



U.S. Army Mission and Installation Contracting Command

Daniel P. Elkins

Public Affairs Office

Daniel P. Elkins is the deputy director for the Mission and Installation Contracting Command Office of Public and Congressional Affairs at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The MICC, a subordinate command to the U.S. Army Contracting Command, provides Army commands, installations and activities with responsive contracting solutions and oversight through more than 1,500 Soldiers and Army civilians at three brigades, one field directorate office and about 35 field-level contracting offices located throughout the nation.



The MICC Office of Public and Congressional Affairs develops and provides public and Congressional affairs policy guidance for MICC leaders, and conducts active public information, community outreach and media relations programs to inform and educate the public, internal audience, industry and Congress about the command's people and mission. The office aims to increase the understanding and support for the MICC's operational contract support mission and its people through transparent communications to its key stakeholders.

Prior to arriving at the MICC, he served at the Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, where he was responsible for planning and executing strategic public affairs communications for the Air Force Manpower Agency, Air Force Services Agency and personnel center in support of more than 450,000 personnel.

Mr. Elkins held a variety of positions of increasing responsibility as a career public affairs professional on active duty and as a federal civil servant over the last 27 years. Those include the full spectrum of public affairs duties including writing, photography, civic outreach, media relations, local and national advertising, crisis communications and Congressional affairs. He is a published author with advertorials appearing in the New England Journal of Medicine and National Jurist as well as news and technical writings at the Air Force and Army levels and in the Army AL&T Magazine.

His advanced education includes a Master of Science in Communications from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, and the DOD Joint Course in Communications at Oklahoma University in Norman, Oklahoma. He also possesses a Bachelor of Arts in Communications from Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, Louisiana, and has completed the Office of Personnel Management Seminar for New Managers: Leading People.



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MEMORANDUM FOR Office of Public and Congressional Affairs, Army Contracting Command ATTN: Larry McCaskill, PAO, 3334A Redstone Arsenal, AL 35898

SUBJECT: Nomination of Daniel P. Elkins for Keith L. Ware Journalist of the Year

1. I take great pride in nominating Daniel P. Elkins as the Moss-Holland Civilian Print Journalist of the Year as part of the MG Keith L. Ware Public Affairs Competition. He is a consummate journalist whose awards span a 27-year federal career and is an exemplary government communicator for MICC at Joint Base San Antonio-Fort Sam Houston, Texas.
2. Mr. Elkins has been recognized for writing at the DOD, Air Force and Army Materiel Command levels. As the lead writer for the Command, his recent awards include being named the best news feature writer for the Army Contracting Command in 2012, and he is a regular contributor to ACC Today, which earned 1st Place honors for the Army Materiel Command Keith L. Ware awards competition.
3. He is the go-to communicator for tackling the MICC leadership's priorities from a strategic approach with the execution of print journalism tactics in support of Soldiers joining the acquisition career field and organizational realignment. The level of commitment, integrity and self-motivation demonstrated by Mr. Elkins in his personal, professional and academic achievements illustrate his strong character, maturity and ethical values.
4. Mr. Elkins' role in telling the Army acquisition story demands a level of research and technical understanding necessary to communicate to multiple audience types. His efforts in educating the public and leaders across the Army serve to foster superior relations and support for the Command's programs and policies. He is highly respected for his willingness to get the job done, a valuable member of our organization and deserving of this recognition.
5. I can be reached at (210) 466-9221 or benito.gonzales3.civ@mail.mil.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Gonzales", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Ben Gonzales
Director, Office of Public and Congressional Affairs

Accountability begins, ends with you

by **Daniel P. Elkins**
MICC Public Affairs Office

Stressing accountability among an organization's workforce is challenging regardless of the business setting. Whether you're employed by the government or private sector, holding employees accountable is a necessary practice if objectives and goals are to be met.

Although an increasing value in corporate and military cultures, accountability can sometimes strike fear in some when it comes to performance appraisals and evaluations. However, it's neither intended to be nor should it take on the tone of a threat, even in the context of a joke.

You don't have to look much further than the Mission and Installation Contracting Command vision to find the very essence of the meaning: "We do the right thing every day and are known as the Army's premier contracting organization."

