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NEWSBLAST

U.S. Army Contracting Command

"Providing global contracting support to war fighters."

Odierno: Army cannot tolerate sexual assault, harassment

By Lisa Ferdinando
Army News Service

WASHINGTON – Sexual assault and harassment are serious problems the Army is vigorously addressing, said Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Ray Odierno.

Odierno testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 4, along with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, service chiefs from the Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard, and six judge advocate generals.

"These crimes violate everything our Army stands for and they simply cannot be tolerated," Odierno told senators, as part of an oversight hearing on sexual assault and harassment in the services.

"As chief of staff of the Army, and as a parent of two sons and a daughter, the crimes of sexual assault and harassment cut to the core of what I care most about, the health and welfare of America's sons and daughters," he said.

Odierno said the Army is focused on eliminating the problem.

"Two weeks ago I told my commanders that combating sexual assault and sexual harassment within the ranks is our number one priority," Odierno said. "I said that because as chief, my mission is to train and prepare our Soldiers for war."

"These crimes cut to the heart of the Army's readiness for war," he said. "They destroy the fabric of our force, Soldier and unit morale.

"We will fix this problem," he pledged.

See ODIERNO, page 3.

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Spotlight on...

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Sonja J. Ablola enjoys fast pace of deployed life

Contracting specialist lauds Deployable Cadre Program

By Larry D. McCaskill

ACC Office of Public & Congressional Affairs

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Sonja J. Ablola

Lured by the faster work pace and the ability to work beside Soldiers in theater, Sonja J. Ablola said the Deployable Cadre Program is something of which she was meant to be a part.

"It's fast paced a lot of the time but the learning time or adjustment to the job time is shorter," said Ablola, a contracting specialist currently deployed to Qatar and permanently stationed at the Mission and Installation Contracting Command-Fort Belvoir, Va. "I love seeing the results of what we do. The fact that we contribute to what is going on and provide a valuable service to the war fighters is very rewarding to me."

In Qatar, Ablola is a contract specialist working requirements for procurement and supply and is the alternate agency organization program coordinator for the government purchase card.

"I get to work in a lot more areas than when I'm back home," said the 44-year-old single mother. "This enables me to bring back more skills than I had before."

A University of Phoenix graduate currently pursuing her master's degree, Ablola said she enjoys her job and sees contracting as an integral part of the supplies and services Soldiers get whether deployed or stateside.

"I believe in what we do, both contracting and deploying, as a civilian," said Ablola, a diehard fan of the Washington Redskins. "It helps us to grow in skills we may not come in contact with at our home station and shows the Soldier that we are part of the team. This helps with the cohesiveness between Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians by establishing camaraderie and bonding. I am glad to be part of a team that promotes unity."

A firm believer in the DCP, she is currently on her second deployment.

"I am a single mom with a 15-year-old daughter, Diana Maria. During my previous deployment to Afghanistan she was inducted into the National Junior Honor Society," said the proud mother.

During Ablola's deployments, her daughter stays with her aunt and uncle.

"She isn't crazy about me deploying but she supports it," Ablola said. "She understands that this sacrifice is something that will benefit us in the long run. She also understands that it takes a team to do things for the benefit of all."

Ablola encourages young contracting specialists to become DCP volunteers as a means of expanding their horizons.

"It gives you a different perspective than your job back home. You see what you do and how important it is to the war fighter," Ablola said.

Readers are encouraged to submit comments or suggestions to the editorial staff via the mailbox icon to the right. Responses will assist the NewBlast staff in producing a publication to better meet readers' expectations and information needs.



U.S. Army Contracting Command

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The NewsBlast is a weekly newsletter authorized and produced by the U.S. Army Contracting Command's Office of Public and Congressional Affairs editorial staff in accordance with AR 360-1 (The Army Public Affairs Program) to inform, educate and entertain the ACC community on people, policies, operations, technical developments, trends and ideas of and about the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army and this command.

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NEWSBLAST

Kendall cautions sequestration likely to continue into 2014

By Nick Simeone

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Sequestration spending cuts could continue into 2014, and the impact of the deep cuts will fall disproportionately on small business, the Pentagon's top acquisition official told a Navy industry forum June 3.

"It's a reasonable possibility that we will go into 2014 with sequestration still underway," said Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics. "A lot of things we planned on doing we won't be able to do."

Last month, Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told Defense Department employees he could not guarantee that the budget situation would ease next year.

