

The MICC Communicator



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Mission and Installation Contracting Command

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Certification
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The MICC Communicator

Contracting for Soldiers

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Achieving certification

Sgt. 1st Class Oswald Pascal graduated in December 2013 from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio where he received a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences. He is in the process of accomplishing his remaining two classes to achieve his Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act Level II certification in contracting. For more on the requirements for certification, see Page 6.



Photo by Daniel P. Elkins

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MISSION

The MICC provides Army commands, installations and activities with disciplined and responsive contracting solutions and oversight. On order, provides trained and deployable contracting support brigades to the operating force.

Path calls for renewed commitment to Army profession

by **Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Bowens**
MICC command sergeant major

I'd like to begin by thanking everyone for the wonderful reception I've received since arriving at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command in January.

I couldn't have asked for a better assignment or introduction to the command than to see firsthand the importance of our role in supporting our Soldiers at the Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise 2014 at Fort Bliss, Texas.

OCSJX-14 offered a key perspective into our mission – we must remain true to our profession as professionals. Witnessing the level of professionalism between our Soldiers and civilian workforce reinforces the critical need to serve as a total Army.

The same level of professionalism in our workplace is foundational of the Army's strength. Character, competence and commitment make up the values of our profession and are every bit as essential as the fabric of our daily lives in the face of a challenging fiscal environment.

Our commitment to the Army profession is indispensable as our leaders have difficult decisions ahead that will impact the total force.

As unit realignments, deactivations and force management commence, military

leaders are strategically shaping the Army of 2020. Leaders at every level must make critical assessments regarding the Soldiers that will comprise our elite force.

There's no doubt that the tired anecdote of doing more with less comes to mind. We've heard this far too often, but many of us are well aware of the realities.

I believe that we will do more with the best. A shortage in resources doesn't mean an absence of resourcefulness.

Ensuring our best people are in place helps lead to finding inventive solutions to overcome challenges.

It is imperative that all members of our team hold themselves and their people both personally and professionally accountable. Although we don't operate on a zero defect mentality, recovering from indiscretions that are not consistent with our

profession will become increasingly difficult.

Our Army professionals are individuals who are responsible for developing and maintaining moral character and competence, on and off duty, while following their own personal commitment to work. It is more than a job – it's a calling to serve in the defense of our nation. As stewards of this honorable profession, all Army professionals must not only police themselves but also their fellow professionals.

Your team and teammates are counting on you to shape the future.



From the CG

New mission, vision outline priorities

by Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Gabbert
MICC commanding general

It's hard to believe that it has been more than 100 days since I took command of this incredible organization, and every day you impress me with your professionalism, patriotism and pride in our mission. Now that I've had a chance to learn many of the intricate details of the command, I'd like to discuss my leadership philosophy and how it relates to our new mission, vision and commander's intent. Additionally, I'd like to lay out my command priorities for the MICC, as that these will be our guiding principles for all that we do.

At the core of my leadership philosophy is individual accountability. I made clear in my Feb. 6 email to the command that every individual must be held accountable; not only for their own behavior but also for the professional responsibility that has been imparted to them by the nature of their jobs. So it comes down to personal accountability in everything we do that serves as the nexus between our individual and organizational success.

Every single word of our new command mission and vision statements is significant. I want our mission and vision statements to be tools used by every MICC member as guideposts on our path forward. New to our mission statement is the requirement to, on order, provide trained and deployable contracting support brigades to the operating force. I need the full support of the entire civilian workforce to train and teach our new military members so when our Soldiers are

called upon, they can go forward to provide warfighters with essential operational contract support. When Soldiers deploy, their home station cannot skip a beat, and the civilian workforce must continue to support the generating force at that installation. In addition, I ask each of you to understand my intent for the MICC: Build a

ready, transparent and accountable organization that is built on trust and respect.

The command priorities I have established reinforce our mission, vision and commander's intent. After my initial analysis of the command, these are the areas I have decided to focus in order to build upon the tremendous success

we have already achieved as an organization. In the next 90 days, command members will see that I intend to power down many tasks to the office level. I have requested that each brigade and Field Directorate Office-Fort Eustis, Va., become a principal assistant responsible for contracting. We also will give the brigades and FDO

the Government Purchase Card Program.

While we are powering down these authorities, there will also be a call for increased individual accountability. Take metrics for example. Metrics will not only be a headquarters responsibility; they will be an office responsibility. Metrics will be assigned to individual "metric owners." These owners will have personal accountability for their respective metrics. This process is being implemented to ensure we have accountability across the entire spectrum of the acquisition life cycle for which we are charged responsibility, including: contract closeout, unauthorized commitments, the Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System, etc. It's all going to be measured and rated, and every single person in our formation has to do his or her part to make this command successful.

We are so blessed to have such a dedicated workforce comprised of military and civilian members. Although we are a command that doesn't always get the accolades we deserve, I'm so impressed with the dedication and professionalism of our workforce.

Let me thank every member of our incredible command for the crucial role each plays for the Army and our nation. You truly provide world-class contracting support to our Soldiers and their families, and I understand the sacrifice and dedication it takes from our entire team to accomplish our vital mission. Keep up the fantastic work you do for our Army. It is an honor for me to serve with you, beside you and for you.



