



Before Insourcing, DOD Needs to Define its Acquisition Workforce

By Matthew Weigelt

Feb 12, 2010

Defense Department officials must figure out what jobs are included in the "acquisition workforce" before they begin to insource thousands of jobs, which may be in fact unnecessary, a blog posting recommends.

Many experts inside and outside of government say the acquisition workforce has declined since the 1990s and, with the increased spending in the post-Sept. 11 world, employees in the various acquisition offices in DOD are not equipped to handle the workload, wrote Sandra Erwin on the National Defense blog hosted by the National Defense Industrial Association.

"The lack of a consistent definition of the acquisition workforce skews the data and may lead the Pentagon to hire people who are not really needed, or to neglect to hire in areas that are more critically understaffed," she wrote, citing a 2009 study by the Rand Corp.

"The Rand analysis shows that the total number of Defense Department civilians in key acquisition-related occupational groupings increased through the 1980s, reached a peak in 1992, plunged to a low point in 2000 and has climbed since then. Between 1992 and 2007, the number of defense acquisition civilians increased by 14 percent, says the Rand report," Erwin writes.

Scientists and engineers kept the workforce relatively stable between 1992 and 2007, and defense civilians in program management and logistics increased substantially and consistently since 1980. However, the number of civilians working in the contracting, quality assurance, and auditing areas has declined steadily since the late 1980s, Erwin writes.

She adds that the number of employees in contracting, quality assurance and auditing, who would likely have been most affected by increased workloads, have experienced the most significant declines in workforce size over time. With a good definition of acquisition workforce, Erwin believes DOD will really find out what it's lacking.