Kendall's comments to the 2013 Navy Opportunity Forum in Arlington, Va., come three months into a budget sequester that is taking \$41 billion out of the Pentagon budget this fiscal year, leading to cuts across the military in everything from operations and



(Photo by Kari Hawkins)

Frank Kendall, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics, warns that cuts are going to fall on small business.

deployments to training and readiness. Furloughs are set to begin in July for about 85 percent of the Defense Department's 767,000 civilian employees.

In the sequestration environment, Kendall said, the department needs to be more proactive in taking care of the small businesses that contract with the military.

"The cuts we are going to experience potentially will fall on small businesses," more than on large military contractors, he said, adding that cuts in research and development worry him as well. "Potential adversaries are modernizing at a rate which makes me nervous," he told the group, which included representatives of companies that produce advanced technologies funded by Navy programs.

Kendall said the department is about to conclude its strategic choices and management review, which Hagel ordered to provide department leaders with options given the current budget environment as well as the prospect of future spending cuts.

"What would we have to do at the department if we had to take \$50 billion a year out over the long term? That would be pretty devastating," Kendall said, mentioning one such scenario being considered by the review.

ODIERNO

continued from page 1

Odierno said the Army needs to do more, and laid out five areas of specific concern:

- preventing potential offenders from committing sexual crimes
- investigating and taking appropriate action with every allegation of sexual assault and harassment
- creating a climate where an individual is not afraid of retaliation or stigma for reporting a crime
- ensuring individuals, units, organizations and specifically commanders and leaders understand their responsibilities
- ensuring the chain of command is at the center of any solution to combat sexual assault and harassment, and that it is also fully engaged

"We can and will do better," he told the senators. "We must take deliberate steps to change the environment. We must restore our people's confidence by improving our system of accountability."

Odierno said the military justice system was designed to give commanders

the tools to reinforce good order by prosecuting misconduct with a variety of judicial and non-judicial punishments. He said commanders are able to prosecute crimes and punish minor infractions that contribute to discipline problems.

Odierno also said his experience leads him to believe that the majority of the problems are the failure of some commanders and leaders to correctly administer military justice in compliance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice and current Department of Defense policies.

"We must take a hard look at our system, from start-to-finish, to ensure that commanders and judge advocates are subject to appropriate checks and balances, all while protecting the interests of the victim and the due process rights of accused Soldiers," he said.

Odierno said that in the last four years, 57 officers have been relieved of command. About half of those dismissals were related to issues with the command

climate those officers created. Some had been deemed "toxic leaders." Others were relieved because they had failed to create a command climate where it was clear that sexual assault and sexual harassment would not be tolerated.

"It is up to every one of us, civilian, Soldier, general officer to private, to solve this problem within our ranks," Odierno said.

Over the last 12 years, the Army has demonstrated "exceptional confidence, courage, and resiliency in adapting the force to the demands of war," Odierno said. The Army will tackle and fix the problem of sexual assault and harassment with the "same resolve."

As part of ongoing efforts, including in its Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, the Army has focused efforts intensely on preventing sexual assault and harassment, educating Soldiers, responding to reports of assault and harassment, and providing victims with support and resources.

Family sets an example, pursues higher education



(Courtesy photo)

From left to right, Jamal Cummins, his wife, Shonnelle, and mother, Jocelyn L. Cannegieter, share a moment following a commencement ceremony held at Strayer University in Atlanta, Ga.

By Larry D. McCaskill

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For inspiration, Jamal Cummins doesn't have to look far when it comes to educational heroes.

Cummins, human resource specialist, Human Capital G-1, Army Contracting Command, recently received his bachelor's degree and his mother received her master's during the same Strayer University commencement ceremony at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

"It was an awesome experience," Cummins said. "My mother always pushed us to get an education at a young age. Graduating together was like icing on the cake."

His mother, Jocelyn L. Cannegieter, graduated with honors, earning a degree in accounting, specializing in taxes. Cummins' concentration was in entrepreneurial studies. He also has a bachelor's in biblical studies.

During his academic journey, Cummins learned valuable lessons outside the classroom on time management.

"Without a doubt I learned the

importance of using my time wisely and that nothing is given to you in life," he said. "I learned that from her. My mom has set the bar with her master's degree so now I have to try to reach it."

Through all her educational quests, Cannegieter has always wanted to set the example.

"My impetus for starting was to show my children that if I can do it, I knew they could do it," said the mother of three. "I wanted to encourage them to get an education now and not to wait until later. I wanted them to succeed. I wanted them to be proud of me."