Photo by Jessica Healey

David Wild, left, and Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Gabbert shovel dirt onto a newly planted fire maple tree while Mission and Installation Contracting Command staff members look on March 24 outside of the contracting office at Fort Riley, Kansas. The tree was planted in honor of co-worker Cheryl Wallace, a contracting specialist who lost her battle with cancer last fall. The memorial ceremony and tree planting took place on Wallace's birthday. Wild is the director of MICC-Fort Riley and Gabbert is the MICC commanding general.



MISSION

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VISION

We do the right thing every day and are known as the Army's premier contracting organization.

Education key for enlisted Soldier contracting certification

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

Entering the Army Acquisition Corps necessitates enlisted Soldiers to meet specific education and certification

requirements outlined in federal statutes in order to execute contracts on behalf of the government and maintain readiness.

Soldiers in the 51C military occupational specialty attached to the Mission and Installation Contracting Command arrive having completed training on the basic fundamentals of contracting before promptly entering a carefully mapped training regimen under the

observant direction of a mentor.

Helping steer their development is the MICC 51C Contingency Contracting Officer Rotational Training Plan and a proficiency guide that outline a structured approach and defines training responsibilities. The plan charts training, education and experience requirements on a rotational schedule alongside MICC civilian professionals allowing uniformed members to gain experience and certification necessary in performing operational contract support in garrison and during contingency operations.

“Attaching Soldiers to the MICC was a deliberate decision by the Army Contracting Command to broaden their proficiency in contracting while increasing readiness,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Bowens, the MICC command sergeant major. “Accomplishing the necessary steps in a timely manner to achieve appropriate certification is at the core of readiness. I cannot overstate the importance of this as a critical mission component.”

The Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act, or DAWIA, sets forth core standards in acquisition and functional training as well as education and experience for contracting certification at three levels for both uniformed and civilian members in the workforce.

Soldiers also have the opportunity to work toward certification by attending several in-resident courses to include the three-week Army Acquisition Foundation Course, four-week Army Basic Contracting Course and four-week Army Acquisition

Intermediate Contracting Course in Huntsville, Ala., provided by the Army Acquisition Center of Excellence. The AACoE is a centralized training, education, and career development school for Army acquisition officers, noncommissioned officers, and Department of the Army civilians. The center integrates Army institutional training, education, and career development courses for the acquisition, logistics, and technology workforce.

analysis, contract structure and format, and Federal Acquisition Regulation fundamentals for basic certification. Intermediate courses explore legal considerations, source selection, managing government property, analyzing contract costs and negotiation.

acquisition workforce already possessing the necessary education, and approximately 96 percent are certified or within the grace period of accomplishing their appropriate certification. VanGilder said approximately 34 percent of enlisted members have achieved

their necessary certification level against a threshold of 94 percent.

“Much of the delinquency is due to accomplishing the education requirement in time to obtain certification,” she said.

While she anticipates that enlisted certification percentage to improve significantly in the next few months, it still falls below that necessary to ensure readiness.

“Accomplishing the necessary steps in a timely manner to achieve appropriate certification is at the core of readiness. I cannot overstate the importance of this as a critical mission component.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Bowens



Earning certification

Contracting experience essential for certification ranges from one year for DAWIA Level I certification to two years for Level II and four years for Level III. Eligible Soldiers and civilians may request to substitute a year of education for a year of experience when seeking their Level II and III certifications.

Donna VanGilder is the chief of training and readiness for MICC Operations. She explained that the requirement for enlisted Soldiers to obtain certification is also coupled with their grade. Staff sergeants are required to obtain a minimum Level I certification; sergeants first class should attain their Level II certification; and those in the grade of master sergeant and above must achieve their Level III certification.

Acquisition and functional training involve successfully completing multiple online and a few resident DAWIA courses in varied subjects to include contract planning, execution and management, cost and price

Advance certification training focuses on contracting for decision makers, construction contracting, cost accounting standards and acquisition law. Additional developmental training is also needed depending on the type of assignment and activity individuals represent.

Perhaps proving most demanding for enlisted Soldiers in the 51C MOS is satisfying the education requirement, according to VanGilder.

“A minimum education requirement of a bachelor’s degree in any field of study with at least 24 hours in business disciplines is required to obtain certification in the contracting career field,” she said.

A threshold of certification is established by the office of the principal deputy to the Army acquisition executive. Civilian interns and officers enter the

Key discriminator

The decision to begin assessing uniformed members into the 51C contracting career field came about in late 2006 to meet the Army’s increasing need for contingency contracting officers. The integration of approximately 400 Soldiers to contracting offices throughout the MICC began in March 2013 as a means to streamline the span of control from oversight of uniformed service members stateside while enhancing their professional development.

As the influx of enlisted Soldiers into the 51C MOS continues, education is becoming more of a discriminator due to certification requirements. This stipulation has become a key element in a competitive selection process to enter into the career field, according to officials.

