

Operational Contract Support:  
Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

Independent Research Project

Major Leah M. Meyer  
Air Command and Staff College, AY18

## **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the US government, the Department of Defense, or Air University. In accordance with Air Force Instruction 51-303, it is not copyrighted, but is the property of the United States government.



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

It is indisputable that defense contractors have played a vital role in US warfare historically. Without a drastic change in the way the US executes joint operations, they will continue to do so into the future. Contractor support of the military dates back prior to the Revolutionary War, and has continued to be a part of every conflict since then.<sup>1</sup> To highlight the current reliance upon non-organic support, the ratio of troops to contractors has gone from 10:1 in Desert Storm in 1991 to 1:1.4 in Afghanistan in 2010.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, in 2007, contractor personnel accounted for 50% of US manpower in the Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR).<sup>3</sup> By 2012, contractor personnel represented 72% of US manpower in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> These contractors are performing myriad roles, from force protection to military training to peacekeeping operations.<sup>5</sup> Simply stated, in this day and age, “it is impossible to deploy without [contractors].”<sup>6</sup> However, the US does a poor job of identifying operational shortfalls early enough to ensure maximum benefit from non-organic sources. Historically, this is a trend that carries into today’s operations and necessitates increased focus beginning from the shaping phase. Rarely, if ever, does the military properly prepare for the various support mechanisms this extensive contractor footprint requires.<sup>7</sup> Operational Contract Support (OCS) is the concept that is meant to change all of that. This paper begins with a look at OCS background and specifics. From there, it examines OCS advantages and disadvantages via a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLP-F) approach. Next, it will analyze survey results pertaining to OCS and, finally, conclude with recommendations going forward, primarily for the US Air Force officer corps.

### **An Explanation of OCS Background and Specifics**

So, why OCS? What does OCS provide that can help the Department of Defense (DoD) to not only properly prepare for contractor involvement in operations but also to take an

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

aggregate look at operational shortfalls and meet the commander's intent using non-organic support? Joint Publication (JP) 4-10 states that OCS is "the process of planning for and obtaining supplies, services, and construction from commercial sources in support of Combatant Commander (CCDR)-directed operations through the related contract support integration, contracting support, and contractor management functions."<sup>8</sup> It is a concept that looks across the theater and attempts to create battlespace effects. OCS is more than a mere logistics function; it provides "responsiveness, effectiveness, and efficiency across the full spectrum of warfighting capabilities and functions," an important consideration based on the extent to which the military relies on non-organic support.<sup>9</sup> The Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-2018 DoD Operational Contract Support Action Plan highlights such reliance:

- Modern warfare relies heavily on contractor-maintained equipment not available in the warfighting force structure
- Contractor support can be added or increased much quicker during a conflict than military or civilian manpower can (and usually done at a lower cost)
- As the military has downsized, some logistics and support functions have been outsourced
- The DoD has emphasized shedding those capabilities that are not inherently military in nature<sup>10</sup>

The Air Force recognizes that as operations continue in this current day and age, reliance on contractors is likely to grow, as the military "downsizes and stresses its already lean sustainment capabilities."<sup>11</sup> In the future, the military will likely lean even more so on OCS in an effort to fill capability gaps.<sup>12</sup> It would take a tremendous expansion in military budget and personnel to recapture some of the critical capabilities that have been outsourced over the past decades, a scenario that is unlikely to become a reality anytime soon. Given the shrinking force size over the years and budget battles that continue, military forces cannot afford to "go it alone." While senior leaders seem to agree that contractors play a vitally important role as will be

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

discussed in further detail, this message does not seem to be making its way down the chain of command or adjusting the way the forces are educated to highlight the reality of how the US executes joint operations.

Since 2010, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has stressed the need for the DoD to incorporate OCS into its planning efforts, as well as examine current assumptions regarding how contractors can and will be utilized in various roles throughout operations.<sup>13</sup> The shaping phase, or those actions that help “set the conditions for successful execution,”<sup>14</sup> encompasses steady-state efforts and is a crucial time to determine what a local economy has to offer as well as solidify relationships with our allies.<sup>15</sup> The conundrum here is that despite the increasing reliance on government contractors, there remains a culture of reluctance to properly plan for the necessary non-organic support. This results in a less than optimal employment of these personnel, when in fact OCS has the ability to bridge operational shortfalls and serve as a critical force multiplier.

One example of OCS serving as such a force multiplier comes from Joint Task Force (JTF)-510 during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF)-Philippines. JTF-510 is a Special Operations Command-Pacific (SOCPAC) unit that provides rapid crisis response in the region to the US Commander in Chief, Pacific (PACOM). During Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), JTF-510 operated in the Philippines training Philippine Special Operation Forces targeting Abu Sayyaf, a terror group affiliated with al-Qaeda. A strict manpower constraint was levied on the JTF Commander, Lt Gen Donald Wurster, as only 600 military personnel were permitted in the joint operating area.<sup>16</sup> Due to these limitations, the operation heavily leveraged contractors to provide life support. In order to clearly define and deconflict requirements, a review board, much like a Joint Acquisitions Review Board, was initiated. As JTF-510 was

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

unable to bring the organic support necessary to establish basing, it instead utilized the Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP) to support the CCMD strategy as well as comply with the manpower cap. Several projects were initiated by looking to the local population to set up transportation services, build indigenous huts, as well as restore damaged buildings for operations. These efforts ended up being more than just simply projects and transactions; they created effects and cultivated relationships with the local populace. Additionally, military manpower was freed up to focus on other mission areas, such as training and assisting Philippine forces in tracking down terrorist cells in the area.

Joint collaboration relies heavily on doctrinal development and usage.<sup>17</sup> JP4-10 is the DoD's attempt to solidify how the US plans for and fills capability shortfalls in theater by looking across the entire battlespace and aggregating requirements, in order to efficiently and effectively meet the CCDRs Lines of Effort (LOE). An example of this came during Operation TOMADACHI in 2011, in which the US provided assistance following a disastrous earthquake and tsunami in Japan. In order to meet the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief LOE, the US military put forth a mandate that all contracted generators were slated for humanitarian purposes before use for US forces.<sup>18</sup> This sent a strong message to the Japanese that the US' primary concern was delivering aid to where it was needed above all else. It not only served to provide power at a crucial time and place, but it helped to achieve a line of effort, reinforcing US commitment and intent to help Japan recover from these devastating events.