That example extended to Cummins' wife, Shonnelle, as well. She received her bachelor's degree from Oakwood University, Huntsville Ala., a week prior.

Cummins said he plans on taking six months off, then start working on his master's. While not pursuing another degree, his mother said she hasn't ruled out attending more classes.

"I always liked school. School is fun and I am not done yet. The knowledge that I now have, no one can take that away from me," Cannegieter said.

Defense Department official offers college education financing tips

By Amaani Lyle

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Defense Department officials encourage parents and students to consider various strategies for financing college education, the director of the Pentagon's office of family policy and children and youth said.

In a recent interview with American Forces Press Service and the Pentagon Channel, Barbara Thompson addressed solutions to some of the obstacles military children might face when trying to pursue a college education.

Thompson recommended researching scholarship and student aid opportunities early on, including use of the provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill that allows service members to transfer their benefit to family members.

Resources such as the Military OneSource website and personal financial managers on installations, she added, offer information ideas on other resources,

such as a tax-deferred savings account for higher learning colleges and vocational schools.

Military OneSource also features scholarship information links and listings, including law and policy updates that pertain to military members and their families, such as expanded in-state tuition availability. Service members on active duty for more than 30 days are eligible to receive in-state tuition for their dependent children at public colleges and universities in the state where they reside or are permanently stationed, she noted.

Once enrolled and paying in-state tuition, Thompson said, dependent children continue to pay the in-state tuition rate as long as they remain continuously enrolled at the institution, even if the service member is reassigned outside the state.

"That has been a very positive move across the federal government that all states have to offer in-state tuition for military children and spouses," she said.

But no matter where the prospective student lives, Thompson explained, it's important for parents to work with school guidance counselors to nurture their future college student's interests and aspirations – and ultimately to choose the right educational path.

"You don't want to go to a school and find out later on they don't offer the degree you're interested in," Thompson said. "You have to do your research."

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau website offers a "Know Before You Owe" page to help untangle student loan procedures, regulations and facts to keep borrowers informed and arm them with information prior to making life-altering decisions, Thompson said.

"We want the best future for our children," she added. "We recognize they've sacrificed a great deal over the lifespan of their parents serving the military... and we want to make sure they're ready for the world when they become an adult."

Senior Army leaders promote National Safety Month

By Michael J. Negard

U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center

FORT RUCKER, Ala. – June is National Safety Month, and senior Army leaders are asking Soldiers, Department of the Army civilians and their family members to educate one another on risk and influence behaviors surrounding the leading causes of preventable injury and death.

National Safety Month coincides with the beginning of summer, historically the deadliest time of year for Soldiers off duty.

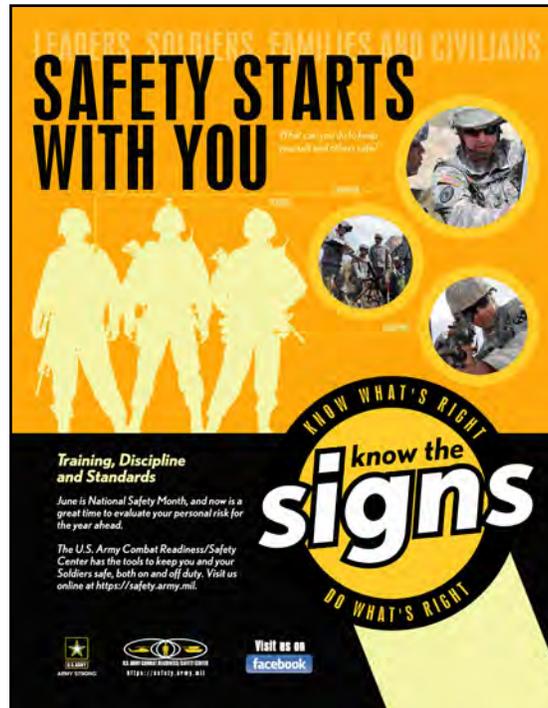
According to Command Sgt. Major Richard D. Stidley, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center, indiscipline is a leading cause of Soldier fatalities, particularly on America's highways.

"We're dealing with somewhat of a paradigm when it comes to safety of the force," Stidley said. "In uniform, in Afghanistan or Iraq, or anywhere else around the world, our Soldiers operate nearly flawlessly on-duty. But when they get home, back to the states and out of uniform, discipline goes out the window and we lose Soldiers at a rate we cannot afford."

The Army lost 160 Soldiers to accidents during fiscal 2012. Off-duty accidents outnumbered those occurring on duty 4-to-1, with motorcycle and vehicle mishaps comprising nearly 80 percent of losses.

