



I ntegration

MICC serves as training ground for 51C Soldiers

Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

Broadening contracting skills and increasing readiness are among the reciprocal benefits behind integrating more than 400 Soldiers at offices throughout the Mission and Installation Contracting Command that began in March.

Army Contracting Command officials announced in January the attachment of Soldiers to its contracting centers and MICC field offices throughout the nation in an effort to streamline the span of control from oversight of uniformed service members stateside while enhancing their professional development.

“The integration of Soldiers into MICC contracting offices will not only benefit MICC



Photo by Ben Gonzales

Staff Sgt. Gloria Gutierrez is one of the more than 200 Soldiers who were formally attached to the Mission and Installation Contracting Command March 20. Gutierrez is assigned to the 679th Contingency Contracting Team at Fort Irwin, Calif.

and Expeditionary Contracting Command but also the Army contracting profession,” said Col. Antonio Brown, the director of the MICC Field Directorate Office at Fort Bragg, N.C., who will also command the 419th Contracting Support Brigade upon activation. “Pairing our Soldiers with contracting professionals will provide the opportunity to learn from the best in our field.

Additionally, integration also adds senior military leaders at two FDOs.

“This harmonizes mission command of the entire contracting

workforce while enhancing the opportunity to provide better horizontal and vertical spans of control for contract oversight and responsiveness,” the colonel said.

Attaching Soldiers to the MICC gives command leaders direct supervision over day-to-day assignments by Soldiers supporting stateside operations. Military members is assigned to the ECC, which will remain focused on its overseas and contingency support.

“Hands-on training, mentoring and guidance enable Soldiers

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MISSION

Provide Army Commands, installations and activities with responsive contracting solutions and oversight.

We have to get integration right

By Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke
MICC commanding general

Just one short year ago, I assumed command of our amazing organization, and we have gone through so much in 12 short months. Now that we have realigned the headquarters, we are established and settled to focus on the field.

The MICC was formed as a result of the Gansler Commission Report and Army's 2008 National Defense Authorization Act Section 849 Report to Congress to provide the technical hands-on training and necessary knowledge, skill and proficiency development for Soldiers in the acquisition community. No other entity in the Army can provide the vital contracting training to our military members than the seasoned and experienced MICC workforce. We have moved into the implementation phase of Army Contracting Command's military integration order, and the time is now to open our doors fully and share our knowledge with the 51Cs on our team.

As of March 20, the MICC assumed control of all Expeditionary Contracting Command elements operating at MICC offices across the command. This means the MICC will eventually have 62 units, of which some will be established this year. I wholeheartedly welcome all of the Soldiers to our command.

Please join me in making our military members full-fledged partners in our mission as we optimize their skills development so we not only give them the contingency contracting training they need but also strengthen our ability to provide responsive contracting solutions and oversight.

It is crucial that we - all of us collectively - synchronize and integrate our uniformed members across the MICC. I firmly believe in hands-on contracting training and experience to ensure our Soldiers are technically competent to perform their mission before they deploy into a contingency or combat environment. We have to have a developmental environment necessary for a learning organization. We owe it to the Army to get this integration right.

Our organization is now agile and nimble enough that we can provide responsive contracting support to our customers.

For integration to be completely successful we must do several things — synchronize and integrate

Contracting for Soldiers



Photo by Ryan Mattox

Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke thanks Staff Sgt. Jason Gilmore and his daughter after the Fort Sam Houston Retirement and Awards Ceremony in the Quadrangle March 28 at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

uniformed members across the MICC; provide indispensable technical, hands-on contracting training and experience for Army contingency contracting Soldiers; provide developmental learning to ensure our military members are technically competent to perform their mission before they deploy into a contingency or combat environment; supervise and manage the workload of the CONUS 51Cs; and enhance 51C contracting proficiency and skill depth.

What makes this command so powerful is the amazing work done by our dedicated people. Every day your selfless service provides critical items needed to support our Soldiers and their families. We will only become stronger as we develop the skills of our newly attached Soldiers and grow as a team focused on providing premier and timely contracting support and oversight.

Contracting for Soldiers! MICC Strong! Army Strong!

Integration valuable for MICC, Soldiers

by **Command Sgt. Maj. Rodney Rhoades**
MICC command sergeant major

Let me start by saying how impressed I've been with what I've seen throughout the command. I clearly understand how vitally important our civilian workforce is in ensuring our Soldiers possess the necessary contracting skills to deploy and perform their mission downrange. It's going to take time and training, both of which always seem to be in short supply.

Your dedicated professionalism impacts our Army from top to bottom. That same level of professionalism is even more critical as we execute our mission in 2013.

There's no question that challenges lay ahead. Today's fiscal environment requires strong leadership at every level and a call for Soldiers and civilians alike to reaffirm our professional identity. Together, we must understand and be committed to the Army Profession and Ethics.

Guiding this commitment is a program developed by officials from the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic, or CAPE. CAPE defines the Army Profession as a unique vocation of experts certified in the design, generation, support and ethical application of landpower, serving under civilian authority and entrusted to defend the Constitution and the rights and interests of the American people.

As Army professionals, we must be competent, maintain the highest character and remain committed to honorably serving our nation. This is demonstrated by obtaining necessary certifications and successfully performing duties necessary to accomplish the mission.

In addition to the hands-on training and mentoring, it's essential that all involved follow the Contingency Contracting Officer Rotation Training Plan Guide developed by military and civilian representatives at the MICC. It's important that we do this right. This guide incorporates Army profession concepts into the professional development of these Soldiers.

This rotation training plan must be foundational in the integration of Soldiers within the MICC. This month we stood up the 418th and 419th Contracting Support Brigades that are attached to the MICC. Soldiers assigned to these brigades have already been in place and performing an outstanding job alongside our civilian professionals.



Many of these Soldiers arrived at our offices with the basic concepts and understanding of contracting. These NCOs are some of the best in our Army. Entering the acquisition, logistics and technology contracting military occupational specialty is highly competitive. Only 28 percent of candidates were selected at the most recent board in February.

As NCOs and officers, our Soldiers already possess a valuable set of skills critical to this command. Just as critical as learning deployable contracting skills is the continued adherence to standards and discipline by the Soldiers who are attached to the MICC. I expect every Soldier to conduct himself or herself in a manner worthy of our professional status.

The formal, detailed instructions that provide Soldiers a benchmark for performance make up the foundation of Army standards. These are describable, measurable and achievable. By these standards, we hold ourselves accountable.

Discipline, on the other hand, is driven by the Army's values.

It's fundamental in the practice of our profession. Holding ourselves to higher standards affirms our commitment to doing what is right. Discipline includes adhering to policies and procedures, attending all necessary training, being accountable, and coaching – all of which are essential to be effective as a professional.

This all adds to our workload and makes the stress very real. Many of us are going to be asked to do things that we haven't done before. We are all stressed from one thing or another in our lives either at work or at home. But stay mindful that our Soldiers are under pressure, too. We're asking a lot of them in addition to achieving their necessary certifications.

We all know what happens when you bring stressors together, so we have to be considerate of others. Communication is the one thing that can help keep the stress level down.

I expect every Soldier to have a battle buddy. I ask our civilians in the workforce to do the same to develop those professional relationships and take care of one another.

Every member of the MICC must look out for one another. That's what brings us together as a family. It's what makes us strong as a command. And it will get us through the uncertain months ahead with success.

EOY Requirements

The impact of contract funding shortfalls this fiscal year make it even more critical that requiring activities are aware of and follow the Mission and Installation Contracting Command's key dates for submitting contracting packages.

