

Enid News & Eagle

We Were Wrong: In-sourcing Vance Simulator Jobs Should be Cancelled by DoD

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By Enid News and Eagle

In an April editorial, this newspaper supported the government's decision to turn away from contractors as simulator instructors at Vance Air Force Base and make them government employees.

We were wrong.

We were operating under the incorrect assumption such a move would save the taxpayers money.

It won't.

The Department of Defense initially said in-sourcing the simulator instructor jobs would save \$480,000 over the next five years. But the Air Force studied the numbers and concluded turning contract instructor jobs into defense department positions actually would wind up costing an additional \$27.5 million because of government benefits and work rules.

That's not a good move.

Because it will not save money, Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently called a halt to in-sourcing beginning with Fiscal Year 2011, which begins Oct. 1 — when the flight simulator instructors are supposed to become government workers.

That is all well and good, but, despite Gates' edict, the process of converting simulator instructor jobs to government jobs continues at Vance and other undergraduate pilot training bases. The instructors await word from the government the process officially is being halted.

About 10 percent of Vance's simulator instructors and support employees have not been re-hired by the defense department. A couple already have taken jobs at another UPT base, Laughlin AFB, Texas.

If these instructors, one of whom is a supervisor, is not qualified to be re-hired at Vance, how could they get jobs at Laughlin?

In-sourcing already has cost Enid a couple high salary jobs. If it continues it will cost the city much

more, because instructors who are rehired will take an average annual pay cut of \$18,000. That will negatively impact the local economy, as well as the city's sales tax revenue.

The contractor in charge of simulator instruction at Vance, Lear Siegler Services Inc., has been teaching student pilots in flight simulators for the past 15 years — without a single written complaint from the Air Force.

This seems a classic case of, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it.” Contract simulator instructors at Vance have been helping the base turn out more than 400 pilots annually for the past 15 years, and turning them into government employees will cost taxpayers more money than continuing with the status quo.

We urge the government to cancel the in-sourcing program, immediately.

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