"Private motor vehicles, either two

wheeled or four, remain the number one accidental killer of our Soldiers," Stidley said. "Indiscipline leads to reckless behavior, and reckless behavior in any form when you're driving or riding can be deadly."



"We are winning the fight," said Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler. "Accidental fatalities have fallen to peacetime levels even as we continue combat operations overseas. But, we cannot yet declare victory."

To help leaders, Soldiers and safety professionals enhance their personal risk

management during National Safety Month, the USACR/Safety Center launched a dedicated website June 1 at <https://safety.army.mil/NSM>, containing posters, informational videos and feature articles addressing four core topics: civilian injury prevention, ground operations, aviation operations and driving safety.

While much effort will be put into awareness during June, senior Army leaders urged all members of the Army family to remember safety is a day-to-day commitment and responsibility.

"Across every Army unit and every installation, safety is everyone's responsibility," said Gen. Ray Odierno, Army chief of staff. "Leaders, Soldiers, Army civilians and family members are encouraged to use National Safety Month to evaluate their safety measures both on and off duty. It's imperative that leaders continue to make safety a priority and that Soldiers take seriously the actions that put themselves and others at risk."

National Safety Month will complement the current Army Safe Summer campaign, which includes materials targeted to specific seasonal hazards, which began May 24, and runs through Sept. 3.

"Use this time to focus your Soldiers on making smart risk decisions," Chandler said. "Doing the hard work now will serve them well in the future. Being prepared saves lives."

Army releases new leaders' handbook on cybersecurity

By Army CIO/G-6

WASHINGTON – The Army published a new handbook this month to provide leaders of all levels with the information and tools needed to address today's cybersecurity challenges, and to ensure organizations adopt the necessary practices to protect their information and the Army network.

"We must change our culture, enforce compliance, and ensure that people are accountable for proper security procedures," Secretary of the Army John McHugh said in a

Feb. 1 memo mandating Information Assurance/Cybersecurity awareness training.

Currently, all Army commands are developing Information Assurance/Cybersecurity awareness training to address areas of weakness identified by the Army Information Assurance Self-Assessment Tool. During the Army Cybersecurity Awareness Week, Oct. 15-18, commanders will train personnel based on command plans and highlight the importance of individual responsibilities.

"Beyond required security training,

we need you to make certain that all of your Soldiers, civilians and contractors understand the threat they pose to operational security by not complying with IA/Cybersecurity policies and practices," McHugh said, addressing all Army leaders.

McHugh also directed all commands to incorporate information assurance into their command inspection programs.

More information and guidance are on the Army Information Assurance One-Stop Shop portal which is CAC accessible.

SBP helps small business with contracting opportunities

By **Beth E. Clemons**

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With more than 100 years of collective contracting and acquisition experience, the Army Contracting Command's Office of Small Business Programs staff spends its days matching small businesses with contracting opportunities around the world.

According to Associate Director Alice Williams, the OSBP was very busy in fiscal year 2012 monitoring contract awards and advising small business specialists in the field. Across the Army Materiel Command more than \$51 billion in eligible contracts were awarded, out of that more than \$19 billion was awarded to small businesses.

"We're a small office but we're dedicated and give 110 percent," said Williams, who oversees more than 60 small business advisors across the command's more than 100 locations worldwide.

Christopher Evans, ACC OSBP deputy associate director, says the purpose of their office is to assist small businesses in finding and attaining procurement opportunities with the Army.

"Small businesses are essential to the

success of our nation. They strengthen our economy and keep our nation strong, agile and resourceful," said Evans. "Small businesses bring special capabilities with a solid sense of commitment and innovation. To that end, Army small business offices do our best to ensure that a fair portion of contract awards are placed in the hands of small businesses."

The OSBP staff estimates it trained more than 75 Huntsville, Ala., small businesses through four workshops and attended or facilitated at more than 125 small business outreach events and workshops. According to Evans, businesses seek their guidance on a range of issues from getting started to writing a business plan and developing marketing tactics. He said the staff also trains members of the acquisition workforce on various issues affecting small businesses throughout the year.

"The advice and recommendations we offer are available to anyone wanting to do business with ACC. We're here as a resource to small businesses to help them obtain government contracts. It's our job to make sure we get as many small businesses involved in the procurement

process as we can," said Evans. "And that can only be accomplished with a hard-working and experienced staff."