Accountability is also foundational in the command's metrics that drive contracting operations.

A fundamental understanding of accountability by those in uniform or who serve the nation as civil servants begins by having taken an oath. Service members and federal employees are compelled by the public trust of the American people to do the right thing.

Members of the Army acquisition workforce and those who support acquisition professionals at the MICC must be accountable in order to successfully execute the acquisition mission that equips, protects and prepares Soldiers for the mission. It begins with performing the duties with which you are charged, on

time and with the highest degree of quality possible.

This couldn't be more critical in the acquisition community, where the execution and management of complex acquisitions necessitate meticulous planning in order to meet milestones in a timely manner. Errors and delays have real and compounding consequences for mission partners when it comes to their budgets, equipment and training, particularly given this environment of fiscal constraints.

Leaders and supervisors at every level are ultimately responsible for accountability. The MICC commanding general, Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Gabbert, often communicates to the workforce that the MICC is a team of teams.

From the battalion and contracting office levels to the brigade and field directorate office level, teams of contracting professionals and those who support them synchronize their efforts with the command headquarters to be accountable to supported activities across the DOD. The final weeks, days and hours of each fiscal year spent in a frenzy to execute contract actions for our customers best demonstrates this team-of-teams approach, each accountable to do the things they say they're going to do.

Pitfalls will remain. Whether at the end of a fiscal year or the start of a new one, a reliance on external systems tied to the acquisition process can pose a host of substantial hurdles. However, accountability begins and ends with each of us. Involving your chain of command, customers and other stakeholders in the process can often make a difference and benefit the outcome.

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 guidelines and participant 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

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Command Sgt. Maj. Stephen Bowens



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

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

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

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.

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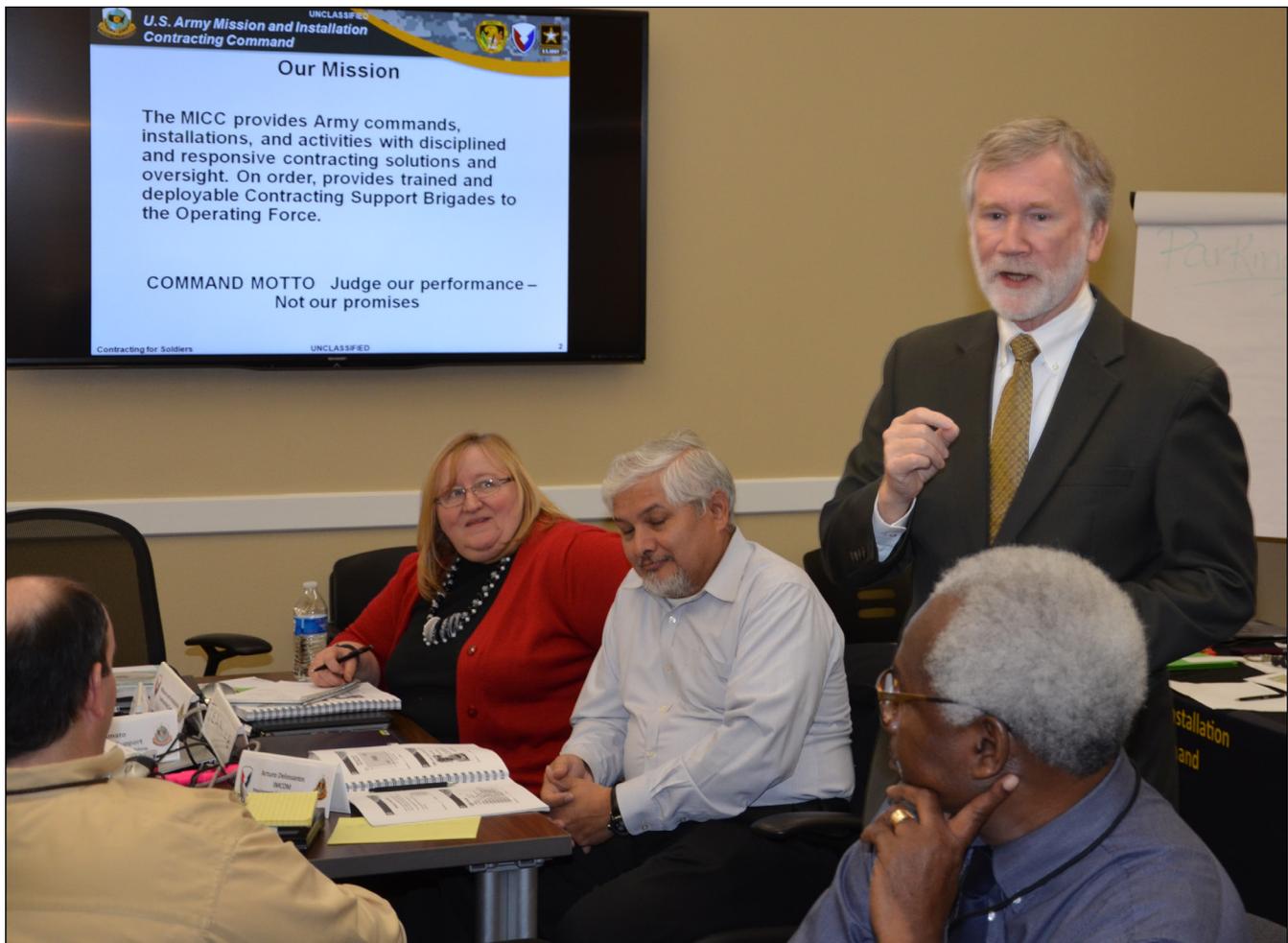


