



NEWSBLAST

U.S. Army Contracting Command

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"Providing global contracting support to war fighters."

Congress passes bill reopening federal government

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama signed legislation Oct. 16 bringing federal employees back to work after Congress finally resolved the budget logjam that led to a 16-day shutdown.

Senate leaders championed bipartisan legislation to reopen the government and remove the threat of government default on its debts. All federal government employees – including some 4,000 Defense Department employees – will report to work Oct. 17.

The legislation is a continuing resolution that will provide federal government spending at fiscal year 2013 levels. This keeps the sequester-level budget in effect.

The act will keep the government open through Jan. 15 and raises the debt limit through Feb. 7. The act contains a provision for a joint Senate-House committee to work on a budget recommendation for fiscal year 2014. Those recommendations are due Dec. 13.

The legislation includes the provision to pay all furloughed employees for the period of the lapse in appropriations. The act calls for those employees to be paid "as soon as practicable."

Even before the House of Representatives voted, President Obama signaled his intent to sign the bill.

"We'll begin reopening our government immediately," he said in a White House appearance. "And we can begin to lift this cloud of uncertainty and

unease from our businesses and from the American people."

Obama asked that all political officials take the lesson of the gridlock to heart and work together to solve the nation's problems.

"My hope and expectation is," Obama said, "everybody has learned that there is no reason why we can't work on the issues at hand, why we can't disagree between the parties while still being agreeable, and make sure that we're not inflicting harm on the American people when we do have disagreements.

"So hopefully that's a lesson that will be internalized, and not just by me, but also by Democrats and Republicans, not only the leaders, but also the rank-and-file," he said.

MICC works to last minute to support war fighters



(Photo by Daniel P. Elkins)

Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke, MICC commanding general, thanks Soldiers and civilian employees for executing billions of dollars in acquisitions to close out the fiscal year.

By Ryan Mattox
MICC Public Affairs Office
Ryan.l.mattox2.civ@mail.mil

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas – September is the busiest time of the year for the Mission and Installation Contracting Command as personnel throughout the command spent the last two months obligating more than \$1.6 billion and completing 13,362 contract actions without a single dollar lost.

With annual appropriations expiring at midnight Sept. 30, MICC personnel spent the last remaining days of the fiscal year matching Army Budget Office funds to the various Army entities based on their respective mission needs.

See MICC, page 4.

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Spotlight on...

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Contracting NCO enjoys supporting the community

Staff Sgt. Brian D. Roussel is an acquisition, logistics and technology contracting noncommissioned officer assigned to the 412th Contracting Support Brigade at Joint Base San Antonio – Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

Describe your current position

I currently work in the Mission and Installation Contracting Command – Fort Sam Houston, Mission Division, where I help support Army North and the Army Medical Command to procure any supplies or services they need.

Describe your passion for the job

I love being a part of the big picture especially with the fiscal situation we are in. Every penny counts.

I feel proud when I know I saved some money that could possibly be used to help the war fighters deployed around the world.