According to Dawn Robinson, Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business program manager, several of the 2013 small business initiatives were created in direct response to emails and phone calls identifying specific needs. In fiscal year 2012, AMC awarded more than \$1 billion in contracts to SDVOSBs.

Managed by Darlene Brakefield, the intent of the Women Owned Small Business program is to provide contracting officers with a tool to meet the WOSB goal, level the playing field for WOSBs to compete for and win federal contracts, and ultimately, help create and retain more jobs for WOSB.

"I serve as an advocate and program manager for WOSB concerns," explained Brakefield. "I monitor ACC's progress in meeting its assigned WOSB goals and work closely with our small business specialists in the field to identify opportunities for WOSB."

In fiscal year 2012 AMC awarded \$1.6 billion in contracts to WOSB.

See **SMALL BUSINESS**, page 7.

Pies in the eye deliver funds for AER campaign

By **Skip Vaughn**

Editor, *The Redstone Rocket*

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Members of the Army Contracting Command-Redstone took one on the chin May 29 for a worthy cause.

And they also took it in the eyes, on the nose and in the mouth during a "pie in the eye" fundraiser for Army Emergency Relief.

Workers bid for the opportunity to toss whipped cream pies into the face of their favorite supervisor volunteers at the afternoon event under the pavilion at the Redstone activity field.

"It was good, a great cause," Col. Ian Klinkhammer, ACC-Redstone executive director, said after receiving his "pie facial" from procurement officer Capt. Nick Yerby. "It's enabled us to exceed our goals from the previous year."

Staff Sgt. Jonathan Turner, contingency contracting noncommissioned officer,

served as the auctioneer for the event.

It was this year's addition to the organization's third annual Fun in the Sun, which included sports activities.

"Right now we're sitting at \$16,000 (for AER) which tops us over what we had last year by almost \$2,000," Turner said before the bidding began.

Klinkhammer received the first pie in the face. He was followed by Scott Campbell, deputy director for Missiles and Space; Lisa Stangle, deputy for Aviation; and Suzanne Spielman, division chief for the Performance Based Contracts and Strategic Planning Division.

"I volunteered for this," Spielman said. "It's for a good cause."

Spielman smiled as she put on a shower cap and the orange paper protective sheet. She sat in the metal chair and bravely took her "pie facial" from contract specialist Adam Mountain.

"I survived, I did," she said laughing. "It wasn't bad."



(Photo by Skip Vaughn)

Suzanne Spielman savors a pie facial. She is the division chief for the Performance Based Contracts and Strategic Planning Division, ACC-Redstone.

Meeting stresses importance of face-to-face dialogue, standardization of work statements/workload data

By Liz Adrian

ACC-Rock Island, Ill.

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ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL, III.

– Representatives from 95 of the 112 Enhanced Army Global Logistic Enterprise Basic Ordering Agreement holder companies gathered May 20 for a meeting with the Army Contracting Command-Rock Island EAGLE team.

The EAGLE program is a unique contracting tool that the government uses to award task orders to a pool of qualified BOA holder companies for supply, maintenance and transportation functions. The program is intended to find efficiencies and standardize contracting processes in order save the government money, and also increases competition and expands the role of small business.

Cheryl Nielsen, ACC-RI EAGLE branch chief, said the biggest take away from the meeting was the importance of having face-to-face dialogue with the BOA holders in order to relay a common understanding of the program and address their concerns relative to the EAGLE program.

Nielsen said the most frequently expressed concerns by BOA holders included standardization of the EAGLE task order performance work statements and workload data, as well as having a full understanding of how their approved teaming arrangements may be applied to task order proposals.

According to Nielsen, the EAGLE team's next steps will be to continue to apply lessons learned and industry feedback to the EAGLE process, with



(Photo by Liz Adrian)

ACC-RI employee and EAGLE team member Brandon Kettler (standing) briefs a crowd of contractors and government employees, including EAGLE team members (front row, from right) Katherine Crawford, Stephanie James and Alexis Bribriesco, during the May 20 BOA holder meeting at Rock Island Arsenal, Ill.

the intent of further streamlining the acquisition timeline and provide improved requirements packages for task order solicitations.

Additionally, the EAGLE team will continuously work on improving communication with BOA holders to ensure they have a full understanding of the EAGLE program and terms of their BOAs, she said.

During the meeting, Nielsen discussed the state of communications, including informing the BOA holders of an upcoming address change for EAGLE's shared email box, as well as website reorganization by mid-July.