Photo by Ben Gonzales

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.

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“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.

Members lead MICC reverse auction

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

Two Mission and Installation Contracting Command members are among the many who helped champion more than \$21.8 million in savings for the Army in fiscal 2013 through reverse auctioning.

Reverse auctioning allows Army requirements to be solicited online through a fully automated process offering greater efficiencies for both MICC customers and contracting personnel in a fiscally challenging environment.

Laura Cannady, a contracting officer with the 900th Contingency Contracting Battalion at Fort Bragg, N.C., led the MICC and Army Contracting Command by saving her Army Reserve Command customers more than \$2.3 million through reverse auctions last fiscal year.

Topping the list of MICC members with the most actions awarded through reverse auction in fiscal 2013 with 68 was Marvene Falgout, a contract specialist responsible primarily for purchasing at Fort Stewart, Ga.

A rewrite of the Federal Acquisition Regulation in 1997 removed the prohibition of auctions and paved the way for the Department of Defense to establish reverse auctioning as an option in the sourcing process over the next few years. Employed sparingly throughout the Army, it was not until August 2012 that a command policy memorandum made its use mandatory by members of the MICC, according to Kimberly Drake, the chief of the MICC Policy and Acquisition Training Division.

The policy directed the use of

reverse auctions for all acquisitions above micro-purchase thresholds defined in the Federal Acquisition Regulation when competitively purchasing commercial supplies and services in a specific number of product and service codes. Those include information technology, furniture, clothing and individual equipment, office supplies, construction and building materials, training aids, and utilities and housekeeping services. A complete list of relevant product and service codes can be found in the MICC Desk Book, available on the MICC SharePoint site.

Recognizing the benefit of savings that allowed Army organizations to reallocate their monies toward other mission priorities, ACC followed suit and issued similar policy in February 2013.

Cannady, a member of the contracts management division, said she was able to leverage the use of reverse auction with an Army Reserve requirement for the procurement of laptops and peripherals. She said organizations whose requirements fall under North American Industry Classification System Code 334111, Electronic Computer Manufacturing, stand to realize greater savings through reverse auction regardless of being restricted to the Army's Computer Hardware, Enterprise Software and Solutions program as a contracting vehicle.

"Contractors actively compete against each other's prices in order to obtain the contract, which resulted in ... very competitive prices that may not have been realized through another procurement method," she said.

Falgout said familiarity and buy-in of the process by MICC

customers is critical. A majority of her awards did not fall in to any particular product code, but she said the education element involved with convincing her customers that reverse auctioning is the best sourcing avenue for supply items made believers of them.

"At first they were hesitant about vendors who could not perform or deliver the products they needed, but 98 percent of the time they get just what they asked for," said Falgout, "and they actually wind up spending less."

