



Brig. Gen. Paul Pardew, commanding general of the Expeditionary Contracting Command, briefs Soldiers participating in Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise 2017 on the status of the contracting career field on March 17, 2017, at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Chad Chisholm)



Joint Operational Contract Support Challenges

■ By Brig. Gen. Paul Pardew, Mike Rector, and Bill Sanders

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses operational contract support (OCS) to plan, procure, and manage contracts for its operations. OCS doctrine, found in Joint Publication (JP) 4-10, Operational Contract Support, is intended to drive the services toward a more joint, efficient, and effective means of planning, executing, and managing contracted support.

Doctrinally, OCS is organized into contract support integration (CSI), contract support (CS), and contractor management (CM). CSI consists of planning and defining requirements. CS is the actual procurement and execution of the contract. CM is the oversight of the contracted effort.

The primary challenges with OCS across all operations are actually found in the CSI and CM aspects of OCS. That is not to argue that CS has no problems; but operationally, the more significant challenges to commanders in the field are OCS planning and oversight.

CSI Challenges

The first challenge to OCS is the lack of OCS planning for the total

force. The total force includes DOD military personnel, civilians, and contractors. Contractors are rarely planned for adequately.

Unit task organizations, time-phased force deployment data, and operational planning include military units and strengths but rarely take into account the contracts or the size of the contract footprint required to support an operation. Using contractors involves multiple planning considerations and can have tremendously negative impacts on an operation if they are not accounted for sufficiently.

In overseas theaters, the military has a responsibility to provide government support to contractors who are not local nationals and who reside on U.S. operating bases. They are referred to as contractors authorized to accompany the force. Often, planning efforts fail to account for these contractors, and thus, base life support and other requirements are underestimated.

Conversely, by identifying in the planning process services and commodities that are available locally (part of OCS analysis of the oper-

ational environment), the military footprint required to execute an operation can be drastically reduced. Planning to use contractors involves many considerations, including security, life support, legal issues, and political factors.

An additional important consideration is whether or not commanders are sure that the contractor can fully support the operational timeline. Contractors rarely attend rehearsal of concept drills to synchronize their business timeline with the operational timeline. Those timelines must be synchronized, and that starts with OCS planning and requirements development.

The second challenge of CSI is contract visibility. Today, DOD-wide, personnel are effectively blind to their contracts. One of the principal characteristics of OCS is realizing efficiencies by minimizing similar contracts and leveraging existing contracts.

There is no effective system that supports the visibility of contracts to the level of fidelity needed for operations. OCS doctrine calls for a multifunctional staff called an OCS integration cell (OCSIC), but the cell lacks the capability to provide a common operational picture to the commander. The DOD has deployed several business systems, but they are not mutually supportive nor do they provide field commanders with holistic visibility of the contracts in their areas of responsibility.

This lack of visibility is evident across all services and operations. It results in inefficient use of contracts among the services and the misuse of limited resources. Moreover, these inefficiencies result in increased costs for contracted services and commodities.

The third challenge under CSI is the execution of a joint requirements review board (JRRB). This board validates requirements in support of

operations. Many times the JRRB functions not as a validation board but as a “pursuit of requirements perfection” board, and the requirement is eventually removed from the operational timeline.

If the requirement is valid for the operation, then it should be approved and the staff should find a legal, moral, and ethical way to support it. Validated requirements must be prioritized and managed against resources.

Additionally, senior leaders seem to be risk-averse when it comes to approving requirements. Although being good stewards of taxpayer dollars and using money in an efficient and expedient manner is always the goal, supporting the warfighter is paramount. During contingencies, requirements validation approval must be delegated down (decentralized) to subordinate OCSICs to ensure operational responsiveness and flexibility.

CS Challenges

The challenges within the CS functional area of OCS are not in the execution of the contract but in the OCS constructs and authorities defined in doctrine. JP 4-10 allows for the formation of a lead service for contracting coordination (LSCC), a lead service for contracting (LSC), and ultimately a joint theater support contracting command. The problems center on the authorities given to the LSCC and LSC.

