

# Enid News & Eagle

## AF Going Forward with Simulator In-sourcing

*By Robert Barron*

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ENID — The Air Force will continue to convert simulator instructors from private contractors to government employees in a controversial in-sourcing program.

Department of Defense officials said this week the Air Force, Navy, Army and Marine Corps are exempt from a fiscal year 2011 freeze on in-sourcing and will continue their in-sourcing plans. Other defense agencies are not included, and those jobs will remain in the private sector.

In-sourcing began as a result of Resource Management Decision 802, announced more than a year ago by Defense Secretary Robert Gates. RMD 802 called for hiring 34,000 civil service workers in place of contractors over the next five years. The change, which Gates said was being made to save taxpayers money, will take place by Oct. 1, the beginning of the next fiscal year.

However, Gates earlier this summer had announced the in-sourcing process was being halted because the anticipated savings were not being realized. The news this week further clarified that in-sourcing would continue for some jobs.

While most simulator instructors at Vance Air Force Base have been hired or made other plans, private sector employees continue to believe they can do the job cheaper than the government.

Ken Sumpter, president of Vance Instructors Association, said most of the instructors have been hired as government employees. Some were not hired, some moved to jobs at other facilities, two plan to quit Oct. 1 and others may retire.

The Defense Department is in the process of hiring 76 simulator instructors to take jobs now held by employees of Lear Siegler Services Inc., a private contracting company, at Vance. Some 10 percent of Vance's current 85 contract simulator instructors and support personnel will not be rehired as government employees.

Along with fewer instructors, those hired are taking pay cuts that will be felt in Enid, Sumpter said.

Some simulator instructors who were supervisors could take as much as a \$22,000 a year reduction, he said. Other instructors below that level also will take cuts.

"It's not cheaper because they are making less," Sumpter said. "The government must now take on the retirement, insurance and other normal employee maintenance that they did not have before."

Contractors can do the job cheaper, he said, because the cost of benefits are not passed along to the government but are paid by the contractors.

Contractors also can hire part-time employees and also work employees overtime, which the federal government cannot do, Sumpter said. Contractors are more flexible about working requirements and who they hire.

“We have no beef with the Air Force here, and that includes the command structure,” Sumpter said. “We have a great relationship. The Air Force is appreciative of what we do.”

Simulator instructors at Vance all are former Air Force or Navy pilots with years of experience. Sumpter said they take pride in what they do and make sure student pilots are trained properly.

He said pilot training does not fit into the 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. office model of government employees because pilot training encompasses many more hours. Sumpter said the program will not work because it has not been calculated properly and in the long run will cause the government to hire more people.

State Sen. Patrick Anderson, R-Enid, said he is “disappointed to hear the Air Force is continuing with in-sourcing the jobs because of the effect it will have on employees of Vance Air Force Base and the Enid community.”

“I have spoken to the Secretary of Defense’s office about the matter and about our concerns there won’t be any cost savings,” he said. “They indicated they will issue a report next week, claiming cost savings will be achieved.”

Anderson said his numbers show it will cost the taxpayers more to make the switch.

“I continue to believe this is simply an effort by the Obama administration to create the illusion they are actually creating new jobs, when they are simply converting private employees to government-funded positions,” Anderson said.

Enid Regional Development Alliance went on record Thursday as opposing in-sourcing. Brent Kisling, executive director, said his organization is concerned about the economic impact on the city of Enid.

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