Reverse auction requirements are similar to conventional contract vehicles but instead are conducted online and rely on interactive bids during a defined period. Similar to private, personal auction sites, a number of bids may be made over the course of the auction window, each disclosed to other bidders. This



nature typically achieves greater savings as the bidding process generates increased competition and allows the requirement to be awarded to the lowest bidder so long as they meet a pre-award survey and review.

After careful review of customer requirements, Cannady recommends the use of reverse auctioning to take advantage of its efficiencies in the speed of the solicitation by minimizing the need to contact individual vendors for quotes, and reduction in the acquisition timeline to five days or fewer.

“My peers have expressed satisfaction with the benefits of the reverse auction process, and we have all benefited from the clone feature that saves time by allowing you to clone a similar purchase then tailor to the specific needs of the requirement,” Cannady said.

Reverse auctioning has an added benefit of documentation for audit

integrity, which Cannady found helpful in avoiding a potential protest regarding a discrepancy in the closing time.

“After receiving complaints from some of the offerors, we were able to obtain a detailed report regarding rejected offers submitted and were able to successfully avoid any formal complaints,” she said.

Falgout agrees the process maintains the integrity of contracting process as her market research extends beyond the

bidding process and includes examining vendors, online product availability and any documents attached to the bid.

The \$21 million saved through reverse auctions was part of more than \$852 million in overall savings by the MICC in fiscal 2013. Contracting professionals throughout the command achieved the savings through contract negotiations, reverse auctioning and Government Purchase Card Program rebates.



Photo by John Dunivan



Photo by Carrie Nelson

Laura Cannady, above, and Marvene Falgout led the Mission and Installation Contracting Command in savings and awards, respectively, through reverse auctions in fiscal 2013.

MICC executes \$5.6B in fiscal 2014 contracts

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

Contracting professionals from throughout the Mission and Installation Contracting Command worked until the final hours of Sept. 30 to bring fiscal 2014 to a close having executed approximately 37,000 contract actions valued at almost \$5.6 billion in support of Army commands, installations and activities across the DOD.

Contract awards made to small businesses across America accounted for almost \$2.4 billion of that total. The command also managed more than 633,000 Government Purchase Card Program transactions in fiscal 2014 valued at an additional \$783 million.

“What the numbers don’t show are the long hours, selfless sacrifices and superior dedication it takes from our team of professionals to accomplish our mission,” said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Gabbert, the MICC commanding general. “Fiscal 2014 was a tremendous success for the MICC, and I’m confident that our team will continue to do great things for our Soldiers, their families and the Army this fiscal year.”

Almost half of the \$2.4 billion in contracts awarded to small businesses came in final quarter of the fiscal year, following an extensive outreach effort by MICC small business specialists across the command in June and July.

“The tremendous effort put forth by our small business specialists was a major contributor in the MICC exceeding its small business goal for the second year in a row,” said Mark Massie, the

MICC Small Business Programs associate director here. “The MICC’s acquisition forecast open house events were a total success in providing transparency to industry and giving them the information needed to pursue future opportunities. This was evident in the MICC surpassing four of five small business goals, a first since fiscal 2010.”

The command achieved 48 percent against an overall small-business goal of 45.8 percent for fiscal 2014. That included contracts executed in the remaining four small-business socioeconomic categories:

- Small disadvantaged business, \$1.339 billion;
- Small disadvantaged business, \$1.339 billion;
- Service-disabled veteran-owned small business, \$477 million;
- Woman-owned small business, \$462 million; and
- Historically underutilized business zone small business, \$314 million.

Although efforts in meeting the HUBZone small-business goal fell short, Massie said the value of contracts awarded during fiscal 2014 in that socioeconomic category exceeded the previous year by more than \$35 million.

The \$5.6 billion in contract actions awarded command-wide in fiscal 2014 is approximately \$300 million greater than the previous fiscal year. Pat Hogston, the director of contract support integration at the MICC, said this reflects a return to stable spending after the impact of sequestration and operational budget cuts. Contracts executed by the MICC totaled \$7 billion and 6.3 billion in fiscal 2011 and 2012, respectively.

Command welcomes 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 in August.

Col. Dennis McGowan is responsible for providing oversight, supervision and quality control of staff actions,



McGowan

personnel, training, operations, building management, public affairs and protocol support within MICC headquarters.

