

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT**

**OF**

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CHIEF OF ENGINEERS  
U. S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMISSION ON WARTIME CONTRACTING IN IRAQ AND  
AFGHANISTAN**

**ON**

**THE CONTINGENCY ACQUISITION WORKFORCE:  
WHAT IS NEEDED AND HOW DO WE GET THERE?**

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

Chairman Shays, Chairman Thibault, Commissioners, good morning. I am Lieutenant General Robert Van Antwerp, Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). I appreciate the opportunity to come before you to discuss the Corps of Engineers support to contingency operations and associated workforce developments.

Support to this country's missions in Afghanistan and Iraq continues to be one of the highest priorities of the Corps. Our primary mission in Iraq and Afghanistan is the design, award, and execution of construction projects in accordance with our construction agent responsibilities. Since 2001, the Corps has managed over 6,000 projects in Afghanistan and Iraq with a construction cost of approximately \$17 Billion. In Iraq, we have managed over 5,200 Projects with a construction cost of \$11.2 Billion. And in Afghanistan, we have managed over 842 Projects with a cost of \$5.8 Billion. In contracting terms, the Corps has been averaging over 1,200 contract awards a year for work in these countries.

The mission has required the dedicated service of many military personnel and civilian volunteers. To date, the Corps has had nearly 10,000 personnel deployments in support of these missions with many people volunteering for more than one deployment. Currently we have over 900 military and civilian personnel on the ground in Afghanistan and Iraq. These personnel are directly supported through our reachback program that allows us to harness the experience and knowledge of our 34,000 civilian employees virtually, expanding our capabilities while reducing the number of personnel in harm's way.

To sustain such workload in these countries with a mainly volunteer force, it has been necessary for the Corps of Engineers to continuously assess all factors including how we structure our deployed organizations, how we staff the deployed Districts, how we perform and oversee the mission, what incentives and benefits we provide our deployees, and associated support. Also from a Corps- wide perspective we have implemented changes in our national contracting community that have improved our contracting support for all our programs, including contingency operations.

In 2007, the Corps completed a review of its contracting organizational structure and processes. The review focused on improving our core business practices of structure, funding, process, authority flow, skill development and clarity of responsibilities to more effectively implement the contracting mission within the Corps. A core outcome of the review was the establishment of the National Contracting Organization (NCO). The establishment of the NCO is consistent with the Gansler Commission recommendations in that it establishes a single command structure for the Corps contracting workforce. The NCO now has an authorized strength of 1,504, of which 1,300 are contracting officers and contracting specialists. For the NCO, we have maintained a 95 percent fill rate throughout Fiscal Year 2010.

Also as result of the review, the Corps increased the number of Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting (PARC) positions from one to three and placed them in regional PARC offices located in Atlanta, Dallas and Winchester with defined areas of

responsibility (AOR). This provides PARC authority closer to mission execution and allows improved oversight of contractual actions within their AOR. We also established Regional Contracting Chiefs and Center Contracting Chiefs in all Corps Districts and Centers. These Contracting Chiefs manage contracting personnel and resources, provide Acquisition Career Management, manage workload & mission, and serve as business advisors to Commanders.

The recommendations of the Gansler Commission have benefited the Corps in a number of ways. Under the Army's "Grow the Acquisition Workforce initiative," we have requested an additional 358 contracting positions to be phased in over Fiscal Years 2011 to 2014. To date, the first 100 of these positions have been approved. A very important initiative for our deployment contracting capability is the addition of military contracting teams. We plan on having nine teams with four personnel in each team. We currently have 32 of these either currently on-board or identified. The Corps has also received \$21 Million from the Section 852 Defense Acquisition Workforce Development Fund (DAWDF). The Corps NCO has been able to use these funds for intern positions, training, developmental assignments, and training equipment upgrades.

As the level of workload has evolved in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Corps has adapted its organizational structure to flex with the mission. In order to manage the major reconstruction program in Iraq, we established the Gulf Region Division and three supporting Districts in January 2004. As the workload in Iraq has declined, the Division was deactivated and now just one District manages the remaining workload. The Afghanistan Engineer District was established in 2004. Since that time, the workload in Afghanistan has ramped up substantially and in August last year we activated a second district in Afghanistan.

Concurrent with the deactivation of the Gulf Region Division in Iraq, the Corps established the Transatlantic Division (TAD) in October 2009 to provide one division for all of CENTCOM and to provide a unity of engineering effort within the CENTCOM AOR. The Division office is located in Winchester, Virginia. The establishment of TAD positions allows the Corps to better support contingency operations. Under the new Division, we currently have four Districts: the Afghanistan Engineer District – North; the Afghanistan Engineer District – South; the Gulf Engineer District in Iraq; and the Middle East District headquartered in Winchester, Virginia.

A key component of our support to overseas contingencies is the Field Force Engineering (FFE) program. The FFE program uses flexible teams of military and Corps civilian specialists that are capable of rapidly deploying into military contingencies and disaster relief operations. These teams provide responsive technical engineering, contingency planning and contract construction support capabilities to the military, Department of Defense, and other federal agencies. The program is designed to be as flexible as possible and is comprised of a number of teams suited for different purposes and missions.