The MICC commanding general said meeting the firm timelines below will help ensure contract actions can be completed by the end of fiscal 2013.

"Given the current hiring freeze coupled with administrative furloughs and no premium time permitted, the MICC workforce will be operating at significantly reduced end-strength," said Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke in a memo to the field.

Officials said the cut-off dates incorporate the time required to put a contract in place and said customers should consider delivery lead times or ramp up for providing services. The schedule includes an additional cutoff date to meet the Army's annual obligation goal of 80 percent by the end of July. Any service contracts are required to begin by Sept. 30, 2013, before funds expire.

Requirements packages submitted after the applicable cut-off date will be evaluated by the a contracting office director on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the contract can be awarded by the end of the fiscal year.

Requirement	Total Estimated Dollar Amount	Submission Deadline for 80/20 July 31 award	Submission Deadline for Sept. 30 award
New Supplies and Services (including Information Technology)			
Commercial and Non-commercial Items/Services	Up to \$150,000	Jan. 14, 2013	March 11, 2013
Orders against Multiple Award IDIQ Contracts (Army/DOD)	All	April 8, 2013	June 17, 2013
Delivery or Task Order against Single Award IDIQ and Requirements Type Contract (Army/DOD)	All	May 20, 2013	July 17, 2013
Orders under Non-DoD Contracts (GSA, VA and other agencies)	All	March 25, 2013	May 23, 2013
Supply	\$3,000 & below	Use GPC	Use GPC
Services	\$2,500 & below	Use GPC	Use GPC
Construction			
Construction, Repair and Maintenance	\$2,000 & below	Use GPC	Use GPC
Construction, Repair and Maintenance	Over \$2,000	Feb. 28, 2013	May 2, 2013
Order against Job Order Contract, IDIQ or Requirements Contract	All	April 15, 2013	June 17, 2013

Exercising Options for Existing Contracts

Timelines are contract specific and require close coordination with the supporting contracting office. MICC officials recommend exercising options a minimum of three to six months prior to the expiration date depending on the complexity of the contract.





Photo by Ben Gonzales

From left, Master Sgt. Heather Graves and Maj. Esther Casari participate in the recent Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise at Fort Bliss, Texas. Both are assigned to Fort Bragg, N.C.

Plan guides Soldier development skills

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

A Mission and Installation Contracting Command cross-functional team has developed a planning guide to manage the professional development needs of more than 400 Soldiers who are being attached to the command over the next seven months.

Army Contracting Command officials announced in January the attachment of Soldiers in 62 units to MICC field offices across the country that began in March to streamline the oversight of Expeditionary Contracting Command members stateside and

enhance their contracting skills.

To help program that training, a team of MICC headquarters personnel at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, have been meeting since October 2012 to develop the Contingency Contracting Officer Rotation Training Plan Guide that outlines a structured approach. Making up the team were military and civilian representatives from training and readiness, contract support integration, acquisition career program management, and contract policy and training.

“The plan defines training guidelines and participant responsibilities to ensure

experiential learning opportunities are maximized and streamlined throughout the MICC,” said Lydia Hardy, an operations officer with the MICC Training and Readiness Division who led the integrated process team.

The plan charts training, education and experience requirements on a rotational schedule alongside MICC civilian professionals to best develop Soldiers for future assignments. It will allow contracting Soldiers in an installation contracting office to gain experience with simplified and complex contracting procedures valuable in performing operational contract support during



Photo by Shirley Herwig

From left, Maj. Frank Benites and Sgt. 1st Class James Gnagie prepare for their roles as cadre during the recent Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise at Fort Bliss, Texas. Both members of the 412th Contracting Support Brigade, Benites is assigned to Fort Bragg, N.C., and Gnagie is stationed at Fort Knox, Ky.

contingency operations.

“In essence, our contracting professionals are playing a major role in training future MICC, ECC and ACC commanding generals and command sergeants major,” said Col. Antonio Brown, the director of the MICC field directorate office at Fort Bragg, N.C., who also commands the 419th Contracting Support Brigade.

Although assigned to the ECC, Soldiers will be attached to the MICC and direct supervision over day-to-day assignments by Soldiers supporting stateside operations will fall on command leaders and supervisors.

On-the-job training and mentorship are at the core of the rotation training plan, according to Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke, the MICC commanding general. He said the command’s seasoned, knowledgeable and skilled leaders should use this rotation training plan as an opportunity to contribute to the long-term professional development of our contracting workforce.

The training plan is based on a 36-month timeline over two phases. It calls for an initial skills

assessment between the Soldiers, who already have a basic level of contracting knowledge, and their supervisors. Soldiers will begin working with simple acquisitions and buys before moving on to complex contracts. The plan lays out a path for Soldiers to become proficient with all procedures making up the contracting lifecycle from pre-award and award to administration, including closeout.

During their first phase of training, Soldiers will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in simplified acquisitions, contract administration, minor construction, small business programs and the Government Purchase Card Program. The second phase includes practical experience in awarding and administering complex contracts, price analysis and source selection evaluation.

The plan also entails an assessment element for tracking progress by Soldiers, defines responsibilities for each individual involved in the training process, and lists Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act requirements for obtaining professional certifications.

ACC integrates Soldiers into U.S. operations

Edward G. Worley
ACC Public Affairs Office

In an effort to streamline command and control of its military contracting Soldiers, the Army Contracting Command is attaching portions of its Expeditionary Contracting Command forces to several of ACC’s stateside organizations.

The action reduces the ECC span of control from the day-to-day oversight of Soldiers executing their stateside contracting mission, allowing the ECC commander to focus on overseas installation and contingency support, explained Lt. Col. Kevin Nash, ACC integration project officer.

It also gives the Mission and Installation Contracting Command and ACC contracting centers direct supervision of Soldiers supporting stateside operations within their organizations, he said.

Maj. Gen. Camille M. Nichols, ACC commanding general, said her intent is to “streamline mission command, better manage our military contracting Soldiers’ workloads and enhance contracting Soldier professional development.

“This action provides greater predictability for our civilian contracting leaders in assigning work to Soldiers in their offices,” she said. “It also provides greater professional development opportunities for contracting Soldiers as they are offered increased contracting experiences.”



Photo by Daniel P. Elkins

Col. Bob Brinkmann serves as the Mission and Installation Contracting Command chief of staff.

Command members welcome chief of staff

Members of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, welcomed its new chief of staff March 4.

Col. Bob Brinkmann is responsible for providing oversight, supervision and quality control of staff actions, personnel, training, operations, building management, public affairs and protocol support within MICC headquarters. He moved into the position after serving as the MICC director of operations since September 2012.

Brinkmann enlisted in the Army Reserve in 1984 in his home town of San Antonio. He was commissioned as an infantry officer through the ROTC upon graduation from the University of Texas at San Antonio in 1987 and entered active duty.

He has more than 13 years experience in the Army Acquisition Corps and is Acquisition Level

III certified in contracting as well as Level I certified in program management.

Brinkmann's acquisition assignments have included serving as commander for the U.S. Army Contracting Command-Kuwait; and deputy commander for operations for the U.S. Central Command's Joint Theater Support Contracting Command at Camp Victory, Iraq. He has also served in a variety of contracting and leadership positions both stateside and in support of contingency operations. Prior to entering the Army Acquisition Corps, he served as a company grade officer in several infantry and logistics positions.

Brinkmann replaced Col. Jeff Morris, who served as the MICC chief of staff since July 2012. Morris was selected in February for a one-year deployment to serve with the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

Selection competitive among 51Cs

The Army Acquisition Support Center convened a 51C NCO reclassification board Feb. 26-27, 2013, at Fort Belvoir, Va.