McGowan moves into the position after spending the past year studying at the Eisenhower School for National Security and Resource Strategy in Washington. Prior to that, he served as the executive officer for the deputy assistant secretary of the Army for procurement.

McGowan enlisted in the Army in 1989, training in Infantry and Airborne. He was commissioned in the Engineer Corps in 1993.

He has more than 12 years experience in the Army Acquisition Corps and is Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act Level III certified in contracting. His acquisition assignments include command of the 905th Contingency Contracting Battalion, which included deployments to Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

CTOC: Be im

by Daniel P. Elkins
MICC Public Affairs Office

The development of a database application by contracting experts and their stakeholders at Fort Belvoir, Va., is yielding greater customer support and buy-in while also addressing key capability gaps in managing contracting operations.

The Contracting Tactical Operations Center application was designed to provide online, real-time procurement insight to address the challenges of a geographically dispersed command, acquisition training, managerial capabilities and resourcing levels at Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Belvoir.

Lt. Col. Maria Schneider, the commander of MICC-Fort Belvoir, said managing those processes was previously limited by antiquated workload tracking methods, redundant data entry, significant resourcing gaps and training shortfalls. She added that the legacy approach was extremely labor intensive and time-consuming with minimal return on investment, resulting in inefficient operations, unnecessary stressors on the already strained workforce, and diminished customer service to supported activities.

“We sought a no-cost solution to mitigate shortfalls and morph data into actionable information that could be accessed readily from multiple locations without network issues, while providing greater visibility, promoting individual accountability and truly managing performance,” Schneider said.

CTOC provides visual aids, inclusive of varied organizational perspectives, in order to provide increased situational awareness of procurement actions throughout their respective life cycle. It also aides in defining workload priorities, properly allocating resources, while emphasizing organizational and individual accountability and risk assessment.

Schneider gained buy-in with an integrated project

team approach that included representatives from the contracting workforce, resource managers and supported activities to identify information important to each. The Phase I development effort focused on managing acquisition planning, pre-award execution and obligation rates.

“The value is not in the data collection but in the data output. We’ve managed to bridge the gap



Lt. Col. Maria Schneider and Jerry Harvey review contract actions in Dec. 12 at Fort Belvoir, Va.

Ivoir database offers improved contracting support

between collecting data and providing online, real-time actionable information,” said Jerry Harvey, who helped lead the effort. “We have more than 12,000 discrete searchable comments attached to fiscal 2013 procurement actions. These comments have been invaluable in telling the story. The general business rule of ‘capture what you did today with your procurement’ has freed up valuable work time for contracting

specialists and enabled managers to review daily actions on their time.”

The team leveraged an existing Army Materiel Command software used for task management and assigned a project lead to work through the tracking of data feeds, creation of data elements, establishment of business rules, concurrent beta-testing and follow-on maintenance and revision.

Schneider said CTOC helps mitigate a variety of capability gaps at MICC-Fort Belvoir. Those include identifying and analyzing trends in the submission of complete acquisition packets to enable tailored training for supported activities; ensuring connectivity between various systems associated with the generation of a purchase request; and improving management workload visibility throughout the entire procurement life cycle to allow greater flexibility to respond to unforeseen conditions. CTOC can also help increase accountability for all parties to enable prioritization and root cause analysis; centrally track non-database items; expand the record of communications associated with the procurement action; and automate the use of toolkits and other oversight checklists into daily operations capable of conducting queries to develop a tailored training program for the workforce.

“CTOC helps underscore the relevance of the command to our supported activities by leveraging already existing Standard Procurement System data to do our jobs better,” said Brig. Gen. Jeffrey Gabbert, the MICC commanding general, who recently reviewed the capabilities of the database. “Best practices such as this should be shared with other directors and leaders throughout the organization.”

Developers of CTOC are now engaged in a Phase II effort focused on incorporating various elements of post-award contract administration with a desired end state of offering local installation leaders a visually enhanced dashboard of information on open procurement actions, spending trends, proactive post-award administration and a snapshot of legacy and current close-out actions at their fingertips.



Photo by Andrew Marion

the Contracting Tactical Operations Center database application