While OCS is a relatively new concept, developing primarily over the past decade, leadership at the highest levels has quickly realized the value in what it brings to the fight; not only products and services but relationships and asymmetrical advantages. However, farther down the chain of command that message is lost. Military forces writ large, the Air Force being

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

no exception, are uneducated and uninterested in OCS for the most part. These sentiments are exacerbated in joint operations around the globe when the immense contractor presence inevitably arrives and the DoD is wholly unprepared to support these individuals.

Figure 1.1 – What is Operational Contract Support?



In order to fully explore what OCS can offer, an examination of the advantages and disadvantages of such will be accomplished via a doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLP-F) analysis approach.

### A DOTMLP-F Analysis of the OCS Construct

In order to better understand the pros and cons of the OCS construct, an examination of the literature, as well as an analysis of 53 questionnaire responses received from three Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC), will drive the conversation. Points of discussion are noted as either Advantages (A) or Disadvantages (D).



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

### **Doctrine**

**(A1) JP 4-10.** While JP4-10 may not be a perfect product, baselining the OCS construct in doctrine gives credence to the pursuit of a “programmatic approach on behalf of the JFC and supporting combatant commanders” of operational requirements planning and execution.<sup>19</sup> As “military doctrine is what we believe about the best way to conduct military affairs,” this guidance is compiled based on the various successes and failures of each service as well as visualizes an OCS path forward.<sup>20</sup> The fact that OCS has been formalized in JP4-10 showcases that utilizing this construct to meet the commander’s LOE is a joint problem and necessitates a joint solution. JP4-10 usage ensures all services are operating from the same basic guidance and using the same baseline model to support warfighter needs.

**(D1) Doctrine Shortfalls.** The issue with housing the joint publication for OCS under the “4” function is that it makes it a “logistics” problem, when in fact, this is an element of operational planning. Maj Gen Darrell Williams, former commanding general of the Army Combined Arms Support Command and Sustainment Center of Excellence, stressed that “we must embrace the fact that OCS is not merely a sustainment or logistics function.”<sup>21</sup> The military’s reliance on non-organic support to fill capability shortfalls cannot be ignored, and OCS is a critical element of operational planning. As noted in the CENTCOM OCS study, “the JP-3 series, Joint Operations, and the draft JP5-0, Joint Planning, have limited references to OCS and its role in joint operations and planning respectively.”<sup>22</sup> Brig Gen Holt, Air Force Installation Contracting Agency (AFICA), made the point that integrating additional OCS guidance into JP3-0 and JP5-0 doctrine would be a worthwhile and relevant consideration given current shortfalls in the construct.<sup>23</sup> The DoD should consider whether situating OCS under the JP-4 construct makes the most sense, and perhaps take a hard look at the 3- and 5-functions to



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

determine if OCS fits better in either of those realms. As GAO pointed out, OCS is “primarily an operational, versus a contracting, function.”<sup>24</sup> The reality is that if OCS were to be included as part of Joint Operations or Joint Planning, the result would likely be a more responsive and knowledgeable force as a whole, bridging the capability gap early in the planning process and resulting in a more effective initial plan.

### **Organization**

**(A1) Ownership at Joint Staff and Service Component Level.** One advantage of OCS organization is the fact that it resides at the Joint Staff or Service Component Headquarters level. With this comes the ability to look across the forces to identify and aggregate warfighter needs in an effort to meet the commander’s intent. Situating this responsibility any lower would present challenges to gaining comprehensive perspective and the ability to respond at the level necessary to mitigate warfighting shortfalls.

**(D1) Service-specific Idiosyncrasies.** One inherent difficulty in executing OCS is that the different services have developed their own way of doing things, which can lead to redundancy, frustration, and delays, ultimately degrading the value of OCS. For example, during Hurricane Matthew recovery efforts in 2016, a Senior Contract Official (SCO) office was established to assist both NORTHCOM and SOUTHCOM. In this instance, one Air Force Contingency Contracting Officer (CCO) was deployed in support of Marine Corps Forces South (MARFORSOUTH), designated as the Lead Service for Contracting (LSC). However, the warrant that the Air Force CCO held was not recognized by MARFORSOUTH, nor would the organization issue the airman a warrant to enable him to act in a CCO capacity.<sup>25</sup> In order to obligate funds on behalf of the government, a Contracting Officer must hold a warrant, which certifies that the individual has the power to do so. This is one example of the service’s inability

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

to work “jointly” in a contingency environment because of simple bureaucratic restrictions.

Although additional recommendations will be detailed, suffice it to say that the DoD would be wise to look at how to recognize CCO warrants across the forces in contingency environments and determine universal criteria for holding and utilizing a “joint” CCO warrant. At a minimum, the DoD must establish an expedited warrant transfer system for contingency situations.

**(D2) Name Designation.** Almost all GCC staff members contacted regarding OCS brought up the fact that the name *Operational Contract Support* should be changed. The issue is that the minute the word “contract” is added to any program or construct, it immediately designates this as contracting’s responsibility in the minds of most and warrants only a feigning of interest. It becomes a struggle to convince individuals, let alone directorates, that this is something that not only applies to them but also an effort they share responsibility in executing.

One must consider how the name itself may be affecting this. Max Bazerman, an Organizational Behaviorist, is an expert on different biases. One that fits with this scenario is the “Retrievability of Instances” bias.<sup>26</sup> This has to do with one’s past experience with a specific subject or situation. Since officers’ experience with contracting tends to be very limited, they are more inclined to assume anything in the “contracting” domain falls squarely in contracting’s realm of responsibility, as it most likely has in the past. This is a reality that leaders must be aware of in order to overcome this misperception. As Col Robert Widmann, Director of Contracting, AFICA Operating Location-Space Command, stated, “it’s unfortunate that ‘contract’ is in the title because the typical...leader’s reaction is to stay as far away from it as possible.”<sup>27</sup> It seems from early-on in careers, officers are taught that anything contracting-related is solely the responsibility of contracting itself.

