The U.S. Army has been procuring goods and services from the private sector since long before there was a United States. Individual handcrafted rifles and pistols, food and clothing, gunpowder and lead were some of the not particularly sophisticated needs of the nascent republic’s Army.

But acquisition today is more than procurement, and today the Army’s needs are very sophisticated indeed. The Hon. Heidi Shyu, the Army acquisition executive, is also the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology, and nowadays “acquisition” is an umbrella term that indicates not only procurement, logistics, and science and technology, but also research and development, contracting, sustainment, maintenance—and anything else in the cradle-to-grave life cycle of defense materiel and services. The general umbrella of acquisition may encompass more subspecialties than any other field in DOD.

The story of acquisition as we know it today is also a parallel history of legislation and regulation begat of investigations and presidential commissions—in particular the Packard Commission, also known as the President’s Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management, in 1986—and in reaction to procurement-related scandals. The Packard Commission, chaired by David Packard, co-founder of Hewlett-Packard Co. and the deputy secretary of defense from 1969 to 1971, came about as a result of headline-grabbing cost anomalies during the military buildup in the first term of President Ronald Reagan, such as $600 hammers and $700 toilet seats.

The Packard Commission’s report was followed by the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which created an acquisition executive for each service. Until the report and the ensuing legislation, the concept of a professional “acquisition workforce” as we know it today did not exist. The commission’s report resulted in, among other things, the creation of the undersecretary of defense for acquisition as well as the acquisition executive positions. It also led to the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act in 1990, the creation of the Defense Acquisition University in 1991, and a host of other reforms that are part of the way Army acquisition does business today.

In 1989, GEN Carl E. Vuono, then chief of staff of the Army and previously the commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, authorized the establishment of
The FIRST 25 YEARS

As is often the case, the history of the Army Acquisition Corps (AAC) doesn’t begin with its actual founding. Rather, it begins in the recommendations of the Packard Commission and the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. As a result of that legislation, the Army created a three-tiered acquisition management chain in 1987 that consisted of the Army acquisition executive, program executive officers (PEOs) and project or program managers. PEOs were established for cost and performance of specific acquisition programs, and project and program managers in turn reported to their respective PEOs. Twenty PEOs were established by May 1987.GEN Carl E. Vuono signed the memo that would create the AAC in 1989. The Defense Workforce Improvement Act followed in 1990, and Defense Acquisition University followed quickly in 1991.

This timeline of the first five continuous years from inception from the PEOs with Army ALICT magazine staff reports. It is meant to be enhanceable, but to provide a general overview of how far the AAC and the Army Acquisition and Logistics Technologies Workforce have come in 25-30 decades.

PEAVATION Portals of all Army equipment to fully armed configuration. Con/figuring 81 armed configuration.

Retrofit of all AHIP programs are aligned.

Control Radar, Radar Control Radar, Radar Longbow Fire added to PM UAS unmanned aircraft MQ-5B Hunter.

1990 – February

PEO EIS

DAWIA

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that the Army Acquisition Corps as a cadre of elite acquisition professionals, both military and civilian, that would serve as the training ground for critical acquisition positions at the top levels of Army acquisition.

Over the past 25 years, a number of acquisition reform recommendations have focused on making incremental improvements to various aspects of the acquisition process, including organization, budget and requirements. The 1993 Section 800 Report streamlined acquisition laws by reviewing legislation and recommending repeals or amendments. Also in 1993, the National Performance Review recommended the use of commercial standards for acquisition programs and ultimately led to the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994, which simplified procurement code.

That same year, Secretary of Defense William J. Perry issued a memorandum outlining major changes in the use of military specifications and standards; many saw the existing specifications and standards as imposing unnecessary restrictions, increasing costs and slowing technology development. His memo called for modifying military requirements, changes in configuration control, a reduction in oversight, and a number of new cultural and process approaches required to implement these changes.

Some three years later, Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen issued the Defense Reform Initiative, designed to streamline DOD’s organizational structure and business practices. The initiative centered on reforms in acquisition, logistics and financial management, and led to the creation of the Defense Management Council and the Defense Reform Initiatives Office. In 1999, the assistant secretary of the Army for research, development and acquisition was rechristened the assistant secretary of the Army for acquisition, logistics and technology—and Army RD&A magazine became Army AL&T.

In late 2001, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld, speaking at DOD’s “Acquisition and Logistics Excellence Week,” issued a challenge “to shift [the] Pentagon’s resources from bureaucracy to the battlefield, from tail to the tooth.” He announced an overhaul of DOD’s planning, programming and budgeting system and called for increased business agility and tapping private-sector business expertise to help streamline the acquisition process and spur innovation in the supplier base.

Five years later, the 2006 Defense Acquisition Performance Assessment Report proposed changes to the acquisition process that would improve DOD’s ability to deliver capabilities to the warfighter by stabilizing and integrating all six elements of the acquisition system: organization, workforce, budget, requirements, acquisition and industry. In the past, acquisition had taken place in a global environment dominated by only a few strategic threats. However, the assessment concluded, the current security environment presented dynamic security challenges and rapidly changing needs, and the acquisition process needed flexibility and agility to respond to those issues.

In 2009, Congress passed the Weapon Systems Acquisition Reform Act, changing the way the Pentagon contracts and purchases major defense acquisition programs to reduce procurement costs. The legislation created DOD’s Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation to analyze new program costs, increasing the emphasis on testing new weapons before they enter production. Defense procurement now accounts for roughly 10 percent of discretionary federal spending, making it a popular target in the current climate of declining budgets and shifting overseas military operations. In March 2014, Rep. Mac Thornberry, R–TX, held the first hearings of a 14-month bipartisan initiative in the House Armed Services Committee that focuses on reforming defense acquisition. Among the issues under consideration are improvements in recruiting, training and developing the acquisition workforce; empowering key acquisition personnel to make effective decisions; enhancing technical expertise needed to support successful acquisition projects; and improvements in planning, contracting and managing services contracts.

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