See CERTIFICATION, Page 8



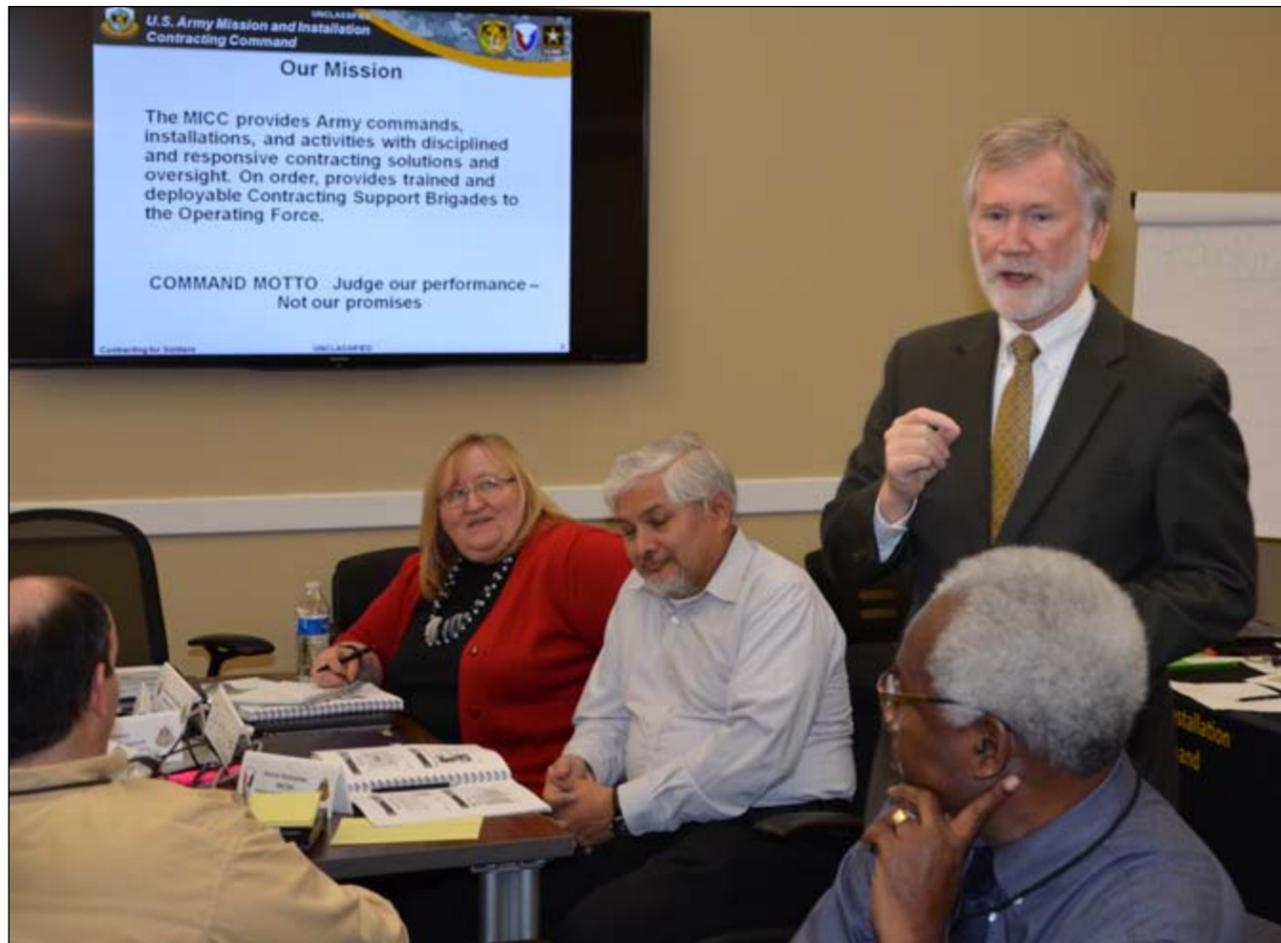


Photo by Ben Gonzales

George Cabaniss briefs acquisition members as part of the Requirements Generation Road Show March 24 at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command's Long Barracks on Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The road show brought together more than 40 contracting professionals from throughout the country representing the Army's major commands March 24-27 to discuss and learn acquisition essentials. Cabaniss is the MICC deputy to the commander.

CERTIFICATION, from Page 7

"NCOs are judged on a 'total Soldier' concept, with primary areas of emphasis consisting of completion of a bachelor's degree and rated leadership time on an NCO evaluation report carrying the most significance," said Master Sgt. Eric Sears, chief of the 51C Proponent NCO at the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center.

Sears added other factors influencing selection include total time in service and letters of recommendation.

Demanding duty

Entering the 51C MOS comes with the recognition that its demands are not limited to civilian education and DAWIA certification as Soldiers also must maintain all aspects of readiness.

"It can be really difficult since they still have to take into consideration family commitments, soldiering tasks such as weapons qualification and physical training, deployments and contingency training

exercises," VanGilder said.

Soldiers begin their training with simplified contract actions alongside civilian contracting professionals. Simplified actions include the acquisition of supplies and services, including minor construction, research and development, and commercial items not exceeding a threshold of \$150,000. They then move on to more complex contracts until they become proficient in all procedures making up the contracting life cycle from pre-award and award to administration, including closeout.

"Technical, hands-on training is a critical component in developing contracting skills," Bowens said, "but achieving all aspects required of certification is necessary to remain committed to the Army profession."

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles on the certification for contracting Soldiers. Following articles will highlight success stories and developmental benefits of obtaining certification.

2nd quarter SB awards exceed \$366M

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

More than \$366 million in contracts were awarded to small businesses throughout the nation during the second quarter of this fiscal year by contracting officials with the Mission and Installation Contracting Command.