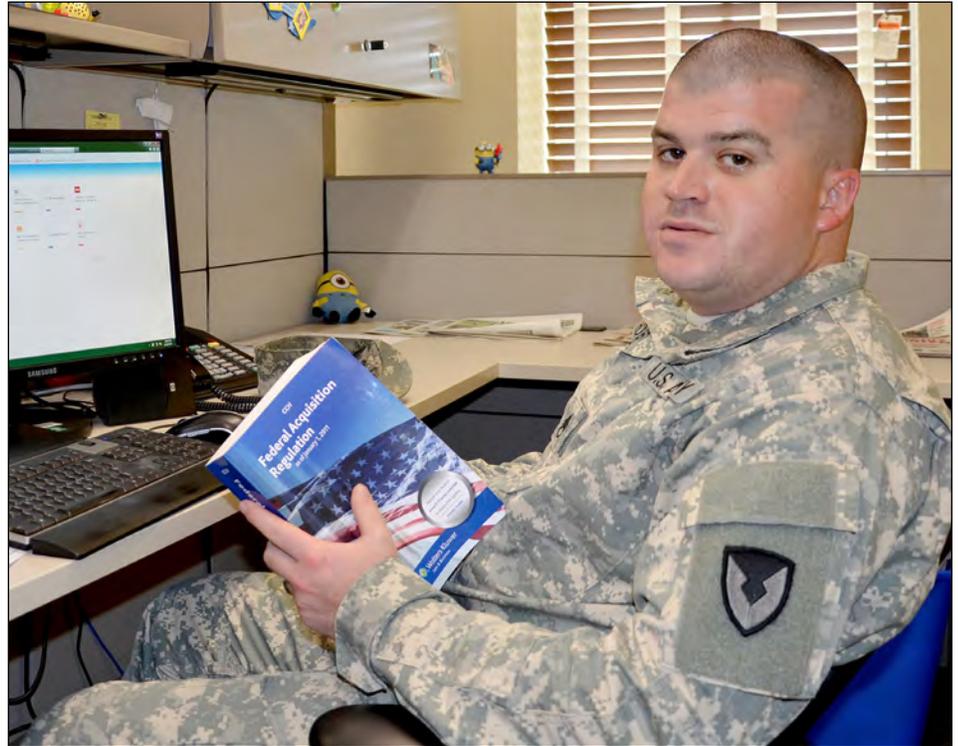
Where do you call home? Tell us about your family and how you spend your time off duty.

I was born in Bronx, New York, but grew up on Staten Island. I have been married to my beautiful wife, Connie Ann, for 11 years. Together, we have three beautiful daughters, Kaitlyn, 11; Delia, 8; and Madeline, 18 months.

In my spare time I try to spend as much time with my family as I can. I love to fish and want to learn how to hunt.

How does your job support the Soldier?

Contracting is the behind-the-scenes



Staff Sgt. Brian D. Roussel

leg work that is part of the Soldier's normal everyday life. Whether it be working on a dining facility contract or buying blast barriers down range, contracting is involved.

What would you like others to know about you?

I love to do volunteer work. I had a three year break in service from 2004-2007. In that time I was able to become a Sleepy Hollow, New York, volunteer firefighter.

Upon my return from an overseas assignment in February 2012, I have coached my daughter's coach pitch baseball team and am the camping director for the Girl Scout-Service Unit at Randolph Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas.

I also have volunteered at the local American Legion and am also a committee member for the MICC Volunteer Projects Board.

I believe in strong supportive communities.

U.S. Army Contracting Command

Commanding General
Brig. Gen. Theodore C. Harrison

ACC Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. John L. Murray

The NewsBlast is a bi-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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Contract specialist by day, children's book author by night

By Venus Sung

Family & Morale, Welfare and Recreation
Fort Wainwright, Alaska

For some aspiring authors, it takes a long time to get a book published. But for Valerie Perry, it was an easy one.

A 20-year Air Force veteran with a degree in management from Wayland Baptist University, she has been working at Fort Wainwright as a contract specialist with the Regional Contracting Office for the past two years.

It was never Perry's intention to become a children's book author.

Originally from Biloxi, Miss., she wrote short stories as a child or jotted a few ideas down throughout the years, "but it was nothing serious," she said.

After producing five stories on Sweetie and Coco, Perry contacted a friend who helped get her story into the right hands. It was a short process.

Perry wrote her manuscript during Thanksgiving in 2011, and submitted it December 29. A week later, she received a contract through Tate Publishing & Enterprises, LLC.

"It happened overnight. It was so quick," Perry said. "What I really wanted to do initially, was to create five or six stories as a book set about Sweetie and Coco but the publishing company decided to wait to see how (the first book) 'Go to the Zoo' did," Perry said.

"Sweetie and Coco Go to the Zoo" is a book about two young friends who visit various animals on a day trip they take together. The book is designed to encourage young readers to understand the different sounds zoo animals can make. The idea came to Perry from her youngest daughter Jada, who was 3 years old at the time.

"Jada named her right hand Sweetie. She's a girl and she's brown. Her left hand is a boy and yellow and is based on her (real life) friend Otis," Perry said.