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

### **Training**

**(A1) OCS Inclusion at Air Command and Staff College and Air War College.** Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) and Air War College (AWC) at Maxwell Air Force Base both devote part of one day to OCS.<sup>28</sup> With approximately 500 US military officers, primarily Field Grade Officers (FGOs), in attendance, this offers a broad opportunity to educate future joint staff action officers on what OCS is all about, what it can provide to the joint fight, and that it is a capability everyone shares a role in executing. This awareness of OCS is beneficial for the US military forces writ large and is value-added in the ACSC and AWC curricula.

**(A2) Defense Contingency Contracting Handbook.** The Defense Contingency Contracting handbook does a good job of highlighting OCS at the various operational phases, as well as demonstrates where contingency contracting sits in the OCS framework. Version 5 of the handbook also addresses OCS processes and boards that are integral to its execution. This handbook is a much-improved version of its predecessors and serves as a useful tool for the contracting corps today, connecting contracting efforts to the broader strategic picture.<sup>29</sup> The important variable here is how it is included and utilized as part contingency contracting training efforts, which is almost entirely dependent upon the organization executing that program.

**(D1) No Mandatory Training for Senior Leaders.** While leadership at the very top of the Air Force such as the Secretary of the Air Force (SECAF) and Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) recognize the importance of institutionalizing OCS, further down the chain of command the concept is lost on key individuals.<sup>30</sup> These are the joint commanders and deployed air base wing commanders who, although they have attended preparatory schools and training for their position, have seldom if ever been introduced to the concept of OCS. This is a gaping hole that exists in the education of those leaders that play a vital role in OCS execution. It is also another

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

missed educational opportunity to inform key individuals of the various mechanisms available to enable the forces to tie-into broader strategic goals. The benefits of such training would extend far beyond each operating location and have impacts across the joint operating area.

**(D2) OCS Inclusion at Accessions Training, Squadron Officer School.** The flip side of OCS inclusion at ACSC and AWC is that it is not discussed elsewhere in the officer Professional Military Education (PME). Although there is some contracting-specific training at certain schoolhouses, such as the Civil Engineer School and Aircraft Maintenance Officer Course, the lessons taught are applicable at primarily the base-level and there is no mention of the broader, strategic implications of OCS.<sup>31</sup> This makes sense to a degree, as students in these programs are primarily second lieutenants who will be in their first assignment. However, it offers an opportunity to set the tone that important distinctions exist between base-level contracting and OCS, and that the latter warrants as much attention as the former. These discussions would help to solidify OCS in an officer's vernacular from the beginning of their careers. Brig Gen Holt concluded that the US will "never effectively integrate OCS until war planners understand how to exploit OCS to the same degree they would any other military capability."<sup>32</sup> Without expanding the reach of OCS training and education, OCS will continue to fall short in terms of warfighting contributions. Outreach to the entirety of military disciplines will determine the success of future OCS endeavors and the ability to realize the full benefits that JP4-10 can offer.

**(D3) Operational Contract Support Joint Exercise Downsizing.** Just recently, OCS-Joint Exercise (OCSJX) has been downsized. This exercise previously gathered over 450 service members from numerous career fields outside the standard trifecta of contracting, legal, and financial management to showcase cross-service and cross-specialty ownership of OCS. The

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

downsizing of this event comes at a detriment to the joint warfighting community. Enlisted and officer members alike from Logistics, Security Forces, Maintenance and other career fields took part in this exercise and realized in short order the role they played in OCS endeavors. Paring this exercise down to a minimal-force, contracting-centric effort is an enormous missed opportunity and only furthers the misperception that other specialties are absolved from any responsibility in executing OCS.

**(D4) Limited Contracting Understanding.** An additional OCS disadvantage is the lack of contracting personnel's understanding of the construct as well. This disadvantage will only grow in its importance to joint operations as time goes on, and as Col Richard Ward, Senior Contracting Official in support of Hurricane Matthew, states, "the lack of OCS knowledge in AF contracting personnel could be an issue in the future."<sup>33</sup> Up until FY 2018, only a 20-minute block in the Mission Ready Contracting Officer (MRCO) course had been devoted to OCS out of an entire 5-week curriculum. However, in recognition that OCS principles are growing in strategic importance and senior leaders are taking note of what OCS can contribute, that has being increased to a 90-minute block with associated testing material, as well as a devoted chapter in the MRCO handbook.<sup>34</sup> Limited understanding of OCS will continue until efforts such as these have taken root and enhanced the basic knowledge level of the contracting corps.

### **Material**

**(A) None noted.**

**(D) None noted.**

### **Leadership & education**

**(A1) Acknowledgement at the Highest Levels of OCS' Importance.** There is no shortage of acknowledgment that OCS is a critical endeavor at the highest levels of military

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

leadership, which gives credence to the efforts of OCS proponents looking to educate the force and obtain buy-in. In 2015, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense as well as the Vice Director of Logistics for Joint Staff J4 put forth that OCS is a “critical component of Total Force capability.”<sup>35</sup> General Petraeus, as Commander of International Security Assistance Forces – Afghanistan, stressed the importance of linking “contracting efforts to a winning counterinsurgency strategy.”<sup>36</sup> More recently, specifically within the Air Force, the SECAF and CSAF stated in a joint memorandum that OCS is a “crucial component of total force readiness, and is broader than just contracting” as well as that OCS is the “conduit to achieve the commander’s objectives.”<sup>37</sup> Endorsements at top echelons such as these give credibility to OCS and underscore the importance of comprehending what it brings to the joint fight.

**(D1) Lack of Understanding.** Yet despite the endorsements listed above, Brig Gen Holt may have said it best: “[OCS] as a capability is still largely viewed...as one-dimensional— simply a means to acquire logistics support when organic logistics is not available or feasible. *It is not yet widely viewed as a significant capability to define and achieve operational end states.*”<sup>38</sup> As part of this study, questionnaires were sent out to various organizations and joint staffs utilizing OCS. Of the 53 questionnaires returned, the vast majority cited “lack of understanding of OCS” as a primary issue facing those trying to lead such efforts. The de facto assumption is that it is just another logistics function. This perceived inadequacy is twofold; first, most military members fail to grasp the magnitude of contractor and other non-organic contributions to joint operations. This is prevalent at all levels, from the enlisted corps to flag-officers. The second reason that OCS is poorly understood is that many senior leaders, as well as action officers, do not understand that it is designed to fill critical capability shortfalls and is a

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

method to help combatant CCDRs achieve their LOEs. It becomes all too easy to brush off OCS when burdened with other tasks, believing that it warrants little time or consideration.

