

# Dayton Daily News

## **Company that Feared Raid of its Workers Sued the Air Force**

By John Nolan, Staff Writer

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A company concerned that Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., intended to hire away its employees and take over handling of the services it was providing the base filed suit against the government, which prompted the Air Force to reverse its plans and extend the company's contract, the firm's lawyer said.

Rohmann Services Inc., of San Antonio, Texas, dismissed its federal court lawsuit against the Air Force and the Defense Department on the assurance it could continue to provide multimedia and audiovisual services to the base and can compete for a follow-up contract, lawyer David Barton said Wednesday, March 10.

The company filed suit on Jan. 26 after its employees told management that the Air Force had talked to them about hiring them and "in-sourcing" the services, although the service did not actually hire them, Barton said.

The dispute is noteworthy for companies that want to serve the government, said Dale Kirby, a former president of DaytonDefense, the regional association of defense contractors.

It is important for taxpayers to know whether the government can provide services for itself more cheaply than hiring a company to do it, said Kirby, a Fairborn-based executive with defense contractor Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. And companies which want to serve the government and must be competitive, need to understand how the government makes that decision and what factors are applied in evaluating whether a contractor or the government would be the most cost-effective provider of a service, Kirby said Wednesday.

"As a company, you would have to ask yourself, 'Where did I go wrong, that my costs are higher than those of the government in providing a service?' If I can't beat the government, I can't beat another company," Kirby said.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates has committed his department to increasing the size of its acquisition work force, including contracting officers, cost estimators and other specialists, to try to get control over spiraling costs of buying weapons, aircraft and other products and support services.

The Air Force Materiel Command, whose bases include Edwards, said it determined that “the audiovisual work was not presently an appropriate candidate for in-sourcing, and those services would for the time being continue to be performed by contract.”

The Defense Department said it “routinely reviews contracted services for possible in-sourcing to ensure they are being performed in the most cost-efficient manner.”

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