"This was a very competitive board and we received the largest number of applications than ever before," said Lt. Col. Anthony Maneri, functional area 51C proponent officer. "The selection rate was only 28 percent," he said.

Out of 182 candidates, 44 were selected for reclassification.

The purpose of the board, administered by the 51C Proponent Office, was to ensure the best qualified NCOs from across the Army were selected for reclassification into military occupational specialty 51C, an Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Contracting NCO, which is part of the Army Acquisition, Logistics and Technology Workforce.

The primary mission for 51C NCOs is to deploy as contingency contracting officers and serve as members of the early entry module contingency contracting team. When not deployed, selected NCOs will serve as contingency contracting officers in support of a headquarters, principal assistant responsible for contracting, contracting support brigades, contingency contracting battalions, and/or installation contracting offices for training and mission support.

Contracting for Soldiers

Integration offers reciprocal benefit

INTEGRATION, from Page 1 to become more competent and confident contingency contracting officers in support of future expeditionary operations," said Brown, who was assessed into the

Army Acquisition Corps in 1999. Mentoring and developing Soldiers' contracting skills through integration also will prove beneficial in providing greater predictability for many

MICC offices that can assign work to newly attached uniformed members.

"These Soldiers will help balance the workload tremendously since about 60 percent of our actions are simplified," said Pat Hogston, the director of MICC Contract Support Integration. "They will begin with simplified actions, but as their training progresses, they will also be able to eventually assist in more complex service acquisitions."

Simplified actions include the acquisition of supplies and services, including construction, research and development, and commercial items not exceeding \$150,000.

The integration of Soldiers with the MICC is being accomplished in three phases. The first phase in March included attaching approximately 200 military members, assigned to the ECC, to 19 MICC contracting offices where most are already collocated. The command assumes primary responsibility for the supervision, training, readiness and logistics support of the military personnel.

The second phase calls for the April 16 activation of the 418th CSB headquartered at Fort Hood, Texas, and 419th CSB at Fort Bragg under ECC and attached to the MICC. When fully staffed, each brigade will conduct personnel, operations, logistics and contract oversight functions as an FDO. Designated to command the 418th CSB is Col. Timothy Starostanko, who arrived in March. Brown arrived at the MICC-FDO Fort Bragg in July 2012.

The third phase of the integration calls for the attachment of the 412th CSB at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to the MICC in the fall.



Photo by Ben Gonzales

From left, cadre members Joshua Kaufmann and Lt. Col. Mitzi Dix discuss an exercise input during the recent Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise at Fort Bliss, Texas. Dix is among the more than 400 Soldiers being attached to the Mission and Installation Contracting Command over the next six months. Dix is a contracting officer with the MICC-Fort Campbell Construction and Engineering Division in Kentucky, and Kaufmann is a lead contract specialist at MICC-Fort Drum, N.Y.

Contracting for Soldiers

DRUMMING UP SOLUTIONS

MICC field office leads contract closeout priority

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

As contracting activities across the federal government battle a systemic crisis of closing out hundreds of thousands of overaged contracts, a dedicated plan of attack by contracting officials at Fort Drum, N.Y., has all but eliminated what once seemed an insurmountable backlog.

In 2008 contracting officials at Fort Drum developed a plan to have each contract specialist close out 10 contracts per day, but by early 2009 little or no progress was being made to tackle the dilemma that was years in the making. John Honey, the MICC-Fort Drum director, was a contracting officer at the time tasked with finding a solution. His approach: start with simple actions before moving on to complex issues.

“At the time we had a Standard Procurement System report that showed well over 10,000 actions. After carefully reviewing the report, the actual number was reduced to around 5,200 actions,” he said.

He began by refining the report to eliminate modifications that close automatically with the contract and blanket purchase agreements that have no closeout function in the Standard Procurement System.

“Based on the previous experience, I realized the task of closing out these contracts needed focus and a game plan,” Honey said. “The bottom line game plan was to target the easy, clean closeouts first, and then work to resolve those with issues.”

Honey and former MICC Contracting Specialist Rebecca Ruff pulled payment data by fiscal year and dug in. If they ran into an issue, the contract action was set aside. This approach allowed the two to accomplish the vast majority of contract closeout actions.

“After we picked the low hanging fruit in large numbers, reducing the backlog from 5,000-plus to just hundreds, we deployed other contract specialists and administrators to assist in cleaning up contracts with issues of delivery, payment and vendor failure to invoice,” Honey said.

The combined efforts allowed the February 2009



Photo by Michelle Kennedy

Richard Smith, left, and John Honey review a contract for supplies Feb. 14 at Fort Drum, N.Y. Smith is a contract administrator for supplies and Honey is the director for the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Drum contracting office.

backlog of more than 5,200 closeout actions to shrink dramatically. By February 2010 that number was 150, and a year later was whittled down to a mere 37 actions. After holding steady at zero overaged contracts over five weeks from December 2012 to January 2013, the office now has a little more than a dozen new actions to close out.

“The goal of zero overaged closeouts is obtainable, but nearly impossible to maintain all the time because of the many forces that work against you when executing closeouts based on the target closeout times established in the FAR,” Honey said.

Federal requirements

The Federal Acquisition Regulation governs the timelines for closing out contracts. For most simplified acquisitions, contracts are considered closed after receipt of property and final payment. Fixed-priced contracts should be closed within six months after

completion, and cost-type contracts should be closed within 36 months of the month in which the contracting officer receives evidence of physical completion.

Cyp LaPorte, the plans and programs division chief for MICC Contract Support Integration, explained that funding provided to the Army is closed out on a five-year cycle, thus all fiscal 2008 funding must be closed out by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service prior to the end of this fiscal year.

“When contract services or supplies have been completed, the action of closing out a contract allows for the deobligation of any excess funding back to the obligation organization,” LaPorte said. “This allows the use of any excess funding to fill funding shortfalls generated utilizing the same fiscal year and type of funding.”

The timely deobligation of millions of dollars in funding becomes even more critical in today’s environment of budget uncertainty for the armed

forces. Should customers not have access to any surplus funding for previous fiscal year requirements, it must use current fiscal year funding to pay any obligations.

“There are many side benefits in having closeouts under control,” Honey insisted. “Two of them are a low level of unliquidated obligations and workload management.”

He explained that while many contracting offices had to divert manpower last year to cleaning up fiscal 2007 unliquidated obligations, his office had no closeout actions for 2007 through 2010 and only a few for fiscal 2011.

“You can better manage and balance your contract administration workload because your active contract workload data is much more accurate,” Honey said.

Changing the culture

A closer look at what brought on this lapse of contract administration sheds light on a variety of sources. Because of the five-year funding cycle, LaPorte believes an understaffed workforce has contributed to contract management setting aside closeout tasks to concentrate efforts on current and future customer contract needs, creating a culture in which the backlog accelerated at an unprecedented pace.

“Contracts eligible for closeout have been accruing at a high rate over the last several years,” LaPorte said, “because contracting offices have been focused on the criticality of pre-award contracting requirements while dealing with an increased operations tempo, hiring freezes and training needs of an inexperienced workforce.”

LaPorte points to an increased workload level for pre-award contract actions that forced contracting offices to reduce the level of support to contract administration.

“As a result, the timeliness of contracts ready for closeout does not become critical in most instances until the fifth year from the year funding was provided,” he said. “This allows the majority of the completed contracting actions to accrue for a five-year period.”