"She used to blame Sweetie for things that got her into trouble and I would tell her, 'You're in trouble too for letting Sweetie do that.'" But the adventures of Sweetie and Coco inspired Perry and she quickly created a few drafts about the two friends. "It just kind of stuck with me one

early morning and I decided, why not try? So I decided to write," she said.

Although the writing process was relatively easy, marketing a new product is difficult.

She finds that holding book signings in an area like Alaska restricts some of the mobility in getting her book out to a wider audience in person.

Perry occasionally holds book signings throughout the local community but would rather read to her young fans than attend these functions.

"When I go out and read to the kids, that's where I get my pleasure," she said. Her husband, Jerome, and her older children, 22-year old daughter, Britney, and 17-year old son, Edward, have all been very supportive. They, as well as family friends, are eagerly anticipating the next book in the Sweetie and Coco series.

Her daughter especially loves that she and her friend, Otis, are written in the book and is particularly fond of the page on elephants.

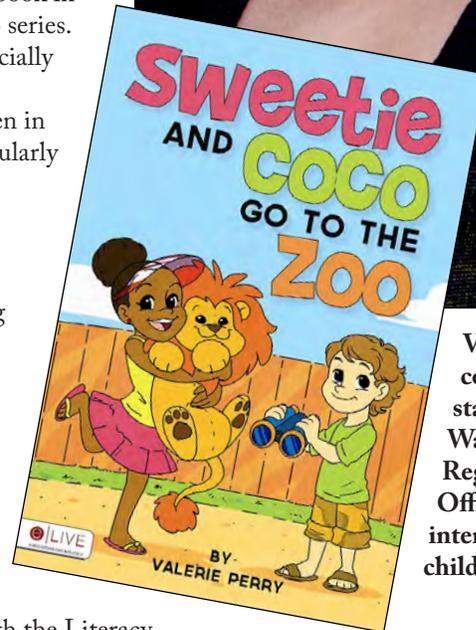
As for future endeavors, Perry is contemplating writing fulltime.

"I love what I do but sometimes you want to work on your own terms and if (this dream) should blossom, I prefer to do this," she said.

Perry would also like to be involved with the Literacy Council and read to kids in schools throughout the community.

Whatever she decides though, she steadfastly focuses on family. "I revolve my life around Jada. She's keeping me occupied and busy.

"While on active duty, it was tough to put my attention on the older kids so now I'd like to focus on my daughter and spend



Valerie Perry, a contract specialist stationed at the Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Regional Contracting Office, says she never intended to become a children's book author.

time with her," she said. And though, Perry still doesn't know what the future holds, she will continue to write in her free time.

To aspiring authors, the author offers a few words of advice.

"Go for it. Don't wait," she said. "You never know what the answer will be, but don't give up because there's always someone who wants to read your story."

Carter to step down as deputy defense secretary

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel has announced that Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will step down Dec. 4.

Carter has served in senior defense department positions since the start of the Obama administration including as undersecretary of defense for acquisition technology and logistics under Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates before becoming the department's number two official.

In a statement issued Oct. 10, the defense secretary said he met with Carter “and reluctantly accepted his decision to step down.”

Hagel called Carter an extraordinarily loyal and effective deputy secretary who constantly provided outstanding support to service members fighting down range.

“He possesses an unparalleled knowledge of every facet of America's defense enterprise, having worked directly

and indirectly for eleven secretaries of defense over the course of his storied career,” he said.

Hagel thanked Carter for remaining his deputy and helping him get up to speed in the department during some unusual times.

“I have continually relied upon Ash to help solve the toughest challenges facing the department of defense,” he said. “I particularly appreciate his work spearheading the Strategic Choices and Management Review, which put the department in a far stronger position to manage through unprecedented budget uncertainty.”

As undersecretary, Carter led DOD's efforts to accelerate the fulfillment of urgent operational needs such as the mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles. He worked to increase the department's buying power, and worked to strengthen America's defenses against emerging threats, such as cybersecurity.

Deputy defense secretaries generally remain in the background, but Carter

held some very visible portfolios including serving as the department's point man in defense relations with India. Most recently, he headed the department's investigation into the Washington Navy Yard shooting.