### **Personnel**

#### **(A) None noted.**

**(D1) Creation/Composition of the OCSIC.** The Operational Contract Support Integration Cell (OCSIC) is a crucial enabler of OCS in a joint staff, and its composition should depend on the specific operating area and mission. One of the downfalls of JP4-10 is its lack of guidance as to how best design and structure an OCSIC. As Maj Gen Casey Blake, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Contracting, stated, “doctrine should be specific on how to organize and tailor OCSICs” and that “the right mix of expertise and experience...ensure(s) that the OCSIC’s efforts are nested with the right priorities and objectives.”<sup>39</sup> As JP4-10 is going through a rewrite, it would behoove the DoD to focus on specific guidance for establishing an OCSIC, potentially even develop a guide or advanced echelon (ADVON) team that can establish the right mix of personnel within an OCSIC before turning it over for mission execution.

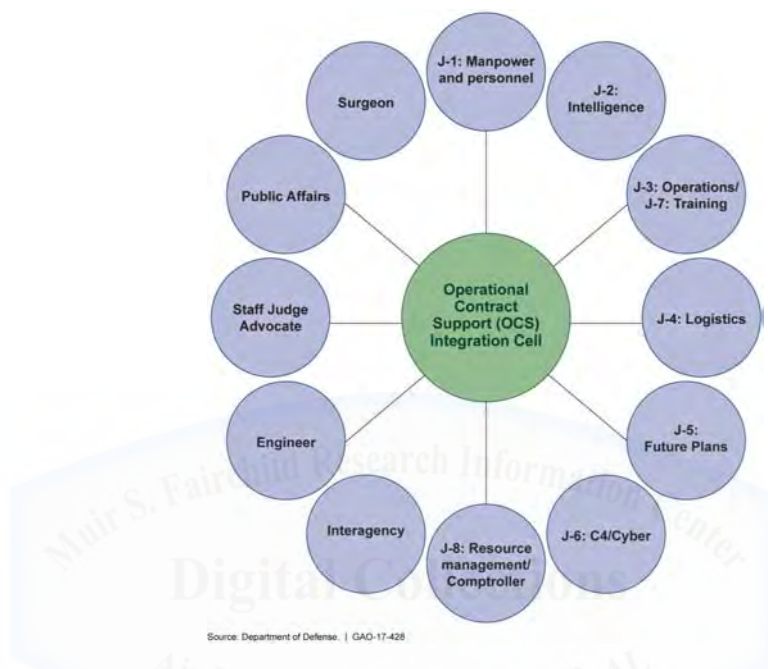
The OCSIC is a vital enabler of OCS at the GCC-level that can act as a “central coordination point” and is usually composed of a mixture of personnel of varying specialties.<sup>40</sup> While the intent is to incorporate a range of specialties, often the OCSIC is filled primarily by those within the logistics directorate. This, in turn, makes it “difficult to integrate OCS efforts in other directorates,” reinforces the view that OCS is a “separate function,” and complicates tasking outside of the logistics directorate.<sup>41</sup> The GAO report on OCS in the Pacific Region specifically calls this out as contradictory to the principle of shared responsibility, and emphasizes that a cultural change must occur to successfully change this misperception.<sup>42</sup> With that cultural change must come an understanding that every directorate plays a role in OCS. The



## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

reality is that contracting may need to be that advocate for this and the voice for OCS understanding and acceptance, even if it does not fall entirely on that community. Figure 1.2 gives a graphic depiction of an OCSIC and some of its interactions.

*Figure 1.2 – OCSIC Interactions*



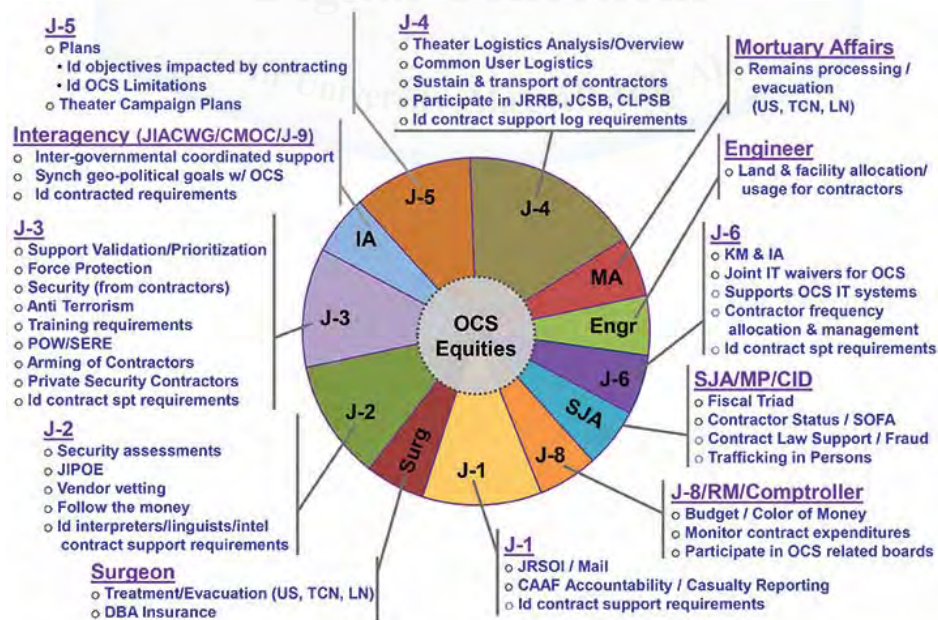
**(D2) Lack of Shared Responsibility...or, “Not My Job”.** This closely relates to the “Name Designation” discussion above, but there are important considerations pertaining specifically to personnel. Lt Col John Cooper, Department of the Army Headquarters for Acquisitions, Logistics and Technology Organizational Integrator, gave one of the better depictions of OCS responsibilities when he stated, “each staff section has some contracting equities and bears some responsibility for indoctrinating, managing, providing for, and interacting with contractors.”<sup>43</sup> However, the United States CENTCOM OCS Study acknowledged that “there still exists a common perception across the force that OCS is simply a contracting function under the responsibility of the J-4.”<sup>44</sup> Recognition that OCS is a process that all have a vested interest in continues to be a point of contention amongst the various GCC staffs.