Moving forward

Contract closeout is one of the MICC commanding general’s priorities in fiscal 2013 as the command postures for auditability in 2014. But the emphasis on contract administration and oversight dates to 2007 with the creation of the Gansler Commission by the Secretary of the Army to assess the rapid expansion of contracting. Among its recommendations was the addition of 1,400 personnel to the service’s contracting

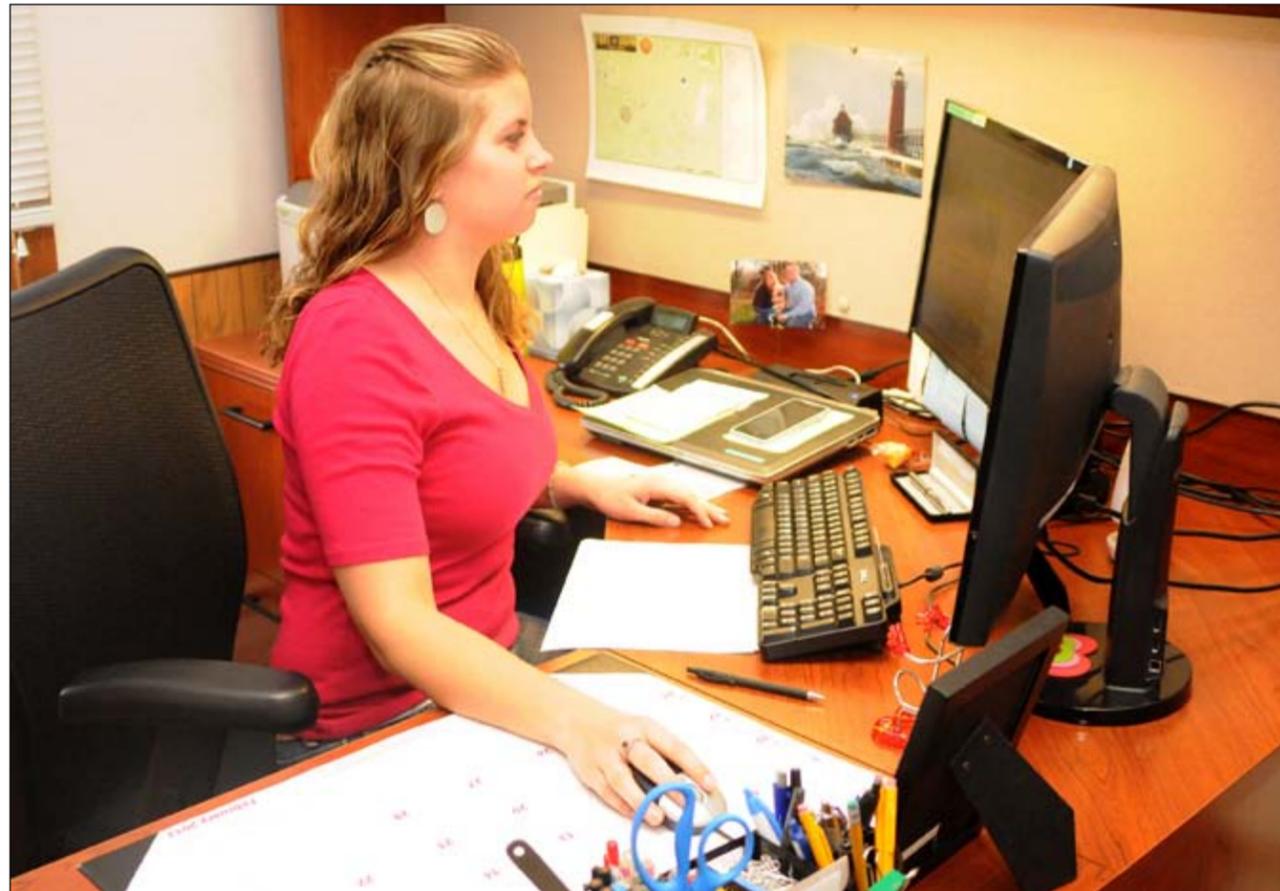


Photo by Michelle Kennedy

Kelli Rinard reviews communications while working in the Virtual Contracting Enterprise system Feb. 14 at Fort Drum, N.Y. Rinard is a contracting officer for supplies.

workforce.

“The Gansler Commission Report recognized the inadequate personnel resources on staff to properly perform contracting administration,” LaPorte said. “Consequently, the Army approved a concept plan to hire additional personnel to perform contract administration and began a phased hiring of personnel beginning in fiscal 2012 and continuing through fiscal 2014.”

The command is making progress in tackling the closeout of

thousands of overaged contracts.

As of Feb. 1, 2013, MICC contracting offices had in excess of 105,000 closeout-eligible actions of which 95,000 are overaged,” according to Derek Dansby, a procurement analyst with the MICC

“It takes time but can be achieved. Closing out the contract is the primary mission of every contract administrator.”

John Honey

from 2,400 a month in fiscal 2012 to 4,800 a month in fiscal 2013,” Dansby said. “Our greatest month was January 2013 as the command closed in excess of 6,500 contracts.”

Knowledge Management Branch. “Many offices are making great progress as we had increased the average monthly closeouts

He added that some contracting offices are ahead of others in the push to close out their overaged contract actions, but that it will take a concerted effort by all for the command to outpace gains of between 2,000 to 3,000 additional actions a month.

To meet this challenge, Honey firmly believes contract closeout has to be instilled as a routine part of contract administration.

“It takes time but can be achieved,” the Fort Drum contracting director said. “Closing out the contract is the primary mission of every contract administrator, and the act of obtaining delivery and performance, and ensuring quality and contractor payment is the path you take to be able to execute the closeout.”

412th Soldier named top NCO in San Antonio

A contracting specialist was named the Joint Base San Antonio Army Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for 2012 during a March 8 ceremony in San Antonio.

Staff Sgt. Brandon Carroll, a contracting specialist with the 607th Senior Contingency Contracting Team, 412th Contracting Support Brigade, earned the distinction through a competitive selection process that recognized exceptional performance.

In 2012, Carroll managed and executed multiple contract actions in excess of \$10 million as part of the 802d Contracting Squadron at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

Carroll believes his selection as one of only two Soldiers in San Antonio for the Army Contracting Command NCO of the Year Competition was a major factor in his win. The competition identifies the top NCOs from each contracting support brigade through a series of tasks and events. He further set himself apart from his peers by volunteering to participate in the Joint Contracting Readiness Training advance party and as a color guard member in support of the Delta Raiders memorial ceremony.

The NCO arrived at Lackland in October 2011 after serving as a cargo specialist at Fort Bragg, N.C. He attended the Mission Ready Airman Course to learn the basics about contracting.

“It’s the meat and potatoes of basic contracting, from (Federal Acquisition Regulation) referencing to how to use the PD2 software,” he said.

The Procurement Desktop Defense software tracks acquisitions during the contracting lifecycle. His training in PD2 helped prepare Carroll for his follow-on assignment with the 802d CONS.

“It was a pretty smooth transition since I was already here for school,” he said. “I appreciated the opportunity to stay at Lackland for the hands-on contracting; it was less of a learning curve.”

Carroll also credits his family, leaders who have shaped his career, dedication and Army values as the inspiration behind his service and achievement along with a simple formula he learned from his command sergeant major: PIE – performance, image, exposure.

Forty-six members competed in six military categories while 19 civilian employees vied for honors



Staff Sgt. Brandon Carroll

in four civilian categories.

“These are the JBSA superstars - together they represent Joint Base San Antonio’s most potent weapon system: its people,” ceremony officials said.

