

Program Manager Interviews Gary Smith, SOCOM Acquisition Executive

“If We’re Going to Manage a Program on the Same Schedule As One of the Services, We’re Not Doing Our Job”

COLLIE J. JOHNSON

Mention special operations forces and most people conjure up an image of a covert, John Rambo-like character, known by various names throughout the armed forces: ranger, snake eater, SEAL, or night stalker. In Gary Smith’s mind, “Rambo” is no more. The special operations forces operators are quiet professionals, who do their jobs under very demanding conditions. By nature, this customer wants everything they need for the mission, they want it quickly, and they want it at a reasonable price. Who can blame them, when they are representing the very unique needs for special operations forces worldwide – men and women who face new, quick-reaction missions, bigger challenges, and certainly bigger risks, all in a day’s work. Justifiably, they expect their government to procure the best systems and equipment necessary to the success of their missions – now.

Gary Smith was ready to take on new challenges when the opportunity came. After 20 years of working as a chief project officer; engineer; deputy project manager; project manager; and Program Executive Officer, Aviation, in St. Louis, he was tapped in 1991 by Army General Stiner to be the first Acquisition Executive for the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. The transition from a GSA warehouse-type building at the Federal Center in St.



GARY SMITH, SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND ACQUISITION EXECUTIVE AND MEMBER OF THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE, IS INTERVIEWED IN HIS MACDILL AIR FORCE BASE, FLORIDA, OFFICE BY COLLIE J. JOHNSON, MANAGING EDITOR, *PROGRAM MANAGER* MAGAZINE.

Louis, to the beautiful Florida West Coast was, according to Smith, a “radical but welcome change.” But that wasn’t the only thing motivating Smith.

In selecting him as the SOCOM AE, General Stiner handed him the biggest challenge of his career. Little did Smith realize, his tenure at SOCOM would coincide with an unprecedented jump

in our nation’s special operations forces’ utilization rate – Northern Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia – our daily headlines tell the story.

Since 1992, special operations forces deployment rates have increased 127 percent. Smith’s job was and is to prepare for and meet the equipment and systems requirements of these short-

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fuse and other deployments, ensuring that U. S. Special Operations Forces (Army, Navy, and Air Force) have the equipment and systems where they need them, when they need them.

Operating with four chartered PEOs, a combined staff of only 126 government personnel to manage all special operations-peculiar acquisition and technology programs, Smith's pride in his small but talented workforce pervades the interview. *Program Manager*, in this issue, attempts to present our readers a small glimpse into what it takes to manage the acquisition program for our nation's special operations forces. By its very nature, the Special Operations Command and its acquisition programs must remain a sensitive operation. Most of this story remains untold – and rightfully so.

Program Manager: *Some of our readers may not be aware of or fully understand the unique operating environment which led Congress to give the Special Operations Command acquisition authority equal to the Services. Could you explain how and why this came about?*

Smith: The Command stood up as a result of the neglect of the Services to fully resource and provide for the training and equipping of special operations forces across our Army, Navy, and Air Force; and because of the failed Iranian hostage rescue attempt, DESERT ONE.

The USCINCSOC [Commander in Chief, U.S. Special Operations Command] has his own budget and acquisition authorities. With the type of missions and actions that SOCOM has to perform, the Congress desired that we be able to move out faster on development and equipment purchases. There also was a desire for Acquisition Reform and streamlining. As a result, the Congress gave this Command its own acquisition authorities and its own budget, Major Force Program (MFP) 11.

Program Manager: *Describe for us, please, what you see as some of the criti-*



We have a strong, healthy internal competition here between our PEOs and PMs – each tries to outdo the others in managing a program faster, better, and cheaper. We have a very dedicated and close-knit program management and procurement team on each of the projects, so it's a real team effort.

cal roles identified thus far for the special operations acquisition workforce.