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

As Col Christopher Wegner, Director of Contracting, AFICA Operating Location-Europe, stated, “A commander would never abdicate their ADCON/OPCON for organic capability to contracting, so why leave it up to contracting to do all the planning/analysis for similar ‘contracted’ capability?”<sup>45</sup> While the collective force sees OCS as “someone else’s job,” this is far from reality. Commanders need to look at this process as one that fills vital operational gaps and enables mission success, not akin to base-level contracts to clean offices and trim the grass.

In order for OCS to realize the full range of effects it is capable of, all career fields must understand that they have a role in OCS. This will require a both an education campaign as well as acceptance on the part of all levels of leadership as to OCS’ merits and the necessity of a collaborative approach. Figure 1.3 explains several of the roles the various staff functions play in regards to OCS.

Figure 1.3 – OCS Responsibilities Across the Staff



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

### **Facilities and Policy**

**(A1) Secretary of Defense Policy Memorandum.** One of the most recent documents highlighting the need for an attention shift to OCS comes from the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF). In his “Guidance from Secretary Jim Mattis” memorandum dated 5 October 2017, he states that streamlining the requirements and acquisition processes is one of his three primary lines of effort (LOE) in remaining the “world’s preeminent fighting force.”<sup>46</sup> OCS is a concept that fits well under this LOE as it seeks to streamline the process for obtaining non-organic support and looks across the battlespace to ensure capabilities shortfalls are filled and warfighter needs met. OCS proponents should capitalize on the advantageous timing of this memorandum and be prepared to tie OCS efforts back to this LOE.

**(D1) Varying Thresholds and Rules of Engagement.** Currently throughout the DoD, no less the case amongst the various GCCs, there exists varying rule sets and authorities to implement JP4-10 requirements. This can lead to confusion and disconnect when determining who is in charge, how the various boards are to run, and what is expected of each OCS participant. This ultimately leads to delays and frustrations. There is great merit in further joint exercises to sort through these kinds of questions and interface issues, although some fog and friction is likely unavoidable as is the nature of contingency and expeditionary operations.

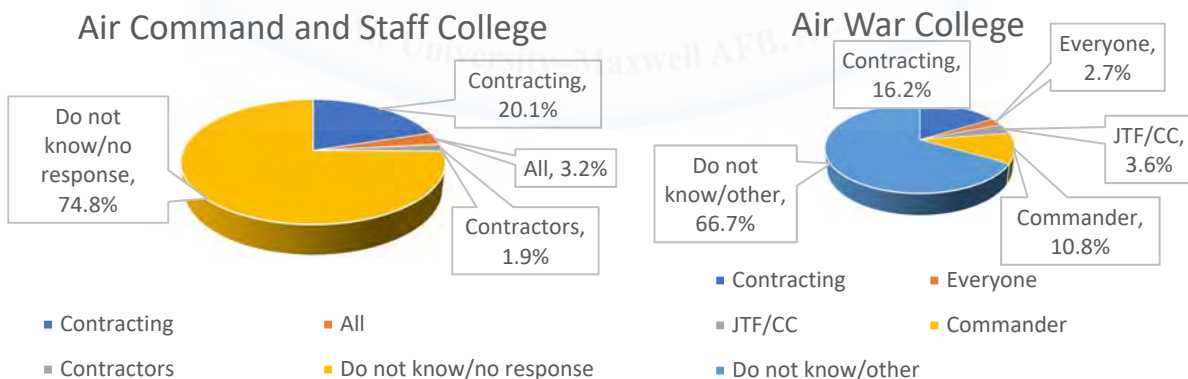
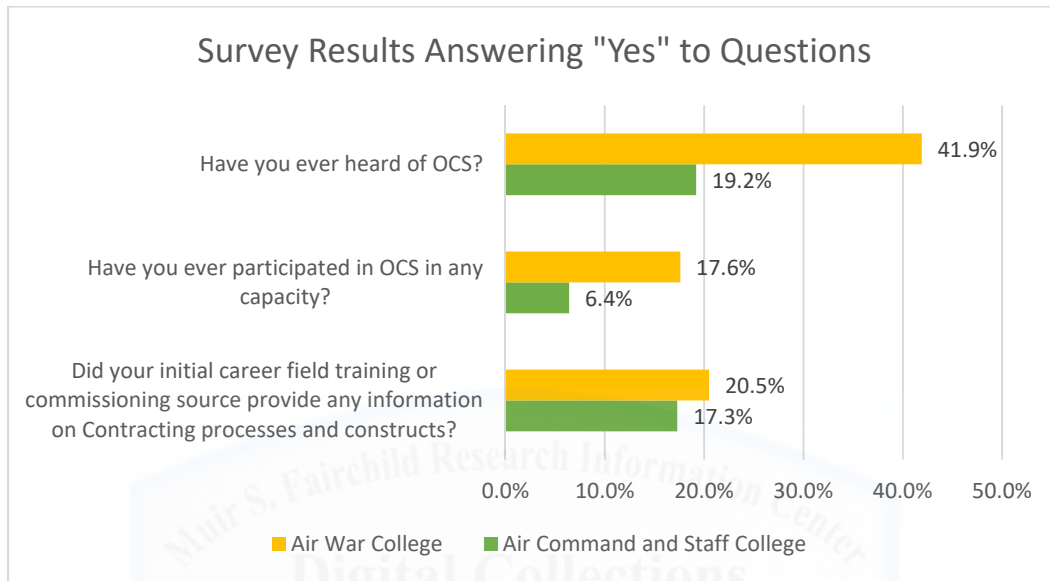
In summary, there exists both advantages and disadvantages pertaining to OCS. Recurring themes identified in the DOTMLP-F analysis include issues with the OCS name designation, lack of shared responsibility, and knowledge of OCS at all levels of leadership. These will be discussed again in the conclusions portion of this analysis.

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

### OCS Survey Results

A recent survey of 312 and 111 US military officers and civilians attending ACSC and AWC was conducted to determine knowledge and experience with OCS. The results are below.