Senior leaders from across Joint Base San Antonio presented the awards to their respective service winners. Maj. Gen. Adolph McQueen, the U.S. Army North deputy commanding general, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rodney Rhoades, the Mission Installation Contracting Command command sergeant major, presented awards to the Army winners.

Also joining Carroll in support at the annual awards ceremony was Command Sgt. Maj. Jesse Hammond, the 412th CSB command sergeant major.

In 2005, Congress approved recommendations of the Base Realignment and Closure commission, creating Joint Base San Antonio as one of 12 joint bases throughout the Department of Defense. As a result, installation support activities at Lackland and Randolph Air Force bases, Fort Sam Houston, Camp Bullis and seven smaller locations were consolidated under a single command and JBSA was formally established Oct. 1, 2010. Today, more than 200 units call JBSA home.

Editor’s note: Contributing to this article was Wayne Amann of the Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Agency at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.

MICC contributes expertise to JCRX

From trainees to cadre and all positions in between, Mission and Installation Contracting Command employees supported the Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise 2013 at Fort Bliss, Texas. Of the 377 trainees and cadre in the exercise, 129 were Soldiers in MICC offices and 37 were MICC civilian employees supporting JCRX-13 as teachers, mentors or coaches for the event.

Ben Gonzales
MICC Public Affairs Office

The exercise, which lasted Jan. 13-31, is the Army Contracting Command's annual contracting readiness exercise that trains military and deployable civilian contracting officers in warrior and contracting specific tasks.

One of those coaches, Anna Walker, a contracting officer from MICC-Fort Bragg, N.C., went the extra mile in not only providing contracting guidance but also participated in the warrior training tasks alongside the military members she mentors. The warrior training included convoy



operations, medical training, vehicle rollover simulations, and simulated weapons training.

"I'm willing to experience exactly what (the military members) are experiencing," Walker said. "It builds morale between the military and civilians because they see I am not just here to teach them, but also to go through all the same training they do."

Another mentor is Ben Rush, a quality assurance specialist from the MICC Directorate of Policy and Compliance at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Rush educated JCRX trainees about the need for quality assurance professionals. "My role is to help the



Photo by Ben Gonzales

Anna Walker talks to El Paso, Texas, media after taking part in a vehicle rollover simulator during the Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise Jan. 20, 2013, at Fort Bliss, Texas. Walker is a contracting officer from Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Bragg, N.C.

trainees learn to take ambiguity out of contracts and to have measurable performance outcomes," Rush said.

It is important for trainees to learn how to appoint contracting officer representatives and develop quality assurance surveillance plans to specify what a contractor needs to do, how to do it, and when to do it, and this should be written clearly in the performance worksheet.

"With specific performance standards identifying acceptable quality levels, we can hold contractors feet to the fire in the event standards are not met," Rush added.

Bringing realism to the exercise was Michael Walker. As a role player for the exercise, he drew on his profession as a quality assurance specialist at MICC-

Fort A.P. Hill, Va., to give JCRX participants a chance to work with a variety of fictitious CORs and contractors representing the typical, diverse customer base. Walker role played as a COR to bring realism to the exercise and give trainees the chance to work with actual contracts as well as individuals fulfilling certain roles involved in the acquisition process.

"We all work together to correct any weaknesses of the past to ensure what our contracts call for is done based on the contract," Walker said. "We are the watchdogs and stewards of the American taxpayers."

Training the next generation of acquisition professionals is the goal of JCRX-13, and part of that generation is Staff Sgt. Jerill



Photo by Larry McCaskill

Sgt. 1st Class Carlet Clark learns the proper techniques to apply a tourniquet and other lifesaving procedures during the Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise. Clark is a contracting specialist from Fort Irwin, Calif.



Photo by Ben Gonzales

Staff Sgt. Jerill Cotton attends a course on contracting procedures during the Joint Contracting Readiness Exercise. Cotton is a contracting specialist from Fort Campbell, Ky.

Cotton from MICC-Fort Campbell, Ky. As a 51C with only five months experience as a contracting specialist, Cotton is one of many trainees new to the career field who require ramped-up training to prepare for worldwide contingency operations.

For the exercise, trainees formed regional contracting centers with approximately 10 members in each of the 18 RCCs. Embedded in each RCC were military and civilian coaches as well as a mentor to guide trainees.

“I did not know what to expect from all of the classroom training we went through. Plus it was great to go through warrior task training as a refresher since I haven’t done that since 2007,” Cotton said. “I’ve learned there is so much involved in establishing a contingency contracting office.”

Coaches also are learning from trainees.

Joshua Kaufmann, a coach for RCC-Mobile from MICC-Fort Drum, N.Y., is participating in the exercise for the second year. This was his first opportunity to go through warrior task training, which not only taught valuable life-saving skills but also brought camaraderie to the RCC teams.

“As coaches and mentors, we are being honest with trainees on their strengths and weaknesses,” Kaufmann said. “I am learning just as much as trainees, because as a MICC employee I do not work on weapon system or military construction contracts.”

The MICC has more than just mentor-coaches and students at the JCRX. Brenda Clark, the deputy director of MICC-Fort Benning, Ga., assisted the exercise as the MICC liaison officer overseeing all ACC civilian timekeeping throughout the JCRX. Lee Mossolle provided information technology support so all 377 participants could access acquisition programs and coaches could oversee student performance.

Without these programs, contracting professionals cannot do their job, Mossolle said. “This is a great environment for trainees to enhance skills required to do joint contracting overseas and become intimately familiar with the tools of the trade.”

The ACC exercise brings together contracting professionals from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines to polish contracting skills, share knowledge and practice all policy, procedures and regulations associated with their craft.

Fort Hood program yields savings

A test program with the Government Purchase Card Program by the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Hood, Texas, is yielding success through cost savings for military customers in a fiscally challenging environment while also identifying efficiencies in the program.

Beginning in June 2012, the MICC-Fort Hood, in conjunction with FedBid, entered into a test program with the installation’s directorate of public works and their GPC holders. Over its first seven months, the program has saved the Army more than \$83,000.

“The intent of the test was to explore potential cost saving and efficiency for GPC transactions,” said Barry Barnett, the director of contracting at Fort Hood. “On average, items purchased have shown a savings of 13.21 percent with an average of 2.2 vendors submitting 4.9 bids.”

The test was limited to GPC purchases in the \$3,000 to \$25,000 price range for supplies, equipment and repair parts that were available from local small businesses on existing blanket purchase agreements issued by MICC-Fort Hood. Government Service Agency contracts were also used when the items were not available through a local blanket purchase agreement. The test program did not affect DPW service or construction contracts or contracts issued by MICC-Fort Hood.

“Based on the initial success, the test program was expanded in October 2012 to include \$1,000 to \$3,000 GPC purchases,” Barnett said. “Business rules have been developed and adjusted based on suggestions from DPW and small businesses who sell these items to DPW.”

The director said FedBid provides a fully automated reverse auction process for DPW GPC holders to

purchase items, eliminating the need for GPC holders to call individual vendors for items.

“FedBid’s system allows more vendors to be contacted electronically, and thus generates more competition and lower bid prices, which saves the government money,” he said.

“As an added benefit, FedBid’s system also provides documentation for the GPC holder’s files, which improves the efficiency of the documentation process and annual inspections of those files,” said Randy O’Brien, the GPC Program coordinator at MICC-Fort Hood.

After the GPC holder enters the supply requirement into FedBid, an email notice is sent to small businesses in the local community who are both registered in FedBid and are on the appropriate blanket purchase agreement for the item being purchased. O’Brien added if the item is not available locally, GSA vendors nationwide can be notified. Vendors can submit bids until the reverse auction is closed, which is normally five business days, but can be quicker for high priority request.