Smith: One of the most critical considerations, I think, is that we have to know our customer very, very well. Our customer base, our warfighters, are demanding, and they're very impatient with the development and acquisition community. They have unique requirements compared to the larger Services. The missions they execute are planned and tailored, but they must be able to change operations

rapidly. Therefore, our acquisition people must have a high degree of involvement with their user community, our customers. But it's also critical that we control how much the user impacts our acquisition efforts, so that we don't get significant requirements changes during the mid-course of an acquisition program. We typically operate with short development cycles, much shorter than the Services.

Another critical consideration comes to mind. We have three Component Commands: Army, Navy, and Air Force. We must prevent duplication between those components. We can't allow each component to go out on their own and buy the same equipment; that would result in individual buys that are more expensive. We need to do economic, order-quantity buying.

Program Manager: *In preparing for this interview, we learned that you operate with four chartered PEOs, with a combined staff of 126 personnel to manage all special operations-peculiar acquisition systems. Given the rapid deployment environment, starting with DESERT STORM, and escalating since 1992 – Northern Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia – we're amazed. How are you resourcing and modernizing special operations forces with the best and most affordable equipment with such a seemingly small staff?*

Smith: Yes, I have an authorized strength of 126 personnel, military and civilian. To be able to execute this mission we use SETA [Systems Engineering Technical Assistance] contractors to augment our very small PM offices. We normally only have two or three government employees staffing a PM office. We also use other government employees from the Services' commands, centers, and laboratories to come here on temporary duty to help us execute the programs.

Our people work very hard, and they often work long hours. They are very dedicated because they have a real closeness with those who execute the

GARY L. SMITH

Acquisition Executive U.S. Special Operations Command

Gary L. Smith is the Special Operations Acquisition Executive, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. Smith transferred to USSOCOM in October 1991, and is currently responsible for all special operations forces research, development, acquisition, and procurement.

Smith was born in Peoria, Illinois, September 24, 1941. He received a bachelor of science degree in machine design from Bradley University in 1963. After graduation, he was commissioned in the Air Force through the Reserve Officer Training Corps and subsequently assigned to Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. Smith served as a Project Engineer and Branch Chief, responsible for testing and qualification of Air Force weapons systems in support of the Vietnam War effort.

In 1968 he began his Army civilian career at Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois, where he managed the development of the AH-56 helicopter gun systems. He transferred to the Army Aviation Systems Command in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1971. With the start of the AH-64 Apache Program, Smith developed the conceptual design and specifications for the complete mission equipment package, including armament, fire control, and avionics subsystems.

In 1975 he earned a master of arts degree in business management and was advanced to Senior Mechanical Engineer. He became Chief Engineer of the TADS/PNVS project in 1977, responsible for all technical aspects of the electro-optical and fire control systems. Smith then became Deputy Project Manager for Aircraft Survivability Equipment in 1980, responsible for acquisition management of the Army's airborne electronic, electro-optical, infrared, and optical countermeasures programs.

Smith was promoted to the Senior Executive Service in 1984 as Director of Advanced Systems, U.S. Army Aviation Systems Command. As Director, he planned and orchestrated the command's research and development program, including conceptual design of new aircraft.

In February 1988 he became the Deputy Program Executive, Aviation, for the Army, and in September 1989 he became the Program Executive responsible for all Army major aviation programs, including the AH-64 Apache, UH-60 Blackhawk, OH-58 Kiowa Warrior, CH-47D Chinook, MH-60K and MH-47E Special Operations Aircraft, AH-1 Cobra, Aircraft Survivability Equipment, Aviation Life Support Equipment, and the Air-to-Air Stinger.

Smith is married to the former Ida Kavanagh of St. Louis, Missouri. They have three sons.



missions. They also receive rapid feedback from the operations that SOCOM executes. We try to be very selective in hiring very highly skilled and experienced personnel. The military slots are Joint-Service billets, so our people get credit for a Joint assignment when they're filling one of these critical acquisition positions.

Program Manager: *It sounds as though SOCOM pretty much gets the "cream of the crop" when it comes to staffing.*

Smith: We're fortunate. The Services nominate military acquisition professionals to fill SOCOM's vacancies. The selected individuals receive both acquisition and Joint credit. We are also very selective in filling our civilian vacancies. We have limited our bureaucracy here. We are still new enough to not have all the in-place bureaucracy to contend with. We don't have checkers that check the checkers. We have a very short reporting chain to get the decisions.