#### Survey Results



One of the questions posed to students was, “Whose responsibility do you believe Operational Contract Support to be?” The ACSC results showed that 20% of respondents believed OCS to be solely contracting’s responsibility. This was by far the most common response, followed by 3% of respondents who stated OSC was “everyone’s responsibility” and 2% that specifically stated “contractors.” The AWC results showed that 16% believed OCS to be

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

contracting's responsibility, 10.8% thought it was the squadron commanders, and 3.6% believed it to be the JTF commander's. This highlights the varied degree of education and understanding amongst officers pertaining to this construct. Upon further analysis, there are explanations as to why the question of OCS responsibility produced such responses, in some cases no response at all, and how the Air Force may go about remedying this discrepancy.

The first plausible explanation as to why the majority of students did not grasp the role of each career field in OCS is due to a lack of education in officer accessions and initial career field training, as well as throughout PME as identified earlier. Inquiries were sent to 10 different offices executing initial career field training, and of the eight respondents, all noted inclusion of some element of contract support or contracting as part of their curriculum.<sup>47</sup> However, only one (contracting) made any mention of OCS. Often, training at these levels is developed in-house and changes come about as the schoolhouse reaches out to counterparts and inquires as to what is imperative and should be included as part of their training. In these instances, the contracting community must pass not only "Contracting 101" information in response, but also include OCS as imperative to touch on. While it is not the sole responsibility of contracting to execute OCS, contracting may need to be the voice of educational outreach and the catalyst for change. This is a chance to highlight the important distinction that while base-level contracting is one thing, OCS is another and is a construct in which all career fields have a vested interest.

In addition, Officer Training School (OTS), Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC), and the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) do not include any mention of OCS or anything regarding contractors and/or non-organic support as part of their curriculum.<sup>48</sup> This is a missed opportunity, as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Instruction 1800.01, the guiding document for joint training in officer accessions, specifically calls for cadets to be educated on

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

the combatant command structure as well joint warfighting principles.<sup>49</sup> Cadets enrolled in OTS, ROTC, or USAFA are a perfect target audience to set the foundation for the importance and criticality of OCS planning and principles. In this context it is possible to establish a framework that stresses the importance of contractors' role and the necessity of non-organic support in modern warfare. As contractors' presence on the battlefield is accordingly "a foregone conclusion" in modern warfare, the DoD must adjust its mentality and acknowledge the reality of how today's force accomplishes the mission.<sup>50</sup> In the most recent version of the Vision for Joint Officer Development posted on the CJCS website, one of two primary manpower strengths noted is "a diverse set of capabilities inherent in the various Services and other organizations that comprise the force...*as well as in external elements cooperating with the force.*"<sup>51</sup> Much of the diverse capability set referenced here comes from those capabilities that the US contracts out. One cannot help but make the connection here that the "external elements" speaks right to the heart of OCS.

Keeping in mind that only approximately 3% of FGOs and civilians at ACSC and AWC acknowledged that everyone was responsible for OCS, introducing and expanding the topic of OCS in military education and training would be a worthy endeavor. There is a long way to go in this regard and there are a great deal more conclusions to be drawn from these survey results; the intent here is to provide data points that can fuel the conversation and drive actions that can result in change and progress.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **1. Initial accession training should include training on the role of contractors**

As previously mentioned, ROTC, OTS, and USAFA training do not include any mention of OCS or the vital contributions contractors make to today's military forces. This lack of



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

acknowledgment comes at the detriment of those future leaders in that they will enter the force without being cognizant of how the military truly operates nor fully comprehend how large of a role contractors play in today's military operations. The CJCS Instruction for Officer PME is a document that seeks to "establish the habits of mind essential to our profession."<sup>52</sup> This document stresses that pre-commissioning training should give cadets "knowledge of the basic U.S. Defense structure, roles....and the nature of American military power and joint warfare."<sup>53</sup> To ignore that the number of deployed contractor personnel often outnumbers that of military on the battlefield today, combined with the disregard of the vital ways non-organic support fills capability shortfalls, is to create the illusion that the military "goes it alone" and paint an inaccurate picture of contemporary warfare.

The concepts taught in officers' accession training are critical and can serve as a foundational understanding of how the military operates. Concepts that are not applied immediately in one's career can still be later recalled, triggering the individual to remember that the topic is something worth paying attention to and an effort they have a vested interest in. This must be the case with OCS. If only three concepts pertaining to OCS were addressed in officer accessions training, they should be:

- 1) A brief explanation of what OCS is
- 2) An explanation that OCS is *different* than base contracting
- 3) An emphasis that *all* officers play a role in OCS, regardless of career field
- 4)

### **2. Formalize contractor considerations as part of joint force planning**

When it comes to considering contractor presence in the battlespace and contributions to the mission, too much emphasis is placed on short-term solutions, and often after the bulk of the force has arrived in theater. This leads to confusion, parallel efforts, and missed opportunities to



## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

capitalize on all that non-organic support can contribute. Additionally, this lack of foresight often leads to delays in locating and providing the various support necessities required for contractor personnel, such as lodging, food, and laundering services. This could be easily avoided if proper attention was paid prior to commencing operations. Planning for the large contractor presence that inevitably accompanies the force in theater campaigns can lead to better long-term solutions by ensuring the DoD is properly prepared to meet such demands. Additionally, proper planning ensures capability shortfalls are filled in the timeframe in which they are needed, not a “day late and a dollar short” to the fight. This must be formally institutionalized in today’s military planning. This is not in any way to suggest that a contractor should fill a military slot on a manning document, but some method must be identified to formally institutionalize planning for these capabilities and personnel. This contention is worthy of a separate study in and of itself to determine the best method of formalizing planning considerations for non-organic support.

### **3. Add OCS to SOS curriculum, expand in ACSC**

Captains attending Primary Developmental Education at Squadron Officer School (SOS) provide a proper audience to introduce the concept of OCS. Attendance at SOS occurs at the Captain-level and can serve to introduce the officer to OCS 4-7 years earlier than ACSC. With a 100% attendance rate for Air Force officers, versus only a 15% attendance rate for in-residence ACSC, this also hits the entire spectrum of career fields. SOS offers an opportunity to introduce the concept of OCS to a much more broad audience, driving home the basic premise of the construct and making important distinctions for military leaders to draw from down the road.