Through March 31, MICC contracting officers have awarded more than \$592 million in contracts for fiscal 2014 to small businesses representing 39.6 percent of total small business eligible dollars awarded by the command. In fiscal 2013, the command executed more than \$2.1 billion to American small businesses.

"Small businesses are important to the economic vitality of the nation, and the MICC is resourced and ready to help those companies form, grow and succeed," said Mark Massie, director of the MICC Office of Small Business Programs.

The MICC OSBP consists of personnel around the country who provide aid, advice and counsel to small businesses. In addition to providing advice to individual small businesses, the program also advocates within the command's 33 contracting offices to ensure small businesses have the maximum opportunity to compete for Army contracts awarded by those activities. Dollars awarded on these contracts help support the achievement of annual government-wide goals required by the Small Business Act.

MICC representatives play a critical role in numerous outreach events in their local areas. Maureen Huston, a procurement analyst with MICC-Fort Hood, Texas, recently assisted small-business owners during the annual Fort Hood Region Government Vendor Conference and Expo at Killeen, Texas. The expo brought together more than 100 vendors, contractors and government agencies to learn about government contracting opportunities.

From a practical perspective, Huston said it is very important that the Army engages small-business owners at events such as these.

"Many of the companies are new to the federal procurement process," Huston said. "It is critical to engage small businesses so they know that we know how important they are."

In addition to attending conferences and networking, she added that small-business owners should seek low- or no-cost training from agencies whose mission is to support small businesses, such as procurement technical assistance centers, small business development centers and local chambers of commerce.



U.S. Army photo

Gen. Dennis Via presents Mark Massie with a certificate of appreciation at the Team Redstone Small Business Symposium hosted at the Summit at Redstone Arsenal, Ala., in February recognizing the contributions by small-business professionals throughout the command. The Department of Defense, Department of the Army, Army Materiel Command and other small-business directors spoke with more than 300 small-business representatives about the importance of and opportunities for partnership and work. Via is the AMC commanding general.

Small-business directors at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston monitor each small business category throughout the fiscal year to ensure contracts are awarded in each of the following small business categories:

- Small disadvantaged business
- Service-disabled veteran-owned small business
- Woman-owned small business
- Historically underutilized business zone small business



Photo by Tracy Fetchik

Col. Dane Rideout presents Manuel Medeiros with the Distinguished Civilian Service award during a ceremony March 13 at West Point, N.Y.

Actions in attack earns recognition

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

A contract specialist at West Point, N.Y., was presented the Distinguished Civilian Service Award during a ceremony March 13 for his quick actions in response to a Taliban suicide attack while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Manuel Medeiros received the award from Col. Dane Rideout, the West Point Garrison commander.

"I'm appreciative someone felt I was worthy of this award," a humbled Medeiros said.

Medeiros deployed as part of the Army Contracting Command deployable cadre from August 2012 to January 2013 as an administrative contract officer in support of the Defense Contract Management Agency. The Mission and Installation Contracting Command contract specialist was responsible for helping manage contracts in support of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police that provided base life support services, vehicles and weapons among other operational support.

On Nov. 21, 2012, while preparing to leave his compound with a security escort team of Soldiers to conduct an audit of inbound equipment at a nearby

regional training center, he and the logistics audit team never got the chance to depart.

"We had just walked into the parking lot and were performing preventative maintenance to the vehicle when the blast occurred about 15 to 20 meters away on the other side of a wall that shielded us," he said. "It was close; I felt the rush of air and heat from the blast.

"I'm not going to lie, the first thing that I did was kind of froze, thinking, is this real. After a second when we heard the screaming of the wounded, we ran toward them and started performing first aid," the 27-year-old said of his first instincts.

His award recognizes his actions for helping establish a security overwatch and performing life saving aid on a severely wounded Afghan guard. The Middletown, N.Y., native assisted in applying a tourniquet to prevent the guard from bleeding until advance medical treatment was available, and he helped prevent another guard from entering shock.

A member of the West Point contracting office since August 2008, he credits his knowledge and reaction to training he received as part to the Joint Dawn contracting exercise in 2012 at El Paso, Texas.

"They integrated the combat life saver course with the deployment training, and I got to use it," he said. "You never know."

Director helping lead oversight

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

A member of the Mission and Installation Contracting Command here is playing a key role in establishing the financial management oversight of approximately \$4 billion in assistance to the security forces of Afghanistan.

Dr. Betty Harris deployed in December to Kabul, Afghanistan, in support of the financial management oversight division for the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan Programs and Resources.

The National Defense Authorization Act calls for the Defense Department to provide assistance as part of the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund that entails the provision of equipment, supplies, services, training, facility and infrastructure repair, renovation and construction, and funding.

Harris is serving as the audit chief on a one-year tour during which she is setting up a new civilian-led professional internal audit office within the financial management oversight division. Despite a challenge of turnover with minimal overlap, her staff includes DOD civilian audit supervisors and auditors, contract auditors and local national financial management auditors as well as a military auditor.

"We conduct compliance-based audits of pay and contracts the Afghans procure with Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan funds," Harris said. "We socialize, through interpreters, with the Afghans to understand their processes and review documents. This will be a very rewarding experience for us as we will also be able to teach our Afghan auditor

counterparts about auditing and internal controls."

