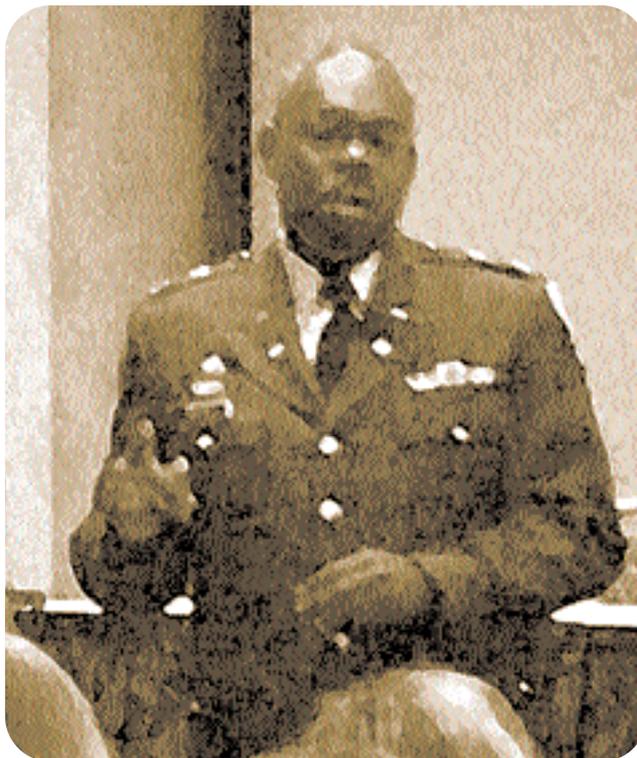
#### Using SPS to Benefit the Warfighter

The theme of using SPS to benefit the warfighter could be heard throughout the Conference, especially when it came to sharing ideas of how to use the system smarter.

Carolyn Hickey came to the Conference from Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. "It took me 12 hours of airplane travel to get here," said Hickey, "but it was worth it. The exchange of ideas is very important."

"These user conferences are a good thing," agreed Dwight Brown, an Army SPS user. "It's nice to see people face-to-face. You exchange e-mails all the time and it's nice to finally see everyone in person!"

Cindy Bailey is a systems administrator for SUPSHIP in Portsmouth, Va. "I came to the Conference to get issues about v4.2 clarified. But I've learned more than just what I came for," said Bailey. "I liked talking with other users who are having the same issues I am. We shared ideas. I also enjoyed meeting Colonel Haynes. He is really on board to make this work."



**"I work for you ... it's my responsibility to put all of the resources entrusted to me by the government to use for you, the SPS users."**

—Col. Jake Haynes, USA  
SPS Program Manager

In addition to users from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marines, representatives from the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA), Missile Defense Agency (MDA), Real Estate & Facilities

Contracting Office (REFCO), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), and Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) were also in attendance.

"SPS was the first system deployed that took all the Services' needs into consideration," said JoAnn Smith from DFAS. "I'm here to keep abreast of the issues with SPS and the Services since we in DFAS really are 'financial partners at work'—vendors come to us for payments."

#### Personal Message From the Director, Defense Procurement

Recognizing the importance of Defense Procurement, not only to the warfighter but to the nation at large, Director of Defense

Procurement Deidre Lee brought a personal message to this year's Conference. She thanked all procurement professionals for their "above-and-beyond" response to 9/11.

"We recognize you're doing a great job. Please take this message back with you to your Commands: *Thank you!*"

**Editor's Note:** For those readers interested in viewing the test portal or providing feedback to the JPMO, send an e-mail to the direct address at [spscommunications@hq.dcmamail](mailto:spscommunications@hq.dcmamail) requesting a PowerPoint version of the COE screens. **Polonsky-Hillmer** welcomes questions or comments on this article. Contact her at [linda@corpcomm-inc.com](mailto:linda@corpcomm-inc.com).

#### A Friendly Game of SPS Family Feud, Anyone?

Conference organizers at this year's Joint Standard Procurement System (SPS) Users' Conference concluded this year's event with a lively game of "SPS Family Feud" in which teams squared off to answer questions about SPS. The winners proudly wore their prized SPS baseball caps, which were bestowed upon them by Tom Bayless, Director, Air Force Contracting Information Systems Program Office. The SPS Family Feud game, which makes an excellent training tool, is available for use by all SPS sites (using Internet Explorer). If you would like a copy, please contact Liz Gooding, SPS User Satisfaction Manager, at [lgooding@hq.dcmamail](mailto:lgooding@hq.dcmamail).