As it stands now, the first time most officers are introduced to the OCS construct is at in-residence ACSC. ACSC includes one module in its Joint Warfighting course, the equivalent of one hour of a three-hour block. While this is noteworthy, the content should be expanded and

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

make up the entirety of one full course day. Joint Warfighting is 37 days total and aims to “demonstrate, at the operational level, how the US joint force organizes, deploys, employs, sustains and redeploys military capabilities.”<sup>54</sup> OCS is a vital component of every one of those efforts, and merits more than one hour of training in this block. FGOs understanding of OCS matters to the joint fight. As Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Latham, OCS instructor at U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the Army equivalent of ACSC, stated, “commanders and staff officers receive little to no preparation for planning or managing” the OCS process.<sup>55</sup> The graduates of ACSC become tomorrow’s staff officers tackling the OCS workload, and as LTC Latham additionally stated, “the next deployment will probably depend on field grade officers to anticipate, define, coordinate and manage contract requirements,” even when they may know little about the process.<sup>56</sup> It behooves the Air Force to introduce OCS at SOS and expand the OCS portion of Joint Warfighting at ACSC, as well as examine what is being taught to ensure the message is in line with what officers need to be successful in a joint environment.

### **4. Make OCS a requirement for all deployed commanders and air base wing commanders**

As previously mentioned, the issue is not that those at the very top do not understand OCS or the importance of what it brings to the fight, but more so that the message has not managed to work its way down to the execution level. One reason for that is leaders, specifically wing commanders and those operating in a contingency environment, do not grasp what OCS is, how it works, or what it offers to the joint fight. When a leader is chosen to be a commander, the military recognizes this as an honor and a great responsibility. For that reason, squadron and wing commanders receive special training before they are sent off to fulfill their duties. A myriad of topics is introduced to them in these courses, and one that should be emphasized is OCS. This is particularly important for those going to serve as wing commanders in deployed locations.

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

These are the individuals that need to be able to recognize when the US may need to look across the battlespace, as well as act as the champions for what OCS has to offer. They are in the unique position of speaking for their entire organization and should have the most accurate site picture of capabilities and shortfalls.

### **5. Change the name**

Hearing “contract” or “contracting” in any conversation outside of the career field usually results in an individual either 1) cringing or 2) tuning-out to some degree, as the subject clearly is not something that applies to them. This has been a recurring theme throughout this analysis and discussion. That single word in the title “Operational Contract Support” has been one of the primary causes of individuals being resistant or apathetic when executing the construct. In looking at how to address this issue, the remedies are two-fold. One, put ample effort into reframing the word “contract” in the minds of officers beginning at pre-commissioning training and continuing through initial career field training, SOS, ACSC, and AWC. That will require considerable lobbying and rewriting of curricula, which contracting will likely bear the burden of spearheading. The second option, and arguably more appropriate, is to rename the construct altogether.

Considering alternative names for OCS is an idea that has merit and may result in a more accurate depiction of what the construct is trying to accomplish. OCS is about more than just contracts; as mentioned, it includes looking at Acquisitions Cross Service Agreements, Status of Forces Agreements, and Host Nation Agreements to name a few. Calling this construct *Operational Contract* Support gives a false impression that this is merely an extension of contracting. Contracting is known for emphasizing that others should not meddle in contract affairs or in any way give direction to contractors, which can both be valid contentions. The

## **Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here**

message is “stay out of our lane” and officers are warned of the gravity of things like ratifications and apparent authority. If the word “contract” were replaced with “requirements” it becomes a different story. Every career field has requirements, and officers are taught that they “own” those requirements. Removing the word “contract” from OCS and going through a reimagining campaign as it pertains to this construct would face much resistance up front and require extensive time and effort, but would be a worthwhile endeavor and solve some of the bigger issues when it comes to buy-in and shared responsibility. Suggestions for a more appropriate title include “Operational Non-Organic Support” and “Operational Requirements Execution.” Both of these provide a more accurate depiction of what OCS entails and refrain from targeting one particular career field for execution.

The US’ reliance on contractors and other non-organic support will remain a reality for the foreseeable future. While there is promise that leaders at the highest levels understand the criticality of what OCS brings to the fight, deliberate actions must be taken to ensure the entirety of the force understands this construct and their particular role in it. The OCS survey results show that the message is not reaching enough of the force and it becomes harder over time to convince an individual that a concept they may never have heard of is their responsibility to execute. While these actions should not fall solely on the contracting community to execute, the reality is that contracting may need to be the voice for change. There are various education and training avenues available that can achieve the kinds of results needed for OCS to take root in the officer corps today. It would also behoove the military to look at how to formally incorporate non-organic capabilities into joint force planning efforts. The most painstaking efforts may be those taken to change the phrase “OCS” itself, but those efforts would be paid back in the long