Program Manager: *That must make your job a lot easier...*

Smith: Yes, it does in many ways. We also have strong congressional support. Since we were a creation of Congress and are so involved in operations all over the world, I think Congress feels an obligation to treat us quite well.

Program Manager: *May I ask you, since you mentioned Congress... despite your small staff and special mission, are you still subject to all the DoD-directed and legal requirements for acquisition systems?*

Smith: Unequivocally, yes. I must comply with all the FARS, DFARS, and Department of Defense directives. We even have our own implementing directives. As far back as five years ago, the DoD 5000-series directives allowed acquisition streamlining, but there was not a real emphasis or incentive to go out and do it. Since there was little reward, it really took someone with guts to do it. Things had to change.

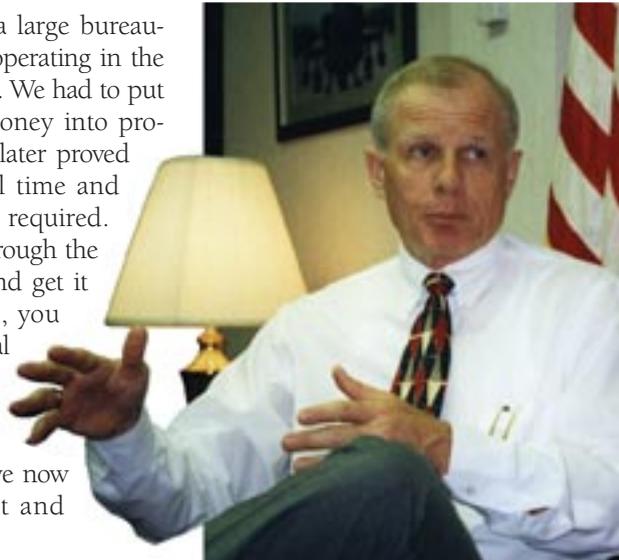
Program Manager: *And that catalyst for change was Dr. Paul Kaminski?*

Smith: Yes and, actually, I think it began even before Paul. I believe Dr. Perry directed some of this initial start-up in the area of Acquisition Reform. And, of course, the Congress also wanted it to happen. SOCOM was told upon creation, "Don't become what you were established to overcome." I think that fits our acquisition system thrust very well.

Program Manager: *Dr. Perry said in a speech at the Acquisition Hammer Awards last year that Acquisition Reform had been talked about for years, but it was something that people put in the "too-hard-to-do" category. He said it gave him great satisfaction to be serving as Secretary of Defense during a time he could actually see reform taking place and be a part of it.*

Smith: Acquisition Reform was indeed long overdue. Here at SOCOM, it's worked out quite well. We started implementing Acquisition Reform when I first came here from the Army.

We, in the Army, had a large bureaucratic system that was operating in the era of total risk aversion. We had to put additional time and money into programs to avoid risk. It later proved out that the additional time and money was not always required. But to get a program through the development process and get it through an OSD DAB, you had to put the additional time and money into the program, needed or not. Risk aversion has now been eliminated; we now evaluate risk up front and then manage that risk.



Program Manager: *Special Operations also has some unique procurement processes and intense management procedures to streamline the procurement process. Can you briefly describe those processes and management procedures that are unique to SOCOM?*

Smith: One of the first things we do is determine the criticality of the program and whether we will manage the program at SOCOM or whether we will ask one of the Services to execute it for us. Approximately 70 percent of our projects are out-sourced to the Services for execution. To make this determination, we go through a matrix evaluation process.

The second thing we do is ensure that the real users are involved, not just representatives of the users, but the SEALs, the Green Berets, the Rangers, or the Aviators out in the field. They get involved in the up-front planning and the writing of a performance specification for the equipment.

The third thing we do is an intense market survey to determine what kind of equipment is out there to satisfy our requirement. Optimally, we desire to find something that's a nondevelopmental item that we could just modify instead of having to start from the very beginning.