Brandon Kettler, ACC-RI procuring contracting officer, provided an overview of BOA administration, including team

arrangement scenarios and organizational capability. Nielsen addressed the task order process, including strategies, timelines and lessons learned.

Procuring contracting officers Alexis Bribriesco, Stephanie James and Sharla Danielson, along with Katie Crawford, contract specialist, addressed technical, past performance, pricing data and small business participation concerns that have been identified by BOA holders.

The majority of the BOA holders indicated that the information provided during this meeting was valuable and they truly appreciated the opportunity to exchange information, said Nielsen. She also said ACC-RI and Army Sustainment Command plan to conduct these meetings on a semi-annual basis.

SMALL BUSINESS

The ACC Historically Underutilized Business Zones program is managed by Constance Jones-Hambrick.

"The purpose of the program is to provide federal contracting assistance for qualified small business concerns located in historically underutilized business zones in an effort to increase employment opportunities, investment and economic development in those areas," said Jones-

Hambrick. We help small businesses find opportunities by making sure that they know about resources that are available to them. We make sure that they have all available information and know how to contact the appropriate government personnel."

According to Jones-Hambrick, more than \$735 million of eligible contracts awarded across AMC went to

continued from page 6

HUBZones businesses.

Providing a conduit from small businesses to Army contracting opportunities, the ACC OSBP is available to assist both contracting professionals and small business owners. To contact the office or for more information, visit www.acc.army.mil/smallbusiness.



ACC in the News

These articles mention Army Contracting Command.

Army Materiel Command honors top employees with Dellamonica award

By Leada Gore

(Posted on AL.com, May 29, 2013)

HUNTSVILLE, Alabama – Top employees from U.S. Army Materiel Command were honored recently with the Louis Dellamonica award. Award recipients were selected from AMC's 70,000 military and civilian workers under the General Officer and Senior Executive Service ranks.

http://www.al.com/business/index.ssf/2013/05/army_materiel_command_honors_t.html#incart_river

Faces of the Force: *Educating future acquisition leaders*

(Sgt. 1st Class Michael Kahyai was formerly assigned to the 916th Contingency Contracting Battalion, 410th Contracting Support Brigade at Fort Sam Houston, Texas.)

By Steve Stark

FOTF editor's note: Sgt. 1st Class (P) Michael Kahyai (rhymes with "Aye aye") said that his most rewarding mission during his time in the Army Acquisition Corps was participating in Natural Fire 10 in Kitgum, Uganda. That exercise, led by U.S. Army Africa Command, involved nearly a thousand African troops from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda working with hundreds of American Soldiers to improve interoperability. "It was great. It was a good mission to be part of. We were interacting with all the other nations."

<http://asc.army.mil/web/kahyai-faces-of-the-force/>

Army Contracting Command uses high-tech method to find NCO of the Year

By Leada Gore

(Posted on AL.com June 30, 2013)

When it came to determining this year's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Army Contracting Command decided to take a high-tech route.

The annual event was conducted via video teleconference this year, according to ACC officials. Army Contracting Command, part of Army Materiel Command, is based at Redstone Arsenal.

http://blog.al.com/breaking/2013/06/army_contracting_command_uses.html

Troops, families can visit museums free for summer

By Terri Moon Cronk

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – At the height of military transfers, adjusting to new communities and registering children for school, more than 2,000 museums across the nation will open their doors, free of charge, to service members and their families as a break from the summer challenges, a Defense Department official announced May 21.

Now through Labor Day, Sept. 2, all active duty, National Guard and Reserve service members and their families can take advantage of this cultural and educational opportunity in all 50 states.

"It's an exciting, inspiring, educational and economical activity for our families to enjoy this summer," said Navy Cmdr. Leslie Hull-Ryde, a Pentagon spokeswoman.

Launching its fourth year at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the 2013 Blue Star Museums Program is a collaboration with the Defense Department, Blue Star Families, the National Endowment for the Arts and the museums to give service members and their families a way to spend time together in their local museums.

"After long deployments, rigorous training schedules and very long hours, our time with our families is very limited and extremely precious to us," Hull-Ryde said. "We are so grateful (to have) this program.

"This program is helping us make memories – memories for our families," she said. "It is making a difference not only in the force of today, but in the force of the future."

The program began in 2010 with free access to about 600 museums. Today, that number exceeds 2,000 and continues to grow, Blue Star Families and NEA officials said.

Visit www.arts.gov/bluestarmuseums for a state-by-state listing of participating museums.



Click on the image for ACC safety messages.



June 5, 2013