



## Poaching by Any Other Name is Still Poaching

By Matthew Weigelt

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Insourcing might not be poaching to a senior Defense Department official, but some readers say it sure looks like it.

"Most of the recent hires around here are former contractors who were doing the same or similar tasks, at the same desks, in their previous jobs," one reader wrote.

At a House Armed Services Committee hearing the same day, several committee members asked Ashton Carter, undersecretary of Defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, about insourcing and businesses' concerns about DOD poaching their employees.

"We're going to the open marketplace," Carter said, adding that DOD is seeking employees where they can be found. "They come from some other job, and I'm delighted when they do come."

So, is DOD poaching contractors' employees?

One anonymous reader wrote that the answer is obvious.

"Going into the 'open market' to recruit specific skill sets that happen to already be in the building is poaching no matter the label," the reader said.

As the Obama administration pushes insourcing government jobs to boost its in-house skills in areas such as defense procurement, companies are concerned that their employees — their investments — are being taken.

It's just that DOD has a one-of-a-kind selling point, Carter said. If new employees are moving to the public sector, it shows that people are interested in joining DOD because it offers the opportunity to play a role in protecting the United States.

Carter said DOD isn't as sleek as the private sector and doesn't offer as much money, but it does have something to offer.

"We don't pay a lot," he said. "Our buildings aren't steel and glass. They're wood and mold, and so forth. But we have the mission." That mission draws people, especially young people, to give up private-sector perks.

Despite a worthy mission, it might further drive the two sides — contractors and feds — apart, according to one reader.

"Disheartening and another case of the U.S. [government] being unable to live up to any notion of a 'partnership' with the contractors that actually execute the government's business," a contractor wrote. "Paint us as evil, smirk at our 'service' to the public and steal our investments — we're too easy a target to miss."

One reader had a completely different take on the question of poaching. Mel from Fort Rucker wrote that poaching isn't such a bad idea.

"I would LOVE to poach the IT specialists working as contractors for me," he wrote. "However, because of veteran's preference (which does good things), I can't reach the majority of the young, smart, 'hungry' programmers working as contractors."

When he gets a list of referrals for open jobs, it's filled with unqualified "govvies looking for their next pay raise," he wrote.

"As a senior manager, my biggest frustration is my inability to hire talented people for all the new 'insourced' jobs the Army is creating," he wrote.

Although many people might be interested in DOD's mission, Mel wrote it's extremely difficult to actually get a job to help.