“His compassion, love and determination to overcome any and all bureaucratic obstacles earned him abiding respect and appreciation,” Hagel wrote. “I am confident that the department, and the country, will continue to benefit from Ash Carter's service in the months and years ahead.”

Carter has moved back and forth between academia and government. He earned bachelor's degrees in physics and in medieval history from Yale University, and received his doctorate in theoretical physics from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar.

Before joining the Obama administration, Carter chaired the International and Global Affairs faculty at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and was co-director of the Preventive Defense Project.

MICC

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If the funds were not distributed by midnight then they are lost, thus a supported activity's mission is impacted. This was the second fiscal year in a row that no dollars were lost while MICC personnel completed end-of-the-year operations with all obligations properly matched and recorded against appropriations.

Those participating in the MICC headquarters end-of-the-year war room worked long hours and weekends conducting contract actions and, reconciling General Fund Enterprise Business Systems and intermediate document errors to beat the deadline.

“The end-of-the-year workload crunch always takes place because during the course of the fiscal year Army priorities constantly change resulting in Army Budget Office and Army commands continually trying to determine the effective spend of funding,” said Pat Hogston, director of MICC Contract Support and Integration.

“Oftentimes the Army operates under a continuing resolution so they are provided their funding in increments throughout

the fiscal year,” Hogston said.

Typically, all MICC offices experience a spike in their workload at the end of the fiscal year and usually 40 percent of all MICC actions executed for the year are accomplished in the last quarter.

In order to synchronize efforts between the Army Budget Office, major supported activities and MICC offices, an end-of-the-year war room was stood up and led by MICC headquarters personnel. New to the war room this year was the development and usage of a single end-of-year SharePoint site to facilitate communications and to ensure an efficient and effective fiscal year closeout.

The MICC Small Business Programs Office exceeded its small business goal achieving 46.3 percent of the dollars obligated going to small businesses and meeting three of its five small business category goals set for the year.

The MICC also maintained its top spot in small business spending for Army Materiel Command, as the command obligated more than \$2.1 billion to American small businesses.

“Our contracting offices and small business specialists did an outstanding job supporting the small business program with even fewer dollars allocated than in fiscal 2012,” said Mark Massie, associate director of MICC Small Business Programs.

MICC officials also credited the collaboration efforts of its members in meeting the Army chief of staff's goal of obligating 80 percent of Army operations and maintenance fund dollars by Aug. 1.

“This fiscal year was extremely challenging due to sequestration cuts and not having full funding authority from Congress until March,” Hogston said. “As a result of these two events, MICC experienced a significant reduction in capacity, our civilian workforce experienced a furlough during fourth quarter, and overtime request and approval was burdensome. Add to that two significant workload spikes – the 80/20 (percent) goal met by July 31 and end of the year by Sept. 30. With reduced capacity and workload surges, it was an extremely challenging time for MICC.”

Former Army captain awarded Medal of Honor

By Lisa Ferdinando
Army News Service

WASHINGTON – President Barack Obama presented the Medal of Honor to former Army Capt. William D. Swenson in a White House ceremony Oct. 15, citing the Soldier's heroism during a six-hour battle that followed a deadly Taliban ambush in Afghanistan four years ago.

Swenson is the first Army officer and the second service member to receive the nation's highest award for that battle. Dakota Meyer, a Marine Corps corporal at the time, was honored two years ago.

Guests at the White House ceremony included other Medal of Honor recipients, Soldiers and Marines who fought alongside Swenson, and the families of service members who died in the battle.

Before presenting the medal, Obama recounted the captain's heroic actions in saving more than a dozen lives during the Sept. 8, 2009, Battle of Ganjgal in Afghanistan's Kunar province.

The president said Swenson is a remarkable example to the nation of the professionalism and patriotism that everyone should strive for.

"Capt. Will Swenson was a leader on that September morning," Obama said. "But like all great leaders, he was also a servant – to the men he commanded, to the more than a dozen Afghans and Americans whose lives he saved, to the families of those who gave their last full measure of devotion on that faraway field."

Swenson served with Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan's Task Force Phoenix in support of 10th Mountain Division's 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, as an embedded advisor to the Afghan border police.