As the director of the MICC Internal Review and Audit Compliance office for the last four years, Harris has been responsible for providing reliable, independent and objective audit, review and consulting to optimize internal control systems and mitigate risks.

Through interpreters, she and her staff work closely with Afghan ministerial officers to conduct numerous audits.

"I respect their customs and wear a head scarf at all meetings I attend," the Atwater, Calif., native said. "At the MICC, I would conduct one audit at a time. Here, I manage five audits at a time in various stages of the audit process."

Conducting business affairs in Afghanistan was a component of training Harris received at Camp Atterbury, near Indianapolis, prior to deploying. Preparation also

included weapons, personal security and mind fitness training. She found scenario-based vignettes to be the most valuable training.

"We were placed in various scenarios with Afghans who recently relocated to the U.S.," she said. "Each scenario was a replica of Afghanistan. They included shopping at a marketplace, attending a meeting with Afghans and seeing suspicious activity when driving in the city."

While there's minimal time outside of work and sleep, she does spend what little free time she has talking with family and friends. And although Harris admits that she misses the convenience of wearing her business suits, dresses, shoes and San Antonio Spurs gear, the certified public accountant must instead turn her attention to personal safety while cleaning her weapon and counting her ammunition.



Courtesy photo

Dr. Betty Harris is deployed as the audit chief in support of the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan Programs and Resources Financial Management Oversight Division in Afghanistan.

Fort Knox HR earns ACC award

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

Contracting members at Fort Knox, Ky., recently earned the Army Contracting Command Outstanding Mission Support Business Operations award.

The MICC-Fort Knox Human Resource Solutions Division was among the 29 individual and four team awards presented by ACC for excellence in acquisition, contracting and small business.

Awards were presented during a ceremony at Fort Bliss, Texas, and covered the period between Oct. 1, 2011, and Sept. 30, 2012.

The MICC team was responsible for managing four Human Resource Solutions Program indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity contract suites valued at more than \$4 billion that provided streamlined acquisition of human resources services for Soldiers and their families as well as supported activities across the Department of Defense. Management and administration of the contracts in support of the HR Solutions Program migrated to MICC-Fort Knox from the National Capital Region Contracting Center in January 2011.

"I'm very excited (about the award) considering we were a new division less than a year old," said Stephanie Bowman, who served as the division chief during the award period.

Bowman said the migration of the workload necessitated standing up the MICC-Fort Knox HR Solutions Division from ground up and



Photo by Dave Shuck

Making up the team that earned the Army Contracting Command Outstanding Mission Support Business Operations award for excellence in contracting were from front left, Monica Clemons, Stephanie Bowman, Cartie Arvin, and from back left, Ray Naraine, Christi McCoy, Sarah Shacklette, Dawn Barnett, Carrie Eastburn, Monika Watkins and Maria Bird.

presented additional challenges of limited resources and the hiring process to fully staff the division.

"I had about half of my staff when we started," she said. "After six or seven months, I was able to hire and fully staff the division."

Movement of the Program Executive Office-Enterprise Information Systems HR Solutions Program from Fort Belvoir, Va., to Fort Knox spelled additional workload for the MICC division. MICC personnel supported the newly relocated program office by assisting with preparing acquisition packages and performing duties beyond their responsibilities to meet customer requirements.

"We worked with requiring activities in defining requirements and then solicited and awarded task orders in support of the various customer missions," Bowman said. "We took the lead during that time period since the division was fully staffed while the HR Solutions Office was working toward full staffing."

Fortunately not lost in the swell

of work was an apparent solution for cost savings. During the award period, the MICC HR Solutions Division achieved an average 33-percent cost savings on 15 task orders awarded in support of the HR Solutions Program that led to more than \$53 million in savings. Bowman attributes the savings to efforts by division members to work directly with the customers in defining requirements and workload to enable award of procurements as fixed price, performance based task orders.

Debbie Ault, the director of MICC-Fort Knox, added that working closely with the co-located PEO-EIS HR Solutions Program helped ensure customer needs were optimally met.

"Army-wide services supported by this suite of contracts include SHARP, victim advocacy and the Army Career Alumni Program," Ault said. "This award recognizes our successful support of the program. We are honored to have been recognized by ACC for our efforts."

KO selected for 3-year fellowship

by Ryan Mattox
MICC Public Affairs Office

A member of the Mission and Installation Contract Command has been selected for the U.S. Army Acquisition Support Center's Competitive Development Group/ Army Acquisition Fellows Program.

Monica Clemons, a contracting officer for the Human Resource Solutions Division at Fort Knox, Ky., was selected for the three-year leadership program that offers competitively

selected individuals expanded leadership training and experience opportunities.

"I hope to gain a better understanding of the Army from a program management perspective

and as a whole by having the opportunity to work at different organizations with different levels of responsibility," Clemons said. "I expect this opportunity will prepare me to seek positions of higher responsibility."

The program's acquisition leader track develops future Army acquisition leaders and provides expanded training, leadership, experiential and other career development opportunities.

Clemons has completed her three-year developmental plan with the assistance of her mentor to include outlining career goals and identifying assignments to help reach those goals.

Her first rotational assignment offers a better understanding of the life cycle process for major

acquisition systems by assisting in the process to reach milestone B for a missile system. A second rotational assignment will give Clemons a chance to expand her experience into major acquisition systems.

