



Expanding and Improving the Army's Contracting Oversight

*In the end, the success of our warfighters is linked directly to the success of the contracting workforce.**

Introduction

The operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have been the U.S. Army's largest expeditionary operations since Desert Shield/Desert Storm in the early 1990s. From the outset, the demand for Army forces exceeded the available supply, especially for combat support and combat service support functions. Unprecedented numbers of civilian contractors have been hired to supply these vital services to Soldiers. In August 2007, the Secretary of the Army created the Gansler Commission to gather lessons learned from this experience with contractors on the battlefield and recommend any needed changes. The commission found that the Army did not have the necessary structures and processes in place to oversee such a large and rapid expansion in the contracting workforce.

The Army has completed 21 of the Army-specific recommendations made by the Gansler Commission, including restructuring contracting oversight organizations and improving the training and career development of contracting personnel. (The commission's other suggestions were policy or legislative changes requiring Department of Defense or congressional action.) Implementation of the final recommendation—adding

1,400 personnel to the Army's contracting workforce—is underway, with completion expected in the next three to five years.

Organizational changes

The commission recommended the establishment of a contracting command that would direct all Army contracting resources. The Army Contracting Command (ACC) was formed in February 2008 as a two-star command subordinate to Army Materiel Command (AMC). Although some contracting personnel will still report to other commands, the ACC will manage the Army's contracting workforce and policies.

The Army Contracting Agency (ACA) is being reorganized to form one of the ACC's one-star component commands, the Mission and Installation Contracting Command, which will oversee contracting in the continental United States. The other component command, the Expeditionary Contracting Command, will take on oversight of overseas contracting as its components are formed over the next four years.

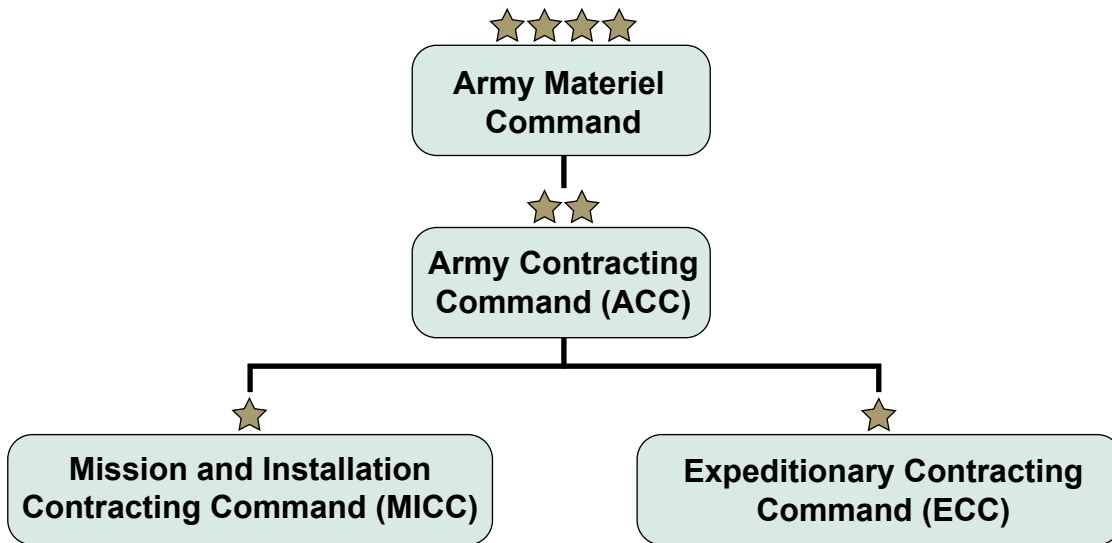
Personnel changes

The commission recommended increasing the Army's contracting workforce by 400 military billets

* LTG N. Ross Thompson III, Principal Military Deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics, and Technology), Statement Before the Subcommittee on Readiness and Management Support, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, on Army Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan, 2 April 2008, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2008/April/Thompson-Parsons%2004-02-08.pdf>.



Army Contracting Command



and 1,000 civilians, an increase of approximately 25 percent. The Army estimates that it will take three to five years to find, hire and train these new personnel, beginning with adding 131 military and 347 civilians in fiscal year 2009.

To improve career management of contracting personnel, Army officers and noncommissioned officers will join the Army Acquisition Corps earlier in their careers than they did before—on average in their fifth or sixth year of service—speeding their entry into the workforce and giving them more time to develop expertise. The Army will also add contracting warrant officers to the force to help recruit skilled civilians and provide additional expertise. The force structure being created under the ACC will provide career paths for contracting officers through the rank of major general, and the command will ensure that contracting personnel are treated

equitably by the Army Acquisition Promotion Board. The Army is also working to leverage members of the Army Reserve with contracting expertise from their civilian occupations and ensure that Reservists without such experience can earn it within the Army.

Moving forward

The Gansler Commission and the Army agreed on the need for additional contracting personnel to improve contract management. The proposed increases are considerable, suggesting that the need is vital. The Army is identifying and validating specific needs and building the structures to train and support the new personnel. As these changes are implemented, the Army's ability to manage contracting activities will improve, resulting in greater efficiency, superior stewardship of taxpayer dollars and better support for the warfighter.

Key Points

- The Army is applying lessons learned from recent experiences with contracting and implementing recommendations of the Gansler Commission.
- A new organizational structure will integrate and unify Army contracting.
- The Army is hiring many new contracting oversight personnel, both civilian and military.
- Career management of Army contracting personnel is being strengthened.