Next we do a good risk assessment up front to determine what the risk areas

One of the most critical considerations, I think, is that we need to know our customer very well. Our customer base, our warfighters, are very demanding, and they're very impatient with the development and acquisition community. They have unique requirements compared to the larger Services. The missions they execute are planned and tailored, but they must be able to change operations rapidly. Therefore, our acquisition people must have a high degree of involvement with their user community, our customers.

are so that we can plan the schedule. Knowing the areas that are high-risk allows us to program the additional effort in the right areas. This also helps us determine where we're going to enter the acquisition cycle, whether it be Phase zero, one, two, or three in the process. We also almost always combine Milestones, be it MS I/II or II/III.

We constantly challenge the time lines. Whenever one of the PMs puts a program together, we wire brush the schedule to determine if we can possibly accelerate it any more than has already been proposed.

We have strong, healthy internal competition here between our PEOs and PMs – each tries to outdo the others in managing a program faster, better, and cheaper. Lessons learned are shared. We have a very dedicated and close-knit program management and procurement team on each of the projects, so it's a real team effort.

Program Manager: *Teaming is certainly one of USD(A&T)'s strong initiatives. Yes, it appears your activity has been one step ahead of the game in working Acquisition Reform before it became institutionalized.*

Smith: We were trying to. And now that it's basically mandated that we do Acquisition Reform, I have a lot of support. Our people have a great pride in executing programs in a streamlined manner.

We have strong CINC support. I work directly for General Shelton, the CINC, and he strongly supports our acquisition mission. One of the things that we've been able to do with his help is stabilize the funding on our major developmental efforts; that's a great help in executing these programs.

Program Manager: *We just had a briefing by Daniel Czelusniak, Director of Acquisition Program Integration, USD(A&T), who came to our College and spoke on that same subject –*

program stability. He sees funding instability as a force working against Acquisition Reform. What I got out of his briefing was that funding stability is the exception rather than the rule for any number of reasons. Is program stability a major problem for SOCOM's acquisition program?

Smith: With the large, major acquisition programs where you're subject to a lot of OSD Comptroller review – yes, that can be true. SOCOM has the advantage of being outside the Beltway, which by its nature translates to much less oversight from OSD. Also, we do not execute any ACAT-I programs here. Our ACAT-I programs would be executed by the Services for us. I don't have the staff to stand up a 100-person PM office with a capped staff of only 126 people. Our ACAT-II's and III's don't get the same amount of outside oversight. Significant outside oversight would prevent us from doing rapid acquisition, period.

Now, we do get cut on some of our projects since we fall under the Defense-wide Agencies, but we've also been "plus'd-up" with funds from the Congress. We have experienced congressional help in plus-ups in RDT&E and the Procurement accounts; that helps. What I am able to do is establish programs for which we will absolutely maintain funding stability, with no cuts to those programs. If the OSD Comptroller cuts one of those programs, I then have to find funding to move back into the program out of something else.

Program Manager: *Your candid assessment – have the Acquisition Reform initiatives out of OSD helped you manage your acquisition program better?*

Smith: Acquisition Reform, to me, has been a definite help. As I earlier indicated, we had a mindset of total risk aversion throughout OSD and throughout the Services. That had to change.

Since Acquisition Reform was initiated, we have a better educational sys-

tem in place. DSMC has added courses. They're doing a much better job since the emphasis at the top is to improve the training of our acquisition workforce.

The PMs now know that they are accountable and have the authority they need, in addition to the responsibilities that they previously had. People are now being empowered more than they were previously.

Key to our present state was strong support from Dr. Perry and Dr. Kaminski to implement and institutionalize Acquisition Reform.

Program Manager: *You mentioned risk-aversion. Dr. Kaminski recently made a statement that stayed with me. He said that there are situations where people have taken prudent risks, done some good things, and for whatever reason, it didn't work out. He called them a category of people he's looking for and wants to reward. Do you reward your risktakers, even when it doesn't work out?*

Smith: Yes, our military are rewarded with honorary awards, and the civilians are rewarded with monetary and honorary awards. They don't have too much of a chance to determine whether they're going to take risks because we demand that they shorten all their acquisition schedules – and the user demands it. They [special operations forces] have important needs where they require the equipment fast. There's a mindset here, that if we're going to manage a program on the same schedule as one of the Services, we're not doing our job.

