

Keystones Get Taste of Work

*By Mark Woodbury
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The inaugural group of eight Keystones selected to participate in a 60-day temporary duty assignment within the Defense Contract Management Agency International Division will be leaving for their assignments within the International Division's contracting management offices in the coming days.

The 60-day TDY assignment was implemented by the International Division to help expose the

third-year Keystones to working conditions in the international environment while also alleviating concerns and rumors regarding an overseas assignment.

Bob Gibson, DCMAI Technical Operations director, said his ultimate hope is that the exposure to DCMAI will entice many of the Keystones to come back and do a full-time assignment within the division. "This opportunity removes some of the mystery of working internationally and

exposes Keystones to international operations," he said. "Also, we hope to encourage them to think of future opportunities here."

Getting the program in place has not been an easy road and has been a work in progress within the division for some years. "I have been discussing various ideas and programs for about two years," said Kathy Butera. "I am excited we have been able to collaborate with all the parties involved with the Keystone program to come up with a program that benefits both the participants and the division. I am confident the Keystones' exposure to the international working environment is going to make them better employees overall while hopefully enticing them to have a desire to take an assignment with the division later in their careers."

Kevin Atkinson, DCMA Santa Ana – Irvine contract administrator, who is scheduled to go to Canada, said this opportunity will allow him to get out of a self-described "comfort zone." He added, "I have lived and worked in the Southern California area for my entire life. I needed to step out of my comfort zone and allow myself to grow both personally and professionally through this experience." Atkinson



Scott Blank, Defense Contract Management Agency International Division deputy director, speaks to Keystones about working in an international environment before they leave for a temporary-duty assignment within the division at DCMAI headquarters building in Alexandria, VA. (DCMA photo)

Working Internationally

said he is also looking forward to being able to offer feedback to program leaders after his TDY. He said there is a certain amount of satisfaction that comes from knowing his ideas will help shape and better the TDY experience for those who participate in the program after him.

For another participant, he feels this experience is going to allow him to become a better all-around employee. “Having been born in the Philippines, I want to give back as much as I can to the country that has given me and my family so much,” said Rafael Llana, DCMA Santa Anna – Irvine mechanical engineer, who is scheduled to go to Germany. “I really feel this opportunity is going to help make me a better all-around employee and civil servant.”

For Laura Herbst-Agee, DCMA Combat Vehicles BAE York quality assurance representative, who is scheduled to go to Kuwait, getting the opportunity to see how an office operates in an international environment, while also being able to link what she was working on in the U.S. internationally, attracted her to the opportunity.

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According to David Andersen, Keystone recruiter, opening up the opportunity for Keystones to see the international work environment is a win-win for all. “This will only be a good deal for everyone,” Andersen said. “The Keystone will get a fabulous experience, and we get a happier, well-trained and loyal employee.”

Andersen said he is also looking forward to using the TDY opportunity as a talking point to future potential Keystones. “The market for recruiting is tough even in these hard economic times, and a lot of the competition comes from other government agencies, which people may find surprising,” he stated. “This allows me yet another perk — if you will — to offer candidates.”

Keystones were selected based on their submitted resumes, college transcripts, a list of training

courses attended and endorsement letters from their directors and supervisors. Additionally, applicants were also asked to submit a letter sharing their thoughts on:

- Why they wanted to go on an overseas rotation
- What they felt it would do for them personally
- What it would do to help the agency as a whole.

For more information on the Keystone Program, visit <https://home.dcma.mil/cntr-dcmac-d/keystone/index.htm>.

First- and second-year Keystones interested in the 60-day rotational assignment within DCMA International will be briefed on the program during their third year in the program and details on how to apply will be provided during the briefing. **C**