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

term when this imperative construct is universally accepted amongst all career fields and is able to deliver the full punch of what it can contribute to the joint fight.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Lt Col James Manker, Jr. and Col Kent Williams, “Global Combat Support System: a Must for the Warfighting Commander Contractors in Contingency Operations: Panacea or Pain.” (*Air Force Journal of Logistics*, Sep 2004).
- <sup>2</sup> Deborah Avant and Renee de Nevers, “Military Contractors & the American Way of War.” (*American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, Jun 2011), p. 2.
- <sup>3</sup> Department of Defense Analysis of the Interim Report of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. 4 Nov 2009, p. 32.
- <sup>4</sup> Heidi Peters, Moshe Schwartz, Lawrence Kapp. “Department of Defense Contractor and Troop Levels in Iraq and Afghanistan: 2007-2017.” (*Congressional Research Service*, Apr 2017).
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 3.
- <sup>6</sup> Lt Col James Manker, Jr. and Col Kent Williams, “Global Combat Support System: a Must for the Warfighting Commander Contractors in Contingency Operations: Panacea or Pain.” (*Air Force Journal of Logistics*, Sep 2004), p. 19.
- <sup>7</sup> Brigadier General Paul Pardew, Mike Rector and Bill Sanders. “Joint Operational Contract Support Challenges.” (*Army Sustainment Magazine*, Jul-Aug 2017).
- <sup>8</sup> JP 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, 16 July 2014.
- <sup>9</sup> Dorman, Maj Gen Edward and Lt Col William Latham, “Operational Contract Support: The Missing Ingredient in the Army Operating Concept.” (*Military Review*, Vol. 96, Issue 6, Nov-Dec 2016); p. 52-59.
- <sup>10</sup> Department of Defense Operational Contract Support Action Plan FY 2015 – FY 2018, 31 March 2015, p. 7.
- <sup>11</sup> Lt Col John Cooper, “Operational Contract Support Planning: Evolution to the Next Level.” (*Army Sustainment Magazine*, May-Jun 2013), p. 17.
- <sup>12</sup> Maj Gen Darrell Williams and Lt Col William Latham, Jr. “Sustainers Should Understand Operational Contract Support.” (*Army Sustainment*, May-June 2016), p. 4.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, p. 2.
- <sup>14</sup> Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, 17 January 2018, p. V-8.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 6.
- <sup>16</sup> Robinson, Linda, Patrick B. Johnston, and Gillian S. Oak, *U.S. Special Operations Forces in the Philippines, 2001–2014*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016: p. 28.
- <sup>17</sup> Bert Chapman, *Military Doctrine: A Reference Handbook*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International), 2009; p. 48.
- <sup>18</sup> Joint Operational Contract Support Planning and Execution Course (JOPEC), Day 1 Overview (p. 7).
- <sup>19</sup> JP 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, 16 July 2014, p. x.
- <sup>20</sup> Col. Dennis M Drew and Dr. Donald M. Snow, *Making Strategy, An Introduction to National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force AL.: Air University Press, August 1988), p. 163.
- <sup>21</sup> Maj Gen Darrell Williams and Lt Col William Latham, Jr. “Sustainers Should Understand Operational Contract Support.” (*Army Sustainment*, May-June 2016), p. 5.
- <sup>22</sup> United States Central Command OCS Study, Oct 2017, p. 12.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 12.
- <sup>24</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives. “Operational Contract Support: Actions Needed to Enhance Capabilities in the Pacific Region.” Jun 2017, p. 5.
- <sup>25</sup> Col Richard Ward, “After Action Report for Senior Contract Official (SCO) Operations in Support of Hurricane Matthew,” 26 Oct 2016.
- <sup>26</sup> Max Bazerman, *Judgment in Managerial Decision Making*, (New York, NY: Wiley), 1986; p. 18.
- <sup>27</sup> Col Robert Widmann. Email to Leah Meyer, 30 Mar 18.
- <sup>28</sup> Air Command and Staff College, “Joint Warfighting: How We Fight.” Academic Year 2018 Syllabus, Maxwell AFB, AL: 2018, p. 72.

## Operational Contract Support: Where We Are and Where We Go From Here

---

- <sup>29</sup> Defense Procurement and Acquisition Policy, Contingency Contracting. *Defense Contingency Contracting Handbook*. Washington, D.C., 2017.
- <sup>30</sup> Honorable Deborah Lee James and General Mark Welsh, “Guidance for Integrating OCS,” 21 Apr 2016.
- <sup>31</sup> Numerous, emails to Leah Meyer, dated Nov 2017 – Mar 2018.
- <sup>32</sup> Brigadier General Cameron Holt, “Integrating OCS into the American Way of War,” 17 Jan 2017.
- <sup>33</sup> Col Richard Ward, “After Action Report for Senior Contract Official (SCO) Operations in Support of Hurricane Matthew,” 26 Oct 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> Paul Joyce. E-mail to Leah Meyer, 13 Mar 2018.
- <sup>35</sup> Department of Defense Operational Contract Support Action Plan, FY 2015-2018. 31 Mar 2015, p. iii.
- <sup>36</sup> United States Central Command OCS Study, Oct 2017, p. viii.
- <sup>37</sup> Honorable Deborah Lee James and General Mark Welsh, “Guidance for Integrating OCS,” 21 Apr 2016.
- <sup>38</sup> Brigadier General Cameron Holt, “Integrating OCS into the American Way of War,” 17 Jan 2017.
- <sup>39</sup> Major General Casey Blake, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Contracting, Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, 29 Jan 2017.
- <sup>40</sup> JP 4-10, *Operational Contract Support*, 16 July 2014, p. III-3 and III-7.
- <sup>41</sup> United States Government Accountability Office, Report to the Subcommittee on Readiness, Committee on Armed Services, House of Representatives. “Operational Contract Support: Actions Needed to Enhance Capabilities in the Pacific Region.” Jun 2017, p. 22.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>43</sup> Lt Col John Cooper, “Operational Contract Support Planning: Evolution to the Next Level.” (*Army Sustainment Magazine*, May-Jun 2013), p. 21.
- <sup>44</sup> United States Central Command OCS Study, Oct 2017, p. vii.
- <sup>45</sup> Col Christopher Wegner, AFICA/KU, email dated 19 Mar 2018.
- <sup>46</sup> Office of the Department of Defense, Guidance from Secretary Jim Mattis, memorandum, 5 Oct 2017.
- <sup>47</sup> Numerous, emails to Leah Meyer, dated Nov 2017 – Mar 2018.
- <sup>48</sup> Kevin T. O’Meara, Chief, Commissioned Education. Email to Leah Meyer, ref. CJCSI 1800.A1E, 14 Mar 2018.
- <sup>49</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” 29 May 2015.
- <sup>50</sup> Lourdes Castillo, “Waging War with Civilians Asking the Unanswered Questions.” (*Aerospace Power Journal*, Fall 2000, Vol. 14 Issue 3), p. 26.
- <sup>51</sup> CJCS Vision for Joint Officer Development, Nov 2005, p. 4.
- <sup>52</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 1800.01E, “Officer Professional Military Education Policy,” 29 May 2015, p. 1.
- <sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. A-A-6.
- <sup>54</sup> Joint Warfighting, “How We Fight” syllabus, Academic Year 2018; p. 3.
- <sup>55</sup> Lt Col William Latham, “Operational Contract Support: Five Things Every Field Grade Officer Should Know.” (*Military Review*, May-June 2012), p. 17.
- <sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 18.

Thank you to LCDR Keith Skillin and Maj Kresten Jensen for their thoughtful insights. Any errors found within are my own.