

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

PRESENTATION TO THE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SUBJECT: OVERALL STATE OF THE AIR FORCE ACQUISITION  
WORKFORCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF RELATED  
PROVISIONS

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MILITARY DEPUTY TO THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF  
THE AIR FORCE (ACQUISITION)

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Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to address this subcommittee and to discuss the work the Department of the Air Force is doing to improve the capacity and capabilities of our acquisition workforce. I am confident that the actions the Department has on-going and those planned through the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) will improve the Department's ability to effectively execute the acquisition mission. I would like to take a few moments to touch on several of these efforts.

In October 2008, Air Force leadership identified recapturing *Acquisition Excellence* as one of the five top priorities that will shape Air Force-wide actions over the next three to five years, addressing actions that strengthen people, processes, and policy. Developing, recapitalizing, and shaping our professional acquisition workforce is integral to acquisition excellence. To guide our efforts to achieve this vision, we partnered with Air Force acquisition functional leaders and the acquisition commands to develop an Air Force Human Capital Strategic Plan for the acquisition workforce, which was published in February of this year.

This plan establishes a strategic vision for a professional acquisition workforce with the right number and the right mix of people with the right education, training, skills and experience to effectively and successfully perform the Air Force acquisition mission. We believe it is an excellent roadmap for guiding workforce development in support of *Acquisition Excellence*.

Sizing acquisition manpower to program requirements is the first goal of our Human Capital Strategic Plan. In the fall of 2008, the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition directed the Air Force Program Executive Officers to reexamine

and provide acquisition workforce requirements for our product centers. After review by the Air Staff and Air Force Corporate Structure, the Air Force validated 2,062 acquisition workforce positions, comprised of 1,804 civilian, 247 officer and 11 enlisted positions. Our next step is to assess additional acquisition manpower needs at the Air Logistics Centers. Finally, we have identified over 900 contractor positions for conversion to civilian acquisition positions, to include acquisition managers, systems engineers, contracts experts, cost and pricing analysts and others. This conversion effort started in early FY09 and will continue through FY13. To help guide our strategic planning, we've completed a RAND study of Air Force cost estimators, and have undertaken reviews of price analysts and future engineering requirements.

For the long-term, we are working with Air Force manpower experts, building on lessons learned from our first-generation acquisition manpower model, to develop a family of objective-based, workload-driven manpower models that define and validate the manpower requirements needed to efficiently launch and manage a weapon system program. When completed, the Acquisition and Sustainment Unit (ASU) Manpower Models will give us the ability to quantify the manpower resources needed for new, existing and/or changing missions. We expect to have several of these models available for use by the FY12 Program Objective Memorandum (POM).

Our strategic plan also includes a focus on initiatives to attract, select, develop and foster talent with the competencies we need to do the current and future acquisition mission. It establishes a competency management framework to support hiring and succession planning as well as initiatives to identify required critical skills, replenish the workforce, advance workforce development and foster knowledge transfer. To

accomplish these objectives, the Air Force is making full use of the Acquisition Workforce Development Fund established under FY08 NDAA Section 852.

Section 852 funding has enabled us to jump start hiring today while we work through the corporate process to establish permanent civilian and military authorizations for a larger workforce, sized to meet program requirements. Based on needs gathered from the Air Force acquisition community, our FY 2009 Section 852 hiring targets include over 300 additional interns, at least 130 additional participants in the Student Career Experience Program and at least 330 experienced journey-level overhires. We distributed the first allocated Section 852 funds to Air Force acquisition commands in mid-January and our product, logistics, R&D and test centers are hard at work recruiting and hiring using these resources.

With regard to hiring authorities, the Air Force re-delegated the use of Expedited Hiring Authority (EHA), as authorized in NDAA 2009, to our installation commanders and other appointing authorities. Next, the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) disseminated implementation guidance, posted the requisite public notices and held a web cast with Air Force Human Resource offices. We have established streamlined hiring processes in support of EHA for all acquisition functional positions at the mid and senior level positions (NSPS pay band 2 & 3). The AF goal is to fill positions within one pay period after receipt of the request for personnel action (RPA). Compared to what had been a months-long process, this is a notable improvement and enables us to hire highly qualified individuals quickly. We continue to use individual and open continuous internal and external vacancy announcements to attract internal Air Force candidates,

other current Federal employees, Veterans, and other noncompetitive appointment eligibles.