"The program is an excellent opportunity to obtain experience in other career fields or expand experiences within your career field," Clemons said. "Leaders must expand their knowledge of other career fields to understand

"Leaders must expand their knowledge of other career fields to understand how decisions they make affect the entire system, and the program is the perfect vehicle to accomplish this goal."

Monica Clemons



how decisions they make affect the entire system, and the program is the perfect vehicle to accomplish this goal.

"Most of my government work experience has been in contracting. I intend to pursue assignments that will take me outside my comfort zone," Clemons said. "My goal is to pursue assignments in the program management career field and become Level III certified in program management by the completion of the program."

She is awaiting to finalize her final assignment that will allow her the opportunity to apply her new experience in a higher headquarters position.

"Having the opportunity to spend some time working at a headquarters office will be an

invaluable experience and will be essential to accomplishing my goal of gaining a better understanding of the Army."

Stephanie Bowman, a contracting officer with the contract management division at MICC-Fort Knox, has worked with Clemons for more than five years. She believes Clemons was selected for this program based on her strong leadership skills demonstrated as a pre-award team leader in her division as well as serving as a

mentor for other pre-award and post-award division members on various aspects of the contracting process.

"I have always encouraged her to seek further career development opportunities and have provided

her with work assignments and projects to expand her contracting knowledge," Bowman said. "She is a dedicated acquisition professional who represents herself and the organization in the highest possible regards and is highly respected by her peers, senior personnel and personnel outside the organization. She willingly accepts high visibility assignments and provides selfless service to her team and the division over and above her position duties."

Bowman added that Clemons personifies a "can-do" attitude and consistently places success of the mission above individual accolades while demonstrating great potential for future leadership opportunities.

FORT BLISS contracting takes TEAM EFFORT



Photos by Ben Gonzales

Melissa Garcia and Staff Sgt. Elijah Felton discuss a contract at Fort Bliss, Texas. Garcia is a contracting officer and Felton is a contracting specialist at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Bliss office.

by Ben Gonzales
MICC Public Affairs Office

In just 12 months, the Mission and Installation Contracting Command transformed from a command performing acquisition support with an additional duty of training the next generation of contracting professionals into an organization providing ready and deployable Soldiers.

A year ago, the MICC was comprised of 1,400 Army civilians and only 30 contracting Soldiers scattered throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Today, more than 350 uniformed members stand among the MICC ranks with the mission of enhancing their contracting skills while working closely with seasoned Army civilians.

The MICC-Fort Bliss office in Texas is the epitome of the military integration across the command. The attachment of Soldiers to MICC offices began last year as Army Contracting Command officials determined to streamline the span of control of Soldiers stateside while

enhancing their professional development, and the MICC-Fort Bliss staff as well as other MICC offices welcomed the new members with open arms.

One of the first people new contracting Soldiers meet at MICC-Fort Bliss is Melissa Garcia. Garcia, a contracting officer with more than nine years experience and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Texas El Paso, works in the simplified acquisition division.

She said many of the 13 incoming contracting Soldiers assigned to Fort Bliss in the past year arrived after completing basic contracting courses, but several had not attended school yet.

“It is great to have them join our team. We embrace them and work with them on the cultural change of the contracting world,” Garcia said. “We give them on-the-job training and go over the basics of contracting, so beginning in the simplified acquisition division is the logical first step for our new Soldiers.”

Leading the MICC-Fort Bliss team is Lt.

Col. Joel Greer. Also serving as the 919th Contingency Contracting Battalion commander, Greer’s mission is to support the contracting needs of Fort Bliss as well as to prepare his Soldiers to be fully trained to deploy into any contingency environment. With 18 Soldiers on the staff and four more inbound, Greer empowered Garcia and the eight other members of the simplified acquisition division to mentor new MICC-Fort Bliss Soldiers.

It is important to integrate new Soldiers at the right level of contracting, and the simplified acquisition division is the best place to learn the basics before moving into more complex contracting procedures, Greer said.

“Melissa just doesn’t tell them what to do, she sits, listens and talks to our Soldiers,” he added. “The Soldiers respect her because she established a solid foundation for Soldiers to take on greater responsibility.”

New MICC-Fort Bliss contracting professionals go through an accelerated training development course leveraged to maximize

the amount of hands-on learning as well as to expose new members to as much of the acquisition process as possible. New contracting members learn as much as they can while supporting the 30,000 Soldiers and their families assigned to Fort Bliss. Home to the 1st Armored Division and 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Fort Bliss is the second largest installation in the Army. In fiscal 2013, the MICC-Fort Bliss obligated more than \$150 million on more than 2,000 contracting actions for the post.

It is important for Soldiers to learn as much as they can, because when the nation calls on them to deploy they will need to be trained and ready, Garcia said.

“The last thing I want them to worry about is that they do not know how to do contracting right when they are in harm’s way,” she said. “We need to give them every tool in our toolbox so they can have it all and know as much as they can as soon as they can.”

When it comes to mentoring new Soldiers in



Hester Stone and Ed Byrd review requirements at Fort Bliss, Texas. Stone is a contracting officer for the post-award division and Byrd is a contract specialist for the pre-award division at the MICC-Fort Bliss contracting office.

her division, Garcia said she relies more on her time when she learned from her mentors: Jeff Parsons and Dr. Carol Lowman, who both are former ACC executive directors with whom she spent six months during a professional developmental course at Fort Belvoir, Va.