Given the Corps workforce in the U.S. and in other locations, we have a large pool of expertise to draw on when filling positions in our deployed organizations. However, continuously finding volunteers to fill these positions does provide a challenge to our organization. This is particularly the case given the length of time we have been operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as demands such as implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and the BRAC program. In recognition of the priority of the mission, our U.S. based Divisions are directed to support the staffing of our deployed districts. The Corps has established Deployment Coordination Administrators (DCAs) in each of the Divisions. The DCAs support the deployed districts by recruiting for critical positions that have been identified as Corps-unique and which must be filled by Corps employees. This initiative has strengthened the support for our deployed organizations. We have also found that our people gain valuable knowledge, skills and experience from their deployment and this benefits their home office upon their return.

One valuable recruitment tool we have used in the staffing of our deployed Districts is the "Schedule A Authority." This authority allows us to quickly hire experienced professionals from outside the government and place them in temporary and term positions within these districts. This strategy has helped build our bench and fill critical positions. The authority is being used to fill positions overseas, and is also used to fill positions throughout the Corps that directly support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We also have a large pool of retired Corps and other Federal civilians who can be employed on a temporary basis to backfill for civilians who have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan or at times deploy themselves. The Reemployed Annuitant cadre is extremely valuable as an enabler for current employees' deployments; it is much easier to support multiple deployees in an organization once it is understood that there will be access to trained replacements on a temporary basis. Reemployed annuitants help us meet the mission, both here and overseas.

In 2007, the Corps commissioned a survey of its civilian employees to get a better understanding of the critical issues faced by those who deploy and issues preventing others from deploying, and to identify issues that are important to families of those who have deployed. The most notable finding from our survey was that family care and support was considered a very important issue across the Command. With the recognition that the sacrifices that our deploying personnel make are shared by their families, the Corps implemented a formal Family Readiness support program for deploying civilians. Family Readiness representatives are now located at each Division and at most Districts. They maintain contact with our deployees' families to provide support and assistance.

While each individual has different motivations for deploying, the survey did identify compensation as a key factor in motivating deployment. Accordingly, we have sought to improve conditions and compensation for personnel where possible. For example, in accordance with DoD guidance, we authorize excused absence during Rest and Recuperation (R&R) periods for deployed personnel. Employees on six month tours

are eligible for one R&R trip, which may include 10 days of excused absence without charge to the employee's leave. Employees on twelve month tours are eligible for three R&R trips within the 12 month service period, and are eligible for up to a total of 20 days of excused absence. In addition, the Corps of Engineers offers relocation incentives to Army employees who volunteer for tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. Relocation incentives of 12.5% are offered for six months tours, and employees on twelve month tours are authorized a 25% relocation incentive. All Corps employees returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who have successfully completed at least a six month consecutive tour are provided five days of excused absence for the purpose of reintegration. This excused absence is for the purpose of reconnecting the deployee with his/her family and home environment.

All these initiatives have helped us improve the fill rates for our positions, but we can still face challenges in filling critical positions.

Ensuring our people are trained and qualified is integral to our mission. The USACE Learning Center (ULC) is the Center for Learning and Training for the Corps. The ULC provides job-related training through technical, professional, managerial, and leadership courses to meet the unique needs of the Corps and other government agencies. Corps Contracting Officers obtain Defense Workforce Improvement Act (DAWIA) training and meet the qualifications for certification. In addition they obtain the mandatory 80 continuous learning points every two years through a variety of experiential, web based and classroom training. All Corps Contracting Officer Representatives must complete mandated training prior to appointment.

Another aspect of our training is the preparation of our people for deployment. The Corps Deployment Center located in Winchester, Virginia prepares civilians to deploy for contingency operations. It is now in its fifth year of operation, training and equipping people for duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. The team at our deployment center has specifically tailored its curriculum to equip Corps deployees with the knowledge they need to be successful in executing our missions. The Corps Deployment Center now supports an ever-expanding customer base, including Corps contractors, the Pentagon's Pakistan/Afghanistan Coordination Cell, the DoD Inspector General's Office, the Defense Logistics Agency, and the Defense Information Systems Agency. The Deployment Center also processed large classes for the Army Materiel Command, a primary customer for these services.

The Corps approach to contractor performance oversight is to have all Contracting Officer Representatives, Areas and Resident Engineers, and Quality Assurance personnel located in country. Contracting Officers are located both in the U.S. and our deployed locations. Currently in Afghanistan, we have 14 Contracting Officers, 7 Administrative Contracting Officers, 81 Contracting Officer Representatives, and 96 Quality Assurance Representatives. We are also supported by 270 local national Quality Assurance Representatives. In Iraq we have six Contracting Officers, two Administrative Contracting Officers, 48 Contracting Officer Representatives, 56 Quality

Assurance Representatives, and another 200 local national Quality Assurance Representatives.

The Corp's quality assurance (QA) program is the key to its oversight of contract performance. Our QA program is designed to oversee the contractor's quality control program. Project and field office staffing varies based on the complexity of the project and the project funding available to pay for the Corps services. The dangerous environment in Iraq and Afghanistan can make it difficult to provide quality assurance and project oversight on all projects at all times and certainly not at the same level as we could in a secure environment.

We have successfully developed processes and methods to mitigate security risks, while still providing quality assurance services. One method is hiring and training local nationals under contract to visit the construction sites and report back with their observations. This reduces costs and our security footprint while training locals and accomplishing capacity building. We have also had success in using remote sensing methods to inspect construction sites for activity, reducing the frequency of inspections by U.S. Government representatives.

Chairman Shays, Chairman Thibault, Commissioners, while there are still challenges; the Corps of Engineers has developed and implemented a number of strategies and initiatives that have improved our contracting and oversight capabilities. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stands ready to continue supporting current and future contingencies and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.