Program Manager: *It seems like every time you pick up a newspaper, our special operations forces are deploying somewhere else – Northern Iraq, Haiti, Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia. It's just a given that the special operations forces utilization rate is rising. Do you have any numbers on that? It has to be a dramatic increase.*

Smith: Yes, it is. Since 1992 we've had a 127-percent increase in our deployments. We're normally deployed to

about 60 different countries each week. You don't hear about and shouldn't hear about all the deployments that we're doing. Some of those deployments might only be one person, but most are much larger. We often go into countries before the real hostilities start. We attempt to influence things so that it doesn't turn into a shooting action.

The reason for the increased deployments is our forces are so uniquely qualified for today's geopolitical environment. They're uniquely language-trained and culturally oriented on the country, and superbly prepared to execute their military skills.

Program Manager: *Since the deployment rates for special operations forces personnel have risen dramatically, obviously your workload has gone up. Is SOCOM, particularly its acquisition workforce, being "beefed up" with increased staff to meet this increased demand?*

Smith: On the acquisition side, since 1991 when we started our acquisition organization, we have grown. The organization started with five people, then it grew to about 50 people, and today we're up to 126. We have not grown any since 1994, but we've taken on a lot of additional work since then.

Program Manager: *And you're meeting requirements by augmenting your staff with contractors, temporary assignments, and other Service personnel?*

Smith: Yes, full-time and temporary reimbursable government employees, as well as support contractors. We're mostly doing more with the same number of personnel and trying to do it smarter and better. I'd like to do even more work here. Instead of outsourcing 70 percent, I'd like to do more of our work here. But I just don't have the resources to do that; we're JCS-limited in the number of people that can be assigned to the total Command. And that's why I've had to resort to other means to augment our workforce.

Program Manager: This is one government employee who would jump at the chance to volunteer for a temporary assignment on such a beautiful base, in sunny Florida.

Smith: Most people would. In addition to our beautiful geographical environment, SOCOM is a very challenging acquisition working environment. So we get the best of both worlds.

Program Manager: Let me turn the subject to technical integration. Where is SOCOM in getting all the right systems meshed together to become completely integrated with the other Services? Are we getting to that point?

Smith: We have many unfilled requirements, but we've made good progress in filling most of the vitally important requirements in weapon systems. Our technology developments are very integrated with the Army, Navy, Air Force, and the National Laboratories. We also have projects with the Department of Energy and DARPA [Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency]. We develop memoranda of agreement with all of these folks so that we can leverage some of the projects that they're executing which have application to our requirements. We might put \$100,000 on a program where, perhaps, DARPA was spending \$2-3 million, and then use our money as leverage to change the development slightly, to meet our special operations forces-unique requirements. That strategy has been quite successful for us and DARPA.

Program Manager: As special operations forces move into more uncharted territories like Rwanda and Bosnia, the demand for specialized communications, intelligence resources, and weapon systems is going to grow. Likewise, we're going to need more trained people to develop and procure this new equipment and these new systems.

We'd be interested in hearing about the education and training of your acquisition



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workforce to meet this ongoing and future monumental requirement.

Smith: As you know, special operations forces are normally the first into these countries. In fact, many times we're there before any substantial requirements evolve for the United States. When we're in these countries, we're supporting the American Ambassadors and their country teams.

Our civilians are in the OSD Acquisition Corps, sometimes called the fourth estate. Our military acquisition professionals are in their respective Service's acquisition corps.

OSD has been very generous in allocating training slots to us. Ninety-one percent of our people are certified at the various levels, with an increasing

number certified at Level III. Another training area, which we view as absolutely vital, is the need for our assigned military, even the more junior military, to be graduates of, or attend en route, the PMC [now APMC] course at DSMC. And then the other way that we train our people is that they learn a lot here in the school of hard knocks.