“I’ve been blessed with great mentors,” Garcia said. “It is a big part of my success. It is still important to keep in touch because there are times when everyone needs a sanity check on how they are performing, and talking to my mentors definitely helps.”

Training new contracting members takes a team effort. No other entity in the Army can provide the contracting training to Soldiers than the seasoned MICC workforce. Across the command and at MICC-Fort Bliss, seasoned Army civilians like Natalia Lerma work side by side with Soldiers.

“We all share our knowledge and work

together,” said Lerma, a MICC-Fort Bliss contracting specialist for three years. “Because we sit right next to contracting Soldiers we can always mentor them whenever they have a question while providing on-the-job training at any given moment. We are never too busy to answer their questions, because we remember what it is like to start a career in contracting. There really is a family environment here.”

One of the newest Soldiers under Garcia’s tutelage is Staff Sgt. Elijah Felton. He came to MICC-Fort Bliss in May 2013 after completing the Mission Readiness Airman Contracting Apprentice Course at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. After serving as a truck driver for eight years, Felton became interested in contracting and cross trained into the career field to help Soldiers get what they need.

“There is always something new to learn every



Natalia Lerma and Staff Sgt. David Timmons go over a purchase request at Fort Bliss, Texas. Lerma and Timmons are contracting specialists at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Bliss office.

day,” Felton said. “It is great to have Melissa and others in the office to take tasks step by step. Civilians here have an abundance of knowledge, and they willingly pass that on to us. Civilian mentors not only take the time to help us learn contracting but also make us feel like a part of the family by helping us get settled into the area and truly care about my family.”

Preparing Soldiers for their contracting roles is not the only thing Garcia does. She also took time recently with officials from FedBid, Inc., to improve business processes for the entire MICC. FedBid is an online marketplace to help federal businesses purchase simple goods and services. By using FedBid, MICC members can help customers save money by using reverse auctions. Garcia recently spoke with FedBid officials to initiate customer surveys to promote communication and to request FedBid to filter data to show trends that could enable

MICC to see potential savings. Last fiscal year, MICC members saved more than \$18 million for customers using reverse auctioning, and the prospective for more savings is possible with modifications to the acquisition process prescribed by Garcia.

“For our command to be successful, we need our Soldiers and Army civilians working seamlessly together focused on completing the acquisition mission for our customers,” said Col. Bob Brinkmann, the MICC chief of staff. “MICC-Fort Bliss is leading the way in developing our new contracting Soldiers while consistently meeting the acquisition demands of their customers on Fort Bliss.”

As a newly-formed staff, the MICC-Fort Bliss Soldiers and Army civilians have built a team that is trained and ready for whatever the future holds while continuing to provide responsive contracting solutions for the installation.

Policy, guidance set path for GPC Program success

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

The key for running a successful Government Purchase Card Program boils down one simple formula – following the rules.

As the lead agency organizational program coordinator for the GPC Program at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., Robert Faux and his alternate program coordinators are responsible for managing more than 1,250 GPC accounts for cardholders and billing officials at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-JBLM.

“I follow the MICC guidance to the letter. If an account is not certified within the five business days, or it has an overdue payment, I have the director’s support to suspend it as necessary,” he said. “It’s not done as an inconvenience to customers, but it gets the resource manager and billing officials involved with the payment process to ensure the accounts are paid.”

The GPC program allows individuals at the lowest level of government organizations and agencies greater efficiency in the procurement of commercial goods and services from merchants.

The nature of the joint base expands the diverse number of missions and GPC customers for Faux. Among the customers are the 62nd Airlift Wing, 446th Airlift Wing, Forces Command, Installation Management Command, Special Forces, ROTC and Junior ROTC.

Identified as a best practice

and for outstanding program management on a recent contract management review by the MICC, officials recognized the daily review process implemented by Faux to help manage the MICC-JBLM GPC program.

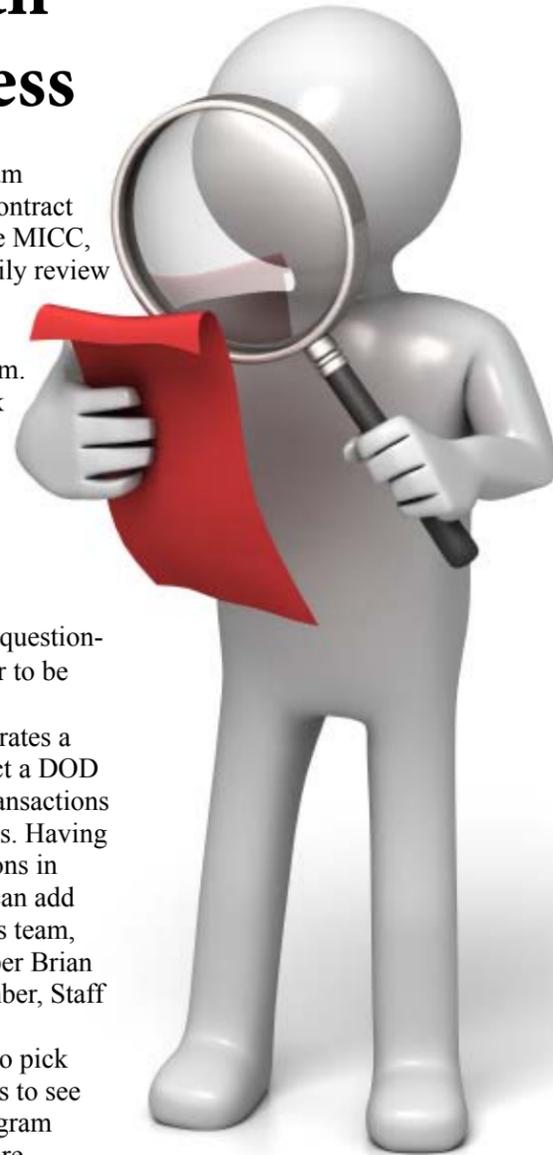
“The purpose is to check for compliance with (Department of Defense), Army and MICC GPC policies,” he said. “I run a daily list of transactions posted to cardholder accounts and flag those to questionable vendors or that appear to be split purchases.”