He said the honor is for all who served that day and for the families of those who were killed in the battle.

"The value of an award is truly what we as a nation put into it, what we value it as," he told reporters after receiving the award. "This award is earned with a team – a team of our finest Marines, Army, Air Force, Navy and our Afghan partners standing side by side. Now that team includes Gold Star families who lost their fathers, sons and husbands that day. This medal



(Photo by Lisa Ferdinando)

President Barack Obama presents the Medal of Honor to former Army Capt. William D. Swenson during an Oct. 15 White House ceremony.

represents them – it represents us."

Around sunrise that day four years ago, Obama said, a column of Afghan soldiers and their American advisors were winding their way up a narrow trail toward a village to meet with elders. "But just as the first Soldier reaches the outskirts of the village, all hell breaks loose," he added.

According to the award citation, American forces and their Afghan partners were ambushed by more than 60 well-armed, well-positioned enemy fighters. Insurgents surrounded three Marines and a Navy corpsman, Obama said, and rocket-propelled grenades, mortar and machine-gun fire poured in from three sides.

"Will and the Soldiers in the center of the column are pinned down," he said. Swenson called in air support, but initial requests were denied because he and his team were too close to the village.

After finding out his noncommissioned officer, Army Sgt. 1st Class Kenneth Westbrook, was injured, the captain risked his life to aid him.

"Will breaks across 50 meters of open space, bullets biting all around," Obama said. "Lying on his back, he presses a bandage to Kenneth's wounds with one hand and calls for a medevac with the

other, trying to keep his buddy calm."

Swenson continued to fight the enemy and risked his life getting Westbrook to the medevac, Obama said, noting that before the helicopter left, he kissed the NCO on his forehead in "a simple act of compassion and loyalty to a brother-in-arms."

Risking his own life again, Swenson then drove an unarmored vehicle straight into the kill zone to rescue injured Afghan forces, the president added. He returned into the path of enemy fire again, when he and a Humvee crew recovered the four fallen service members.

"Will and the others carry them out, one by one," Obama said. "They bring their fallen brothers home."

Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Edwin Johnson, Marine Corps 1st Lt. Michael Johnson, Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Aaron Kenefick and Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class James Layton were killed, along with nine Afghan security force personnel.

Westbrook survived the battle, but died a month later from complications.

"To the families of those we've lost, we will never forget," said Obama, the nation is grateful for those who served that day and all who continue to serve "with such incredible courage and professionalism."

MICC CG thanks WWII vets for service

Brig. Gen. Kirk Vollmecke talks with World War II Navy veteran Roland Borchers Sept. 27 at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport prior to his departure for Washington, D.C. The commanding general for the Mission and Installation Contracting Command traveled with veterans from Fredericksburg, Texas, to their departure point and spoke briefly to thank them for their contributions to the nation. The trip, funded by private donations, was part of Honor Flight Austin, which transports World War II veterans to Washington to visit memorials dedicated in honor of their service and sacrifice.



(Photo by 1st Lt. Joseph Durlin)



ACC in the News

This article mentions Army Contracting Command.

Army contracting workers receive new leadership

By Katie Davis Skelley

(Published in the Redstone Rocket Oct. 16, 2013)

On a beautiful Alabama fall afternoon, members of the Army Contracting Command and the Expeditionary Contracting Command gathered on the Army Materiel Command Parade Field to say goodbye to their outgoing commander, while welcoming a new commander and a civilian interim chief.

http://www.theredstonerocket.com/military_scene/article_9be7131a-366b-11e3-9654-001a4bcf887a.html

Organizations settle in at new locations

By Kari Hawkins

(Published in the Redstone Rocket Sept. 25, 2013)

Administrative space changes made throughout Redstone

One of the major elements of Team Redstone's administrative space realignment project has fallen neatly into place thanks to months of planning and coordination. And much like a domino effect, the move sets off a host of other relocations around Redstone Arsenal that will lead to efficiencies in organization operations.

http://www.theredstonerocket.com/news/article_f5c14fb8-25e0-11e3-8931-001a4bcf887a.html



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