

# Aberdeen Reverses Outsourcing Decision

GARY SHEFTICK • KAREN JOLLEY DREWEN

**W**ASHINGTON — The decision to award a large part of Aberdeen Proving Ground's [APG] base operations and community support work to a contractor has been reversed.

The initial decision last May to award the work to a contractor meant 558 APG garrison positions would have been eliminated, officials said. Aberdeen Technical Services — a joint venture between DynCorp, Roy F. Weston, and several subcontractors — had been selected as the most cost-effective organization to perform the work under bid, which included public works, logistics, childcare, and community services.

Following an appeals process, though, officials said revised cost estimates changed the initial decision to an in-house government win, by a margin of almost \$1.8 million.

Aberdeen was the first Army installation to initiate a garrison-wide Commercial Activities [CA] study, beginning the process in April 1997. Such studies, also known as A-76, are now being conducted at many other installations, according to Col. Duane Brandt, chief of the Competitive Sourcing Office under the Army's Assistant Chief of Staff for Installation Management.

Brandt said a total of 170 Army A-76 studies are now under way, involving about 37,000 jobs. He said many of the studies, though, are "small-scale in terms of functions" and number of jobs under review for outsourcing.

Large garrison-wide studies, Brandt said, are now ongoing at 12 Army installations: Forts Belvoir and Myer in Virginia; Forts Meade, Detrick, and APG in Maryland; Fort Sam Houston, Texas; Fort Polk, La.; Fort Devens, Mass.; Fort Hamilton and Watervliet Arsenal in New York; Pine Bluff Arsenal, Ark; and Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

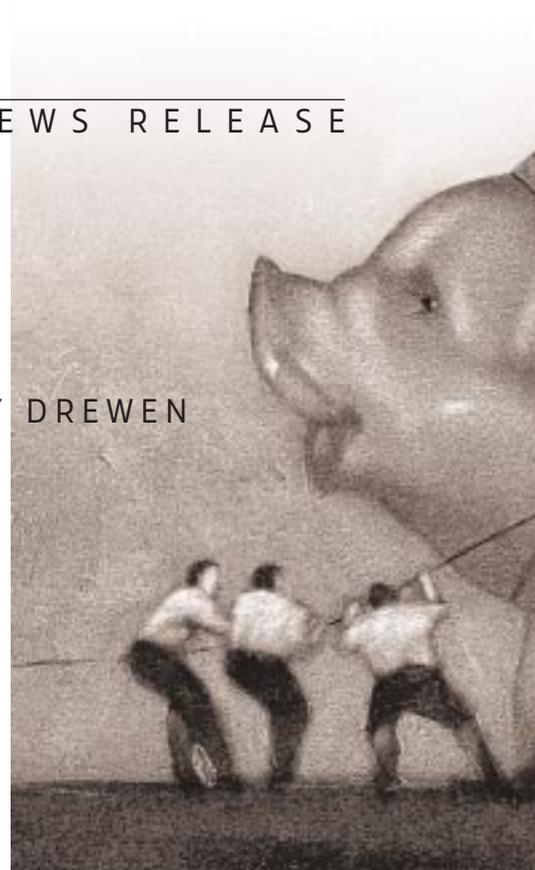
Brandt said historically about 50 percent of past CA studies have been contract wins. The larger studies, though, have tended to go in favor of contractors, he said.

Contractors have greater interest in the larger studies such as Aberdeen, Brandt said, because there's "more opportunity for return on investment."

Brandt said reversal of the decision at Aberdeen "gives credibility to the appeals process." He said it shows that the process is not just a rubber stamp, but warned that the contractor will now have a chance to also file appeals.

"This is no more of a sure thing than the announcement I made three months ago on the contractor win," said APG Garrison Commander Col. Robert J. Spidel when he announced the decision to Aberdeen employees last week. He cautioned the workforce to accept the information "without adding assumptions or jumping to conclusions."

As part of the CA process, a public review period was opened after the initial decision, and five appeals against the cost comparison were received. Three were submitted by government employees, one was submitted by Lodge 2424 of the International Association of



Machinists and Aerospace Workers, and one was submitted by ATS.

An Administrative Appeals Board convened to review the appeals and determine the validity of the submitted allegations. Of the 37 allegations submitted in the five appeals, nine were upheld. In implementing the decision of the Administrative Appeals Board, made up of representatives from other installations, the government conducted a revised cost comparison, which resulted in a change to the initial decision, and an in-house government win.

Post officials said previous plans, which called for full implementation of a contract or the government's "Most-Efficient Organization" by January 2000, will be delayed because of the reversed decision and any further time needed to resolve future protests.

Even if the decision in favor [of] the government holds, officials said the current APG workforce will be reduced by 133 positions to meet requirements of the "Most-Efficient Organization" or MEO.

To achieve the reduction, programs such as the Voluntary Early Retirement Au-

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thority, Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay, and Reduction-In-Force will be requested. Spidel said the number of employees that will be displaced cannot be determined until a final decision is reached and VERA, VSIP and RIF are implemented.

A protest period must now be opened in which the contractor may protest the Appeals Board's decision. Spidel noted that there could be lengthy litigation regarding this decision in federal court, which would mean the final outcome of this CA package may not be determined for some time to come.

For the time being, however, those who filed the appeals said the decision is a major victory. Henry L. Scott, business representative for Lodge 2424, said the union was "overwhelmed with the success."

"It's a victory we're going to savor," he said. "However, we're facing the prospect that the contractor can have this overturned."

He thanked the team members who had 21 days to prepare a total of 25 allegations submitted for appeal, who "worked

very hard to get it right." Seven of the nine appeals upheld by the board came from the union.

In particular, Scott noted the "outstanding support" of U.S. Rep. Robert Ehrlich Jr., and the assistance from Sen. Paul Sarbanes and Sen. Barbara Mikulski.

Scott noted that problems in the relatively new CA process, also known as A-76, make the process difficult.

"How is a playing field ever going to be level when the contractor has our numbers and we don't have his?" Scott said of his concern that while the contractor has access to government figures, the government CA team cannot see the contractor's package.

Despite the uncertainties of the process, some APG garrison personnel are cautiously optimistic.

Harry Greveris, civilian deputy of the Directorate of Public Works, which has the most employees affected by the package, said DPW employees are more optimistic and will have an easier time planning their futures.

"I think they were pleased to hear it was overturned. Now the biggest challenge will be to make this work, and transition into it," he said.

Ernie Flynn, a DPW facility maintenance and management specialist in the Edgewood Area, said he thinks "there are a lot of questions to be answered.

"I believe there was a sigh of relief, but I believe basically, the workforce as a whole is still holding its breath about the continued uncertainty of what those decisions will be," said Flynn, an APG employee for 27 years. "The real thing is wait and see. This is a step in the right direction, but not the final step."

Randy Moore, chief of the Community Recreation Division in the Directorate of Community and Family Activities, said the news was "a positive decision for both our workforce and our customers." His division's sports program and the Autocraft Program were included in the study.

"I'm not trying to read too much into it, and it's certainly not a final decision, but it certainly is encouraging," he said after the announcement. "There may still be some pain in the transition, but not nearly as much as there would have been with an award to the contractor. But we will wait to see what the final decision is."

Diane Spampinato of the Directorate of Resource Management has supported DPW's resource management needs for 11 years, and has spent more than two years working on the directorate's CA package.

"We're optimistic, because this is just one more step in the right direction to save these people's jobs," she said.

**Editor's Note:** Drewen is editor of the APG News, Aberdeen Proving Ground's weekly newspaper. This information is in the public domain at <http://www.dtic.mil/armylink/new>.