

# The Washington Post

## Pentagon Ahead of Schedule on In-sourcing and Beefing up Acquisition Workforce

By Marjorie Censer

Monday, June 21, 2010

The Pentagon has hired 3,400 people since the fall of 2009 and replaced about 1,400 contractors with government workers as part of an aggressive effort to strengthen its oversight of acquisitions.

The department is running well ahead of schedule in its plans to add 10,000 new employees and convert another 10,000 private jobs to the public sector by 2015, said Shay Assad, the Defense Department's top acquisition policy official. The department had projected that by now, the number of hires and job conversions would total 3,500; the tally is at 4,800.

Contractor advocacy groups have pushed back against the shift from contractors to government employees, but Assad said the Pentagon is going about the process fairly.

"It's not [that contractor employees] were wearing company X's badge yesterday and today they're wearing our badge. That's not what's going on," Assad said. "We're posting every job, and we're hiring through our hiring process, which is publicly available to everybody."

In particular, he stressed that contractor employees are not being pressured to join the government.

"We really don't need to use and will not use what I'll call strong-arm tactics to try to bring people on board," Assad said.

The hiring is part of a Defense Department initiative to beef up its acquisition workforce and improve training.

Among the 10,000 new jobs, the majority -- about 5,600 -- will be contracting officers, according to Assad. Another 2,500 will work for the Defense Contract Management Agency, which oversees contracts, while about 800 more will go to the Defense Contract Audit Agency and another 800 will focus on pricing.

He said in-house work includes systems engineering, program management, logistics and budgeting positions.

The Government Accountability Office is due to issue this fall two reports on the Pentagon's efforts, one on its overall strategic plan for improving its workforce and another on the effectiveness of its training, according to John K. Needham, the GAO's director for acquisition and sourcing issues.

As a result of the new effort, Assad said the Defense Department will see lower prices for equipment and services bought from contractors as well as significantly improved oversight.

"There's an expected return here," he said. "There's an expect[ation] that we're in fact going to do our jobs better, that we're going to increase the buying power of the Department of Defense. That's what this acquisition workforce growth is all about."