Program Manager: That's a tough one. I've been to that school.

Smith: Things have really changed. The first formal course I ever attended at DSMC was the Executive PM course. I went back later and took some of the short courses. This was not the right order of training: hard knocks, executive course, then detail short courses. Training is more disciplined today.

Program Manager: As long as we're talking about DSMC, is there anything that DSMC, in your mind, can do to further meet the training needs of your acquisition workforce?

Smith: I guess at this point I'm going to sound like a paid commercial for DSMC, but I think DSMC is a premier education facility, from the short courses through the long PM [APMC] course, and on to the executive courses and GO/Flag Officer course.

The executive courses are particularly good. I do, however, think there's a few areas for improved training. The first one is more training for the acquisition workforce on how to execute the non-major programs – the ACAT-II and -III programs. I say this because the majority of DoD programs are non-major. Some of the students come back from the APMC course and say that they'd like to hear more about how to execute the non-major programs in lieu of the majors. In reality, there just aren't that many ACAT-IDs around today.

The second area would be more emphasis on risk evaluation, risk-taking, and how to manage risk. Some

of the students also tell me that they'd prefer to have more case studies on how successful programs were run instead of so much emphasis on the failed programs and why they failed.

Program Manager: *You certainly called it right – we couldn't ask for a better commercial. And we're holding a marketing job just for you.*

Smith: I do feel that way about DSMC. It's just a superior school, and they have a superior staff of instructors to conduct the courses. I've never seen a bad instructor at DSMC.

Program Manager: *Can I divert your attention now out to the West Coast. I'd like to talk briefly about Force XXI. Did you have any involvement in that exercise?*

Smith: No special operations-peculiar equipment was tested at Force XXI. However, our Special Forces did participate with some Army common equipment.

Most of our systems are tested in other exercises. We participate in all the JRTC (Joint Readiness Training Center) rotations. We participate in JCETs (Joint Combined Exercise Tests) in other countries in support of the warfighting CINCs.

An example is the recently completed CENTCOM ROVING SANDS Exercise that was conducted here in the Southwest Desert. SOCOM's TENCAP office tested two systems: Town Crier and Steel Rattler. These were digitized sensing, processing, and information reporting systems in support of reconnaissance to counter SCUD missiles. The equipment performed very well, but I cannot discuss any of the details due to the sensitivities that would be involved.

Program Manager: *There's a lot being written about special operations forces medicine, especially since the opening of the Special Operations Medical Training Center at Fort Bragg. Can you tell us what type of medical systems and equip-*

ment will support a wounded warfighter on future battlefields?

Smith: The Special Operations Medical Training Center at Fort Bragg is a USCINCSOC-resourced and -controlled facility. It provides special operations-specific training for Army, Navy, and Air Force medical personnel. Its focus today is on enlisted medical personnel training, but it's going to be expanded later to medical officers and medical support personnel.

Program Manager: *When you say "special operations forces medical personnel," do you mean that special operations forces have their own medical personnel who accompany them on missions?*

Smith: Yes. Every Special Operations Forces A-Team, which is a 12-man team, has one medical corpsman with them. Because they operate in small teams and are often in very dangerous situations with high risk for injuries, they take their medical support with them.

We also have a medical modernization technology initiative that supports our wounded warfighters. It places the emphasis first on protection and performance enhancements to preclude or minimize any injuries.

We also provide medical support for civil affairs and humanitarian assistance for indigenous populations in other countries.

We spoke earlier, prior to this interview, about the popular, so called "snake-eater" or "Rambo" image of the special operations forces. And yes, we certainly have the capability to do the "Rambo" kinds of things. But I can tell you, the majority of the efforts that we support are civil affairs, psychological operations, and humanitarian assistance. That's what our forces are doing around the world every day as Quiet Professionals.

Program Manager: *How about the outcome of the QDR? Were there any surprises for you?*

Smith: There's a couple areas in the QDR that will affect us. One is the takedown of two reserve Special Forces battalions.