Vendors know only if their bid is winning, called lead, or not, called lagging. Barnett believes the FedBid process offers increased security and integrity to the GPC procurement process by not informing vendors of the names of individuals purchasing items, how many vendors are competing or the amount of the lead bid.

FedBid has an Army-wide contract managed by Army Contracting Command-Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. It has been in use at MICC-Fort Hood for many years and provides a reverse auction process for purchasing supplies and some services. The online marketplace provides free customer help desk support and assistance.



Photo by Leonard Mettlach

Randy O’Brien and Trena Mueller review Government Purchase Card Program information Feb. 4 at Fort Hood, Texas. O’Brien is the GPC Program coordinator and Mueller is a GPC account representative for the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Hood.



New policy strengthens administration, oversight

Ryan L. Mattox
MICC Public Affairs Office

Quality assurance officials recently completed a major milestone by publishing the command's new quality assurance policy to address and help correct the Army material weakness in contract administration and oversight.

The policy follows the Mission and Installation Contracting Command's Quality Assurance Program roadmap to provide guidance on goals, expectations and functional requirements for quality assurance across the command. The roadmap includes three basic elements – policy and procedures, quality assurance

workforce development and contracting officer's representative management.

"This policy is a major step in the MICC Quality Assurance Program," said Joe Merry, a senior quality assurance specialist with the MICC Contract Support Integration Quality Assurance. "The Army has a material weakness in contract administration and oversight and documentation of that oversight. In many cases, we do not have documentation to support that the Army received acceptable services and supplies in accordance with the requirements of the contract to justify contractor payments. The policy demonstrates that we are committed to moving forward in addressing the Army's material weakness with contract administration."

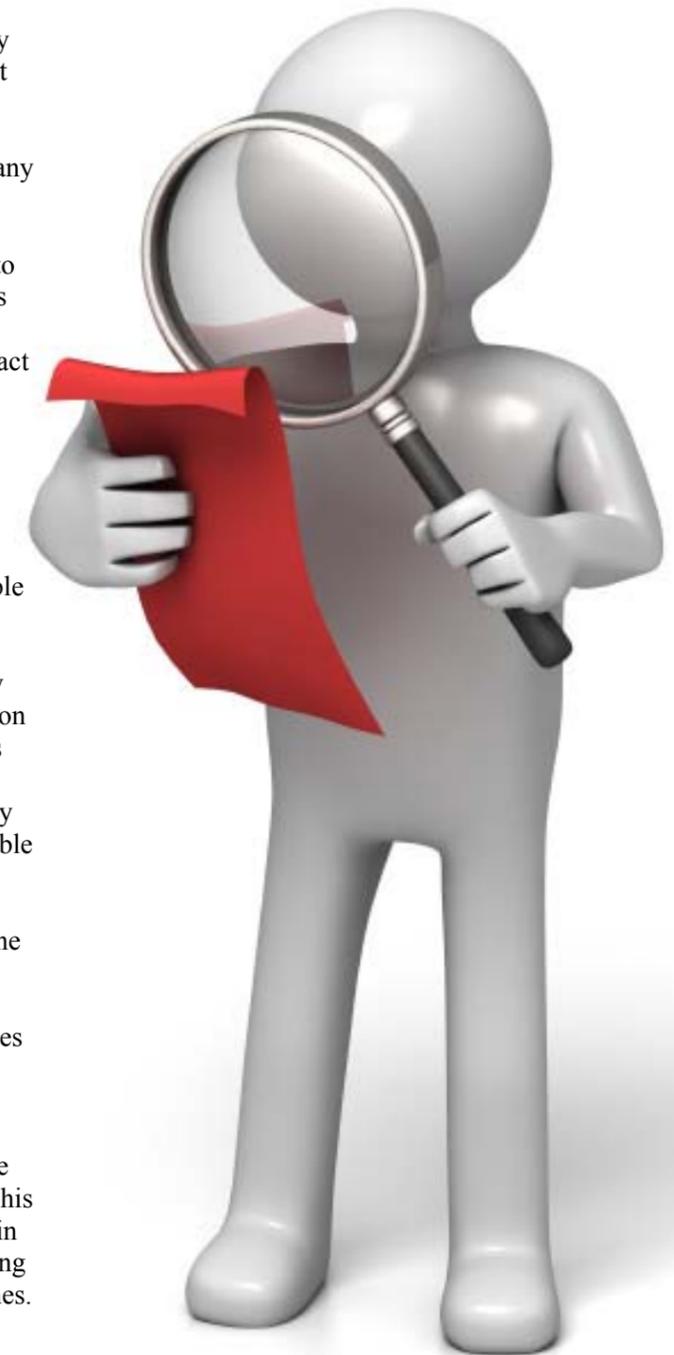
MICC quality assurance specialists are acquisition professionals and members of the command's acquisition team. The policy, available on the MICC SharePoint site, defines their roles in conducting the quality assurance mission, which is critical in the efforts to hold contractors responsible and accountable for performance and quality control.

The command's overarching goal is to ensure it has an effective and independent government quality assurance program required by the Federal Acquisition Regulation. The program assures contracted services or supplies conform to contract requirements, and contractors are "acceptably maintaining" their quality control systems to ensure they are providing acceptable services or supplies.

Merry said it is also important to understand that quality control is the responsibility of contractors. The MICC Quality Assurance Program helps determine that contractors are maintaining adequate quality control inspection systems congruent with the services performed and supplies furnished.

Merry pointed out that it is difficult to hold contractors responsible and accountable for performance and quality control if requirements have not been well defined with measureable outcomes. This is where quality assurance specialist can play a role in the pre-award process through assisting in determining if requirements are written with well defined outcomes.

A quality assurance specialist, as a member of the MICC contract acquisition team, should be able to assure the Army is receiving what it paid for and that it is consistent with contractual requirements, he said.



Finding innovative solutions

Brendalyn Carpenter
Joint Base Lewis-McChord

Implementation of a new refuse and diversion contract at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., is set to make recycling and waste generation more public and more visible to building occupants.

For the last two-and-a-half years JBLM Directorate of Public Works and Mission and Installation Contracting Command staff developed a plan that consolidates basewide recycling and refuse services under one contract. The result is JBLM's first diversion and disposal contract aimed at achieving the Army's Net Zero objectives by 2020.

JBLM is one of five installations selected in 2011 by the assistant secretary of the Army for installations, energy and environment as a pilot installation for Net Zero Waste by 2020 to reduce landfill. The increased diversion under the MICC contract brings the base closer to that goal.

Net Zero objectives coupled with higher headquarters environmental goals set the target for establishing a contract that would be recognized as a benchmark for other installations, said Thomas Ebenhoh, a MICC-JBLM contracting officer.

"Both of these helped energize what has been aimed at in prior years, which is increasing recycling and reducing waste," Ebenhoh said. "Timing for the effort was also helpful with the Net Zero awards

program."

He said consideration was next given to what might incentivize units to recycle while adding an element to the contract that would benefit the contractor in diversion from waste to recycling.

Ebenhoh said the lead time when first contacted by the customer proved valuable in finding a solution that worked for both the customer and a contractor.

"The importance of starting the acquisition process early to have adequate time to put the best possible contract vehicle in place is Contracting 101," he said. "In this particular procurement, the market research, building the line items, and developing the pricing strategy required adequate and early lead time to package into the solicitation."

Ebenhoh believes the unique contract is a first for this type of effort, and the time and effort necessary to come up with the innovative solution has made believers out of the MICC's customer.

