

Reversing Outsourcing Presents ‘Conundrum’

By Kate Brennan

October 27th, 2010

For the last nine years, contractors have increasingly been hired for what should be government defense jobs. Getting those jobs back into the government workforce is not going to happen overnight, said U.S. Army Undersecretary Joseph Westphal.

Westphal said Defense Secretary Robert Gates is deeply committed to moving government jobs back to government employees, but that the Pentagon can't solve the problem in a matter of months. He asked for patience.

Westphal said Gates is also committed to making the government workforce more efficient and supporting current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Westphal said.

But he said, "There is a conundrum."

While the Pentagon wants to transfer jobs back into the government, it wants to do it right, he said.

As the government works through these issues, new contractor jobs get posted every day. Recently, ITT, a provider of counter-IED technology, posted a job ad for a congressional liaison for the Joint IED Defeat Organization, a position that is arguable more suitable for a government employee than a defense contractor.

In the meantime, the Army is working to improve the service's hiring process, which Westphal called "one of our biggest challenges." If it takes the Army 180 days to let a job applicant know whether they got a job or not, it is likely they will be hired by someone else, Westphal said.

Service officials are aiming to have a reformed hiring process within a year.