The Air Force is using a corporate recruitment strategy targeted to ensure the right talent applies for available acquisition positions. We've partnered with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Air Force Personnel Center to create an employment brand, recruitment materials and website; to create concise, easily understood, and user-friendly vacancy announcements and streamlined assessments and certification for our featured vacancies. We've established strategic recruiters at each Acquisition Center, who, in conjunction with their senior acquisition functionals, have overall responsibility for local recruitment plans, activities and events to target highly qualified candidates. We're seeking diverse quality talent using external recruitment sources tailored to the types and levels of the positions. This includes searching for qualified job seekers through professional and community outreach to professional organizations, alumni associations, career building organizations, professional conferences, non-federal employment sites, job fairs, contractor-to-civilian conversions, transition centers for separating and retired military, employment agencies, and employee referrals. We're using the full range of recruitment flexibilities to include recruitment and relocation incentives, student loan repayment, work-life programs such as alternate work schedules, transportation subsidies, fitness programs, and tuition assistance along with available pay setting flexibilities.

We are also investing more in the people we have. Our Human Capital Strategic Plan outlines four major objectives to increase the effectiveness of the workforce: identify and address training gaps; train people before they are assigned to positions of

higher responsibility; emphasize professional currency; and revitalize position qualification and tenure management. Here again, we're leveraging the Acquisition Workforce Development Fund established under Section 852 to address training capacity shortfalls, including sending more civilians to acquisition initial skills courses and increasing seats in other courses we believe can help improve acquisition outcomes. We've also been working closely with Defense Acquisition University to focus their use of the Fund on high priority Air Force training needs.

Section 834 of NDAA 2009 directs the Department of Defense to report on three objectives regarding military acquisition career paths, command positions, and contingency contracting. The Air Force has a deliberate and well defined strategy for addressing these objectives and for paving the way forward for the acquisition workforce of today and the foreseeable future.

The Air Force deliberately develops acquisition professionals according to well defined career path models which serve as a guide for developing both military officers and civilians through assignments, education, and training. These career models define career paths to greater rank and responsibility within the acquisition workforce. The development of acquisition workforce members is enhanced by the use of Career Field Development Teams consisting of senior leadership from within each Career Field. Using the published acquisition career path models as a guide, the Acquisition Development Teams provide each individual developmental guidance "vectoring" them on paths of progression and opportunity in the acquisition workforce. The DTs also nominate officers and civilians for service schools (developmental education), and identify military candidates for command leadership positions within the acquisition

workforce. The Air Force has also established career field management and force development functional responsibility at the Headquarters Air Staff level to provide strategic direction to the career fields, and oversight of the Developmental Team process.

The Air Force relies on a large pool of military contracting officers in order to meet Air Force and a fair share of joint, contingency contracting deployments. Today the Air Force maintains the Department of Defense's largest deployable contracting force and is filling the bulk of the contingency contracting and contract administration deployment requirements in Iraq and Afghanistan. The current operations tempo generated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has made the contracting career field one of the most deployed career fields in the Air Force. Air Force leadership recognizes the threat the current ops tempo poses to the retention of the contracting force and has initiated numerous efforts to ensure the workforce remains the backbone of the contingency contracting mission. One of the recent efforts is to evaluate the need for a Critical Skills Retention Bonus for contracting officers in targeted year groups and ranks/grades. This effort has been underway for some time and, pending OSD and corporate Air Force approval, is targeted to formally roll out in the 2009 fiscal year.

The Air Force acquisition workforce also has a contingent of enlisted personnel within the contracting career field. These Airmen serve in key positions throughout the Air Force in the operational and contingency contracting communities and are also developed in concert with the needs of the Air Force. The development of this invaluable resource is addressed both within the enlisted force and within the contracting community to ensure the right quality and numbers of contracting NCOs are retained for the Air Force contracting mission.

In November 2004, the Air Force initiated an unprecedented change in the acquisition organizational structure within the Acquisition and Logistics centers. The centers were reorganized into a Wing-Group-Squadron structure to align with the organizational constructs employed by Air Force operational units. The result of this restructuring has provided numerous command opportunities that were not previously available to the acquisition workforce. We are currently reviewing this structure to ensure that it is properly aligned and sized to meet warfighter needs.

The Air Force codes and tracks all General Officer billets in the acquisition workforce for use in development and succession planning, and to ensure the best qualified leaders are identified to fill these key leadership positions. The Air Force currently has 20 General Officer acquisition billets, and 27 acquisition-qualified General Officers including 1 contracting-qualified General Officer. At this time, the 6 senior Contracting positions in the Air Force are Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. The Air Force most senior leadership continually reviews General Officer requirements against our General Officer authorizations to ensure the number of General Officer billets in acquisition continue to be properly balanced with total Air Force requirements.

The Department of the Air Force is fully committed to Acquisition Excellence and appreciates the efforts of the Congress to considerably improve our ability to develop and recapitalize our acquisition workforce. We are aggressively using the authorities and resources provided in legislation – they are key enablers for our workforce strategic plan.