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ECBC- Rock Island Supports BRAC Consumable Items Transfer to Defense Logistics Agency

Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. — As the engineering support organization for the transfer of most consumable items (CIT) to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center-Rock Island (ECBC-RI) has led the efforts to establish consistent dialogue between the organizations.

In addition to a decreed closing or merging of various military installations across the country, the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) also called for the transfer of most CITs to the DLA was required. The purpose of the transfer was to achieve economies and efficiencies that would enhance the effectiveness of logistics support to operational joint and expeditionary forces.

Since the DLA performs the item management and procurement of the consumable items, communication lines had to be opened between DLA and ECBC, as the engineering support organization for the items.

"Dialogue with DLA did not start easily," Nan Ramsey, Engineering associate director and ECBC-RI site manager, said. "When ECBC-RI first began working with DLA, we discovered there was very little understanding of Army engineering elements within the DLA's processes."

According to Ramsey, the DLA uses a different approach for procurement than that traditionally used by the Army, which typically uses an Integrated Product Team (IPT) for the acquisition of an item. One example of this approach is the integration of ECBC employees serving as members of the IPT providing advice on market research and company capabilities, advice on needed testing and inspection and other technical areas to the U.S. Army Tank-automotive Armament Command (TACOM).

"When we started talking to DLA, we expected to continue to participate on procurement IPTs. What we found was that they did not use the same IPT approach for acquisition as that used by the Army. They use automated processes where item coding triggered certain actions, allowing them to procure as many as 200,000 items per month," Ramsey said. "We soon realized it was not going to be business as usual – we had a lot to learn."

Upon discovering that there was similar questions and uncertainty regarding current transfer processes among the other Army Research, Development, and Engineering Centers and the 21 Armed Services' Engineering Support Activities (ESAs) across the Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, ECBC-RI organized a meeting that would allow the Army to learn from the Services who had transferred many of their CITs in previous years.

“The next step then was to meet with DLA and discuss our concerns,” Ramsey said. “Getting all the Services together with DLA was instrumental to understand the processes and resolve our concerns.”

Some of the key issues addressed during that initial meeting in 2008 provided ECBC-RI with the ability to better plan for the workforce by getting funding commitments from DLA in advance.

Three years and many meetings later, with the continued perseverance and extensive coordination by representatives from ECBC-RI, the Army and other ESAs, including the Army Materiel Command, a signed agreement on the funding is in hand. Additionally, a new Joint Engineering Support Instruction, which has already been signed at the three star-level in the Army, is in coordination.

“These efforts were essential since we have just completed the support to TACOM in the transfer of almost 700 chemical biological items to DLA for management,” Ramsey said.

ECBC-RI Team Leader Nancy Lyford admits, they are still working some of the kinks out in the processes, but she says ECBC-RI and the DLA have come a long way in the last three years.

“Largely due to Nan’s persistent efforts, we’ve been able to bring everyone together in one room to talk about similar problems within the transfer and work to resolve many of them,” Lyford said. “The older I get, I learn communication is key to everything.”

For more information about ECBC, visit <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/>.

ECBC is the Army’s principal research and development center for chemical and biological defense technology, engineering and field operations. ECBC has achieved major technological advances for the warfighter and for our national defense, with a long and distinguished history of providing the Armed Forces with quality systems and outstanding customer service. ECBC is a U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command laboratory located at the Edgewood Area of Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland. For more information about the Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, please visit our web site at <http://www.ecbc.army.mil/> or call (410) 436-7118.

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