"We arrived at a contract that was written to take us to our goal," said James Lee, JBLM Directorate of Public Works Qualified Recycling Program manager of his work with the MICC team. "The contract by itself can't get you there because the contractor isn't the person who's putting trash in the can. So we had to figure out a way to engage the public in a meaningful way so our contract could be successful."



U.S. Army photo

1st Sgt. Scott Stull tosses recyclables into the commingled recycling bin. The 1st Joint Mobilization Brigade is the first unit to assign a building point of contact to support new Net Zero Waste requirements at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. Stull is the 1st JMB facility manager.

DPW and JBLM's waste management and recycling contractor have partnered to implement strategies that will increase recycling and waste diversion. The plan uses an innovative approach to establishing accountability for what goes into the recycling and refuse containers at JBLM offices and unit areas, coupled with an ambitious outreach, education and marketing strategy.

With support from JBLM's leaders, a plan of action is moving forward in two phases.

In Phase 1, military units and activities that use refuse or recycling containers at their facilities must identify a single point of contact responsible for resolving issues associated with each refuse and recycling container at his or her building.

Although the effort is still in its early stages of marketing the

Contracting for Soldiers

disposal costs, and potential savings from recycling and waste diversion.

Ebenhoh said the contract puts the government and the contractor on the same team, benefitting both parties.

"This contract provides a powerful tool that can be used by the contractor and the government," he said. "Both gain benefit by achieving higher solid waste diversion rates."

JBLM officials seek benefits that have both immediate and long-term impacts on the base community. Recycling generates revenue that goes back to JBLM's Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, and safety and natural resources projects.

In the last two years, the Qualified Recycling Program funded \$350,000 to help build the Army Family Covenant Splash Park and \$175,000 annually to help maintain the facility.

For the contractor, the new 10-year contract is incentivized to generate more profit from the sale of recycled commodities it collects than for the amount of waste it hauls off base.

The contractor can earn up to 50 percent of the proceeds from the sale of recycled commodities, Lee said, based on diversion performance.

Changes will gradually become apparent. In the coming months the gray, 96-gallon, two-wheeled commingled containers will be phased out and replaced with larger, front-loader containers that accommodate the truck scales.

Large dumpsters will also be phased out and replaced with waste containers appropriate for the amount of waste generated by each building.

"Part of what we're doing is right-sizing the facility," said Shelia Martin, DPW Recycling Outreach coordinator. "Not every facility has a need for an eight-yard container;

some facilities only need a one-or two-yard container."

The changes help prevent illegal dumping by selecting appropriate containers for each facility, she said. Units and base activities will use existing containers until the new versions become available.

Martin said, while the program is a major step in the right direction, DPW anticipates challenges.

"There are going to be little tweaks along the way; we'll have to take things step-by-step; it's going to be a learning curve," she said.

Helping guide those tweaks will be contracting officer representatives, who are responsible for the surveillance of contractors.

"The COR is key, especially in monitoring the contractor's invoicing and ... appropriate surveillance," Ebenhoh said.

Phase 2 debuts the Net Zero Competition, the first lasting April 1 through Aug. 31. JBLM military units can earn cash awards of up to \$10,000 for their unit fund accounts and recognition for practicing sustainable behaviors that increase recycling, divert waste, conserve energy and water, and improve air quality.

The Net Zero Competition is a mechanism to engage the base community, said Terry Austin, DPW Installation Sustainability Net Zero coordinator. It's a tool to get the attention of those who are not aware of the base's sustainability goals, she said.

"If the prize money is what gets them interested, that's OK," Austin said.

The cash awards come from proceeds generated from base recycling. So the money is actually being returned to the people on this installation who have done the work of recycling and conservation, she said.

Furloughs pose security risks



Security officials at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command have been fielding questions regarding the potential impact of furloughs due to sequestration.

Those questions have included the potential financial considerations that in severe circumstances may threaten their ability to obtain or maintain a security clearance and access to classified and sensitive government information.

“Several people have asked how decreased earnings could affect their ability to meet financial obligations and how that would affect their security clearance,” said Chris Cisneros, the MICC security manager. “This issue is relevant to the acquisition workforce because a secret level security clearance is a requirement for 1100-series positions and most other positions within the command.”

She added the requirement for financial responsibility must be maintained by both civilian employees and uniformed members of the command.

In a March 22 memo to security directors from the Department of Defense under secretary, Timothy Davis, the director of security, recommended that cleared DOD personnel be reminded of their “individual responsibility to protect national security information and to report any information that may have a bearing on continued eligibility for access to classified information.”

Cisneros said MICC members who encounter financial problems should, among other things, work with their creditors to manage their debts; keep documentation of their financial situation and communications with creditors; and keep their local security office informed. Members should notify Cisneros or a supervisor in writing if he or she experience financial difficulties.

The under secretary’s memo as well as most frequently asked questions can be found on the security subsite of MICC Sharepoint Operations and Security page.

Veteran finds joy in continued service

A senior contract administrator and contracting officer at Fort Knox, Ky., was recently recognized for his contributions while serving in Afghanistan.

As a retired veteran, Danny Hall enjoys supporting Soldiers and the warfighter through his love for contracting and holds a great respect for the men and women who

Installation Contracting Command-Fort Knox Contract Management Division responsible for a highly visible, diverse customer base, he supports the garrison command and manages higher profile service contracts and job order contracts.

“I enjoy the challenges associated with contracting and also enjoy my place of employment along with the people I work with,” Hall said.

The contract management division is annually responsible for more than \$500 million of contracts

quality of life for them and their family,” he said. “We also support the Warrior Transition Battalion, which is a reminder of the sacrifices our Soldiers are making.”

Hall retired from the Air Force, where he also served as a contract administrator and contracting officer. While on active duty, he spent time in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates supporting Desert Storm. He still possesses a willingness to be in the fight out of uniform.

“When the call came for volunteers to deploy, I was eager to do my part supporting our Soldiers in harm’s way,” Hall said.

He has deployed twice since 2009, including a year from April 2009 to April 2010 in Iraq and six months in early 2012 as an administrative contracting officer for the Defense Contract Management Agency Northern Afghanistan.

“My wife always supported me in my decision to deploy, and I received tremendous support from the people I work for and with at MICC-Fort Knox,” he said. “Besides having to pull extra duty while I was away, they also kept in contact with me and sent generous care packages. I work with a great group of people.”

Hall and his wife of 34 years, Ginger, live in Ekron, Ky., a small community near Fort Knox. They have a daughter and son who have both graduated from college. He fills his spare time traveling with his family and touring the roadways by motorcycle with friends. Besides the back roads of Kentucky, he has also toured the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Rockies, Yellowstone and Canada.



Photo by Rod Prickett

Danny Hall is a senior contract administrator and contracting officer for the MICC-Fort Knox Contract Management Division in Kentucky.

serve this nation.

While deployed, he issued more than 250 letters of technical direction, 700 work orders, 65 change orders and 97 material requisition requests in support of seven forward operating bases.

As a member of the Mission and

that either support Soldiers directly or support those who provide services to Soldiers, such as the garrison.

“I see every day how those contracts I’m responsible for support the Soldier in their jobs and also provide for the welfare and



Photos by Daniel P. Elkins

Delivering for Army's second largest installation

Ben Gonzales
MICC Public Affairs Office

Providing the contracting needs for more than 35,000 Soldiers and their families at the Army's second-largest installation is no easy task, but members of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Bliss, Texas, accomplish that every day.

The 56 members making up the contracting office plan, integrate, award and administer contracts for Army commands and units on post, which are spread over 992,000 acres.