Additionally, he incorporates a program to randomly select a DOD standard of 6 percent of transactions for audit by billing officials. Having managed 56,356 transactions in fiscal 2013, audit actions can add up rapidly for Faux and his team, including long-time member Brian Selck and the newest member, Staff Sgt. Nathan Shelton.

“The main intent is not to pick on people,” Faux said. “It’s to see where we are with the program and make sure purchases are within regulations and have the correct paperwork. If an issue is discovered, we can nip it in the bud.”

He said suspensions are rare since he has a good working relationship with resource managers and informs them immediately if he spots any potential issues that may lead an account to become delinquent. It is that approach that allows the GPC team to maintain a delinquency rate of less than 1 percent.

“You have to be proactive versus reactive. Between regulations and MICC guidance, we have the tools



to get things done,” Faux said. “If you see a trend, take care of it before it becomes an issue that blooms out of control.”

His program management and efficiency also allows the contracting office to maximize its GPC rebates. In fiscal 2013, GPC program transactions totaled more than \$41.8 million, which generated \$510,551 in rebates returned to MICC customers at JBLM to fund additional mission priorities. Thus far in fiscal 2014, Faux has managed more than \$10.7 million in transactions.

Our response often determines outlook

by Ben Gonzales
MICC Public Affairs Office

March held many twists and turns. There were challenges that appeared impossible to accomplish and obstacles that seemed insurmountable. And there were opportunities available that were never there before.

All these challenges caused me to pause and reflect on what is important, and what I should do about them.

The first thing I did was notice the commanding general’s leadership philosophy sitting on my desk. In his letter, Brig. Gen. Jeff Gabbert says, “I expect us all to take care of our families, seek professional development opportunities and enjoy the rewarding opportunities this command offers. I also believe that taking time to enjoy life and all of the wonderful opportunities we have is important.”

The weekend after I re-read the leadership philosophy, I received the news about Air Force Maj. Gen. A.J. Stewart. The former Air Force Personnel Center commander passed away in early March after fighting brain cancer. Although I never worked for him, I heard him give a Veterans Day speech in 2011. Here was a man at the top of his game: avid biker, pilot,



Photo by John Hancock

Ben Gonzales, left, was an honorary caddie for pro golfer Ernie Els at the Valero Texas Open March 26.

personable, dynamic speaker, energetic and well liked by his staff.

After more than 30 years of service, Stewart was informed in 2012 he had stage IV brain cancer. Instead of sulking and withdrawing, he fought on and went public with his battle. In a March 2012 editorial, he reminded us that life is short and precious.

Despite knowing that brain tumors can be fatal, Stewart said, “Be positive. You have to fight a challenge like you intend to win. Leave negative thoughts behind and be ready to endure. Run your race like a winner. Attitude may be the number one component of success.”

More than 1,500 people showed up to say goodbye to the general, and walked away with the memories of the way he lived life to the fullest.

Another valuable life lesson came from South African Ernie Els, whom I met as a guest caddie for a day at the Valero Texas Open. Watching pro golfers warm up on the driving range was inspiring. Their swings were mechanical: with such precision and power. On television, some people appear to be larger than life, superhuman and unapproachable; however, Els was personable, friendly, deserving of his nickname “The Big Easy” at 6 feet 3 inches tall with a demeanor as smooth as his flowing golf swing.

Humble with a gentle soul, the former No. 1 player in the world gladly welcomed me as his honorary caddie for the afternoon. Els said he used the practice round of golf “to work on my greens and lines.” I acted like I understood what he was talking about, but just between me and you, I had no idea what he and his real caddie were saying when they huddled together before each shot. It was as if they were speaking a numerical language in British accents that only they understood. I must admit that I was in awe as he took time to sign autographs and talk to every person who stopped him along the course.

When I asked Els about the game of golf, he said it is really like life.

“You can only take it one step at a time,” Els said. “I like to play it one (stroke) at a time while planning for the entire course. And you really have to have a short memory. You cannot dwell on the negatives. You have to stay positive and know that the game and life is better up ahead.”

Looking back, these three gentlemen all shared the same message: we need to have a positive outlook on life. Learning from these leaders, it is important to remember to enjoy life and maintain a positive attitude no matter what obstacles are ahead of us.