One of the other things that the QDR addressed was Counter-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction [CP/WMD], which Dr. Perry assigned as a SOCOM mission. It is one of our priority missions, and it's going to require significant new developments. I believe that there was about \$1 billion directed and dedicated to that effort. We will not get all that money because the Services also have requirements. CP/WMD is one of our highest priority missions.

The QDR was good to us from the aspect of the world environment today – the kinds of things that have to be executed by the military today are right in line with the type of actions that SOCOM executes. We anticipate being very well-employed in future world operations.

Program Manager: *It appears Congress is giving you the money you need to do the job. Overall, would you say you're well funded?*

Smith: No, we have shortfalls. But I won't make a commercial for acquiring more funding in this article. We have a budget of about \$3.2 billion per year. Keep in mind this \$3.2 billion includes all the military pay, civilian pay, the O&M, the RDT&E, and Procurement. I only have about \$140 million in RDT&E, and about \$600 or so million in FY97 Procurement. It's not that big of a program. We have many more requirements than we have funding for. And that's why Congress keeps helping us and giving us some of the additional funding we need.

Program Manager: *Many of our readers are probably wondering – Is Gary Smith a former night stalker, snake eater, ranger, or SEAL? What kind of background qualifies a person for so unique a position?*

Smith: I'm none of the above. I was never assigned to special operations

forces while on active duty. I started off as an Air Force second lieutenant right out of college as a flight test project engineer. My entire career has been in the government as an acquisition professional.

I left the Air Force as a captain and went to work as an Army civilian. I've been a project engineer, a program chief engineer, a Deputy PM, a PM. I was the Director of Advanced Systems for the Aviation Systems Command for about three years. I was a Deputy PEO, a PEO, and then I came here as the Acquisition Executive. I've done this all my working career – and it's been a good life.

Program Manager: *One last question – Were you given any advice and counsel when you took this job that has served you well? Who gave it to you, and what was it?*

Smith: I guess I was given two pieces of advice. General Stiner, the USCINCSOC at that time, hired me for this job. He expected me to execute the mission without any bureaucratic interference.

I was given another piece of advice by a congressional staff member. This lady explained to me why they had given these unique acquisition authorities to SOCOM. They wanted SOCOM to be one of the first acquisition organizations to streamline and field weapon systems on a fast-track schedule. The first program we could streamline was the MARK-V Special Operations Craft. Congress appropriated money in our budget to execute this program rapidly. We executed a very fast-track schedule; we saved about two to three years off the normal time it would have taken to get the boat into production.

Program Manager: *The MARK-V Special Operations Craft – now there's another story in itself.*

Smith: Yes. That's the model you saw in our outer office. During the developmental testing we had three



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competing contractors. We gave them six months from contract to deliver their prototype boats. We put them in a "boat-off" or "sail-off." One performed very well.

We then entered low-rate production, did more testing and modifications, and proceeded into full-rate production. From the time we initially released the RFP – going through competitive test, our down-select, and re-proposal effort for production – to award of the LRIP contract was 23 months. We then gave Halter Marine nine months to deliver the first full-up production article. They delivered.

We just signed a contract Monday [June 2, 1997] on a similar system called the Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat. It's a 36-foot-long boat. We gave the contractor five and a half months to deliver these craft. The competitors all delivered on time.

We again selected three competitors. One delivered a boat that was too heavy and was set aside, which generated a protest. We countered the protest. We then took the remaining two boats into competitive test and did a full operational evaluation; we just awarded the production contract last Monday to the winner.

Program Manager: *Is there anything else that I haven't covered or any other area you'd like to talk about?*

Smith: I'm glad you asked. I'm extremely proud of the SOCOM acquisition workforce. They all are very dedicated; they work very hard and try their best to get the user good, performing material. I'm just very proud of all the things that they do. And in this business, it's the people that really make acquisition streamlining work. They get all the credit.

Program Manager: *Mr. Smith, you and your staff are doing a remarkable job, critical to our nation's defense and our special operations forces deployed worldwide – missions and programs for which you and your talented staff will never be sung heroes. We wish you continued success.*

Smith: Thank you.