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## ECBC's East-West Engineering Collaboration Sets Trend for New Way of Doing Business

**Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.** — In an effort to better adapt to its customer's needs, two teams from the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center (ECBC) are working across the 763 miles between them to collaborate on a series of programs, establishing what could be a new way of doing business for the premier national resource for chemical and biological defense.

With ECBC's Production Test Branch located in Rock Island, Ill. and the Center's Advanced Design and Manufacturing Division (ADM) based in Edgewood, Md., this new alliance is being called "ECBC East-West," according to Bill Meyer, chief of the Production Test Branch.

The collaborative work is currently aligned to the Program Manager for Sets, Kits, Outfits and Training (PMSKOT), servicing the U.S. Army Tank-Automotive Armament Command. The programs include Metal Working Machine Shop Sets (MWMSS) and Next Generation Sets Equipment Contact Maintenance (SECM). ECBC has been providing engineering support to PMSKOT since 2007; however, the Rock Island-Edgewood partnership on MWMSS and SECM began at the beginning of this year.

"As our relationship developed with PMSKOT, they became more interested in doing prototyping. I was familiar with what [Chief] Mark Schlein was able to do under the Advanced Design and Manufacturing Division in Edgewood. After reaching out to him, it was clear we had a mutual interest in collaborating to do the work for PMSKOT," Meyer said.

For both the MWMSS and SECM projects, the Edgewood and Rock Island Engineering teams have crafted a seamless workflow, fitting together the various project requirements like pieces of a puzzle. In addition to contributing to the conceptual design phase, the Production Test Branch manages the MWMSS and SECM projects while the ADM Division provides design insight as well as the modeling, creating prototypes of full-size MWMSS and SECM units.

Prior to the ECBC East-West collaboration, the PM would have to go to three or four different organizations to complete the design and prototyping phases of the programs.

"PMSKOT loves the concept. It streamlines the program management; it's cost effective and provides better control for them from cradle to grave. Throughout the development process, they know exactly who to go to; and customers like that," Meyer said.

Although the mechanical work is tangential from ECBC's traditional focus on Chemical Biological (CB) defense, Meyer says the ability to offer this kind of cradle-to-grave customer service is the emerging business trend in both the government and private sectors. Rather than jumping through "contracting hoops," the process is expedited when work is consolidated to one organization.

“The trend within the government right now is to be more customer-oriented. We’re going to see more of this, not less of it,” Meyer said. “We’d love to see PMSKOT take it to the next level, which would be Joint Services — working with the Navy, Air Force, Marines and Army all under one roof. The amount of work would snowball from there.”

According to Meyer, PMSKOT’s decision to take their work to ECBC was initially due to dissatisfaction with the engineering support they were receiving from their original vendor, and the need for an organization with greater capabilities.

Prior to their move to ECBC, PMSKOT was conducting all testing offsite. Since ECBC-Rock Island was already conducting transportability testing for other CB projects and offered the ability to host some of PMSKOT’s simpler testing, the PM’s transition to ECBC was a natural move.

“The bottom line is, we had more capabilities,” Meyer said.

Meyer admits that the collaborative work is still in a trial phase; time will tell whether or not this new approach will catch on with other clients. Should the situation present itself, however, Meyer says he would “entertain looking into it.”

“These are the first two programs we’re doing collaboratively as ECBC East-Wes,” Meyer said. “If it’s successful, it could be a major benchmark for PMSKOT and for ECBC.”

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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