Home to the Army's second largest maneuver area as well as 1,500 square miles of virtually unrestricted airspace used for missile and artillery training and testing, Fort Bliss has the room to accommodate the 300-percent increase in its population over the last five years. Providing and sustaining the contract needs of the installation is where the MICC-Fort Bliss staff comes in.

In fiscal 2012, the Soldiers and civilians at the contracting office executed more than 2,100 contract actions valued at more than \$207 million. They take care of all of Fort Bliss' major units – including the 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss Garrison, 32nd Army Air

and Missile Defense Command, Brigade Modernization Command, Joint Task Force-North, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy – and assist with the new William Beaumont Army Medical Center.

The MICC-Fort Bliss staff partners with its customers to evaluate and determine the best course of action to achieve award, management and oversight of contracts. Such efforts have included the teaming with 1st AD officials to develop a contract action review board to assist the division in prioritizing its contract requirements.

“We sit with the 1st AD's chief of staff and go through all the large requirements to make sure we procure only what is truly necessary for the customer,” said Lt. Col. Shawn Jenkins, the MICC-Fort Bliss associate director. “Since fiscal 2010, our staff helped 1st AD with a 54-percent reduction in costs with no noticeable reduction in services through smart contracting and consolidation of requirements. They understand the value of contracting and how we can work together to save the Army money.”

Fort Bliss leaders and customers recognize and seek the expert technical contracting advice and assistance of the MICC-Fort Bliss staff. It is about selecting contract types and methods of solicitations to obtain

services and supplies designed to best meet customers' requirements, said Hester Stone, a contracting officer. He said the ability to interact and understand different customers' needs and execute acquisitions requirements in a timely manner on a daily basis is vital to providing responsive contracting solutions and oversight.

In addition to working with Fort Bliss commands, support by the contracting office reaches beyond the post gates to local small businesses that perform many of the contracts required for the installation. In fiscal 2012, more than \$69 million went to area small businesses through more than 1,300 contract actions. Leading that effort for Fort Bliss is Sue Jones, the small business specialist.

“We open our doors to meet with area small business representatives every Friday to educate local officials on what opportunities are available here as well as provide the forecast for contracts to come,” Jones said.

When Jones isn't working as the conduit for area businesses, she trains the MICC-Fort Bliss staff on market research for small businesses and how the programs benefit the Army and local economies.

Administering contracts for installation units takes the efforts of all the MICC-Fort Bliss team.

“In a constantly changing environment, my job is

to strive to keep my team on track through mentoring while staying abreast of the current policies and changes in the dynamic contracting world,” said Melissa Garcia, a contracting officer in the major acquisitions division. She leads four contract specialists.

To make sure the contracting office staff keeps up to date, MICC-Fort Bliss conducts weekly contracting developmental training for contracting officials as well as the newly assigned Soldiers. Many of the contracting officials in uniform have only been in the job for a short time, so the staff implemented a new military training rotational program exposing Soldiers to as many facets of contracting as possible.

With such a demanding customer base, many MICC-Fort Bliss members manage high-dollar contracts. Wendy Colon, a contract specialist, awarded three information technology supply contracts totaling \$170,000 and three service contracts totaling \$17 million last fiscal year. George Brown, the contract management chief, manages more than 200 contracts valued in excess of \$948 million.

“I help by awarding contracts on-time while being good stewards of our taxpayer dollars and ensuring the contracts meet the needs of the Soldiers,” Brown said.

(Above) Members of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Bliss, Texas, include, from left, contracts specialist Flor Sanchez; quality assurance evaluators Misty Bishop and Keith Aikens; property administrator Reynalda Pallaya and contracts specialist Jaime Briseno; and Government Purchase Card Program coordinator Joe Craggett.

GREAT HEIGHTS

MICC director climbs Kilimanjaro

Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

The contracting director at White Sands Missile Range recently achieved one of the greatest physical challenges only a relative few can ever say they've accomplished.

Finding the time to squeeze in vacation plans in a contracting environment might lend most to consider a tranquil beach where the BlackBerry is replaced with a fruity cocktail. For Bev Stotz, those plans took her to Africa where she climbed Mount Kilimanjaro.

Already active in Pilates, cycling and hiking, Stotz was contacted last summer by a friend whose cousin was planning to climb Kilimanjaro but didn't want to go alone. Knowing Stotz as being adventurous with a current passport, her friend recommended she join her cousin on the once-in-a-lifetime excursion.

"I thought it sounded like fun, and I always wanted to go to the 'real' Africa," said Stotz, referring to her several trips to Egypt. "So I figured, why not?"

They were part of a group of eight that brought together climbers from Cleveland, Canada and Hong Kong on a guided climb, which covered 42 miles with a 12,000-foot elevation change.

Their climbing skill levels were as varied as the group itself, which included adventurers in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

"I fit right in. Some of these folks run marathons, so suffice it to say, I wasn't as fast," Stotz said, adding that she was the oldest in the group at fifty-something. "The guides do a very good job of pacing the group; they don't let you go crazy."

The 29-year contracting professional lives at an elevation of 4,000 feet in Las Cruces, N.M., and has hiked

Bev Stotz maneuvers the rocky terrain of Lava Tower during her January climb of Mount Kilimanjaro.





Bev Stotz pauses to take in the view of Mount Kilimanjaro during what she describes as her greatest physical challenge.

many elevations, but can't recall hiking anything higher than 10,000 feet.

"I was a bit apprehensive as my departure date approached," she said, choosing to rely on a fellow church member from Tanzania who has completed four climbs to help alleviate her worries. "He put my mind at ease that I was certainly able to do this."

Arriving in Tanzania in mid-January, she started her eight-day trek of scaling the highest free-standing mountain in the world two days later. Her final ascent to the summit of Kilimanjaro began at midnight in the light of a full moon and took six hours, 40 minutes. She describes it as surreal.

"It was like, 'what did I just do and why?'" Stotz said. "Then thinking the tallest mountain in Africa, the highest free-standing mountain in the world and I'm standing at the top of it; OMG!" Stotz said. "It is still weird to hear the words 'I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro' come out of my mouth. In the grand scheme of things, not many people can say that, nor do they know people who can."

Along the way, she admits to experiencing emotional highs and lows. Having lost her father in 2010, she is confident she felt his presence at many points throughout the climb. "He was with me up there,"



Courtesy photos

Bev Stotz pauses to take a photo in front of Mount Kilimanjaro during her climb in January.



(Left) Bev Stotz joins fellow hikers ascending the Barranco Wall during the climb. (Right) Stotz climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in January, reaching the summit of the highest free-standing mountain in the world.

she said. "Everyone I talked to that did this has had that same surreal feeling, like you were somehow detached and watching from somewhere else. It's hard to describe."

The toughest part of the climb was the descent. The MICC-WSMR director has had one knee replacement surgery and suffers from the degeneration of cartilage in the other knee, leading to bone-on-bone pain.

"Nothing prepared me for that. It was excruciating. One stretch

(of the descent) was nothing but large rocks and stream bed," Stotz recalled. "It took most people about three-and-a-half hours to go down that stretch. It took me over six hours and two meltdowns. At the end of summit day, I was exhausted."

Despite the pain, she most treasures the bonding between complete strangers throughout her entire experience.

"It was amazing to see people from all over the world and from different cultures, religions and

backgrounds find one common thread to bind them together. Not just our little group of eight plus guides and porters, but everyone on the mountain at that time.

"All of us with one goal to reach the summit proved that differences can most certainly be overcome, and people really can be kind to each other," she continued. "We all cheered for each other as we climbed and prayed for those being taken down. The humanity was the greatest part of the whole adventure."