Despite designations from the combatant commander, most of the LSCC and LSC efforts fall apart because of how the services are funded and how they operate with their service contracting structures. The LSCC should give the services the ability to cross-coordinate to support an operation, but it lacks the authority to require a service do anything outside of its capacity or normal operations.

While the LSC construct somewhat minimizes this lack of directive authority, it presents other problems as the various service contracting activities do not readily prescribe to another service having the authority



Air Force 1st Lt. Jessica D'Ambrosio completes a simulated payment to contractor role player Senior Airman Michael Burkett at the Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise 2017 on March 20, 2017. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Chad Chisholm)

to direct its contracting resources. In reality, there is a distinct lack of joint contracting, which exasperates the challenges of contracting efficiencies.

This lack of influence in either construct does not support the joint contracting support board, which the contracting community uses to deconflict competing efforts in order to support the warfighter more efficiently.

CM Challenges

CM is the third function of OCS and is usually the most problematic. The fact that DOD personnel are effectively blind in CSI plays out in CM execution. If you cannot see your contracts and contractors, then you cannot manage them or provide effective oversight. If you cannot manage and oversee this part of the total force, then you cannot guarantee the desired operational support required to meet the commander's intent.

This aspect of OCS also has a doctrinal deficiency. While CSI has the JRRB and CS has the joint contracting support board, no such board assists a commander in CM. The corrective measure is to establish a commander's contract review board (CCRB) at which subordinate staff or unit commanders brief contracts that support the operation.

The briefings should address five management areas:

- Contract description and life cycle.
- Period of performance and follow-on requirements.
- Contracting officer representatives (CORs) assigned to oversee the contract.
- COR monthly reporting.
- Overall contract performance.

The CCRB would ensure that the contract is overseen and performed, tie the contract to the command, and tie the contract to the operational plan and commander's intent.

The Positives

Despite the concerns about OCS, tremendous progress has been made over the past 10 years. OCS is gaining

prominence as a mainstay for supporting contingency operations. Both the Army and the Air Force have designated OCS proponents. The Combined Arms Support Command has an OCS Training and Doctrine Command capability manager assigned for Army doctrine and organization development.

Combatant commanders have started to source OCSICs in the U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Pacific Command. During contingencies, OCSICs are now almost always established for joint task forces and commands and even in some subordinate task forces.

The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff continue to work to improve OCS systems across CSI, CM, and CS in order to address contract visibility and management issues. Training is improving with the Joint OCS Planning and Execution Course, the Army's OCS Course, and the Joint Staff-sponsored OCS Joint Exercise.

Recommendations

OCS has the most impact at the joint task force, corps, division, theater sustainment command, and expeditionary sustainment command levels. Combatant commanders set policy and guidance, but OCS execution, deconfliction, and management are at those levels. Commanders must plan for contracts and contractors and establish an OCSIC to manage this part of the formation.

Planners should establish, use, and leverage strategic sources and agencies in the battlespace. These include theater support contracts, the Army Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, Defense Logistics Agency Troop Support, and others. The solution does not always have to be service-centric; capabilities and capacities in the other services may in fact support an operation better. Joint solutions provide operational unity of effort and, in many cases, result in cost efficiencies.

Trained, responsible personnel should be assigned as CORs to man-

age and oversee contracted efforts. The JRRB should be used for validation, and some form of CCRB should be established to manage the contracted effort supporting the operation.

Units should increase their contact with their supporting contracting organizations. In the Army, these organizations are aligned with Army service component commands, corps, divisions, and brigade combat teams, but in a joint environment they may be aligned differently. Communication will ensure the contract executors know how they fit into the operational scheme and where a business timeline must fill an operational need.

If treated as a planned, synchronized, and integrated part of an operation, OCS will have a more positive impact on the overall operation. Commanders will appreciate the increased operating tempo, the taxpayer will appreciate the efficiencies, and the warfighters will be better supported.

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