

Seamlessly Integrated Operations



An Interview With Army Col. Jacques A. Azemar, Commander, DCMA Iraq

The Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) is involved with many important missions overseas that directly support the warfighters, those at “the tip of the spear.” One office that is providing this type of support is DCMA Iraq. To get a better idea of what type of work is being done at DCMA Iraq, we spoke with that office’s commander, Army Col. Jacques A. Azemar.

Communicator (C): What is DCMA Iraq’s mission, and how many employees are there in total?

Col. Azemar (CA): DCMA Iraq’s mission is to provide 24/7 Contingency Contract Administration Support in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Specifically, DCMA Iraq is responsible for the administration and execution of the U.S. Army’s \$5.8 billion Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP). LOGCAP provides critical base life support services such as water, food, fuel, power generation, billeting and morale, welfare and recreation services to over 250,000 U.S. and Coalition Force personnel, Department of Defense civilians and contractor personnel on over 55 forward operating bases (FOBs) dispersed throughout Iraq. DCMA Iraq is comprised of a headquarters element based on Camp Victory in Baghdad and three tertiary commands located in the International Zone, on Camp Anaconda in Balad and on Camp Slayer, which is located within the Victory Base Complex. In total, DCMA Iraq has 47 personnel in theater, split almost evenly between military and civilians. In addition to the four command locations, we

have teams of administrative contracting officers and/or contract administrators and quality assurance representatives deployed to over 15 additional FOBs in theater. From these pre-positioned locations, DCMA teams “cover down” and provide LOGCAP contract performance management oversight to each of the 55-plus FOBs receiving base life support services under the LOGCAP contract.

C: How many DCMA personnel support the Joint Contracting Command – Iraq/Afghanistan (JCC-I/A)?

CA: As of August 2006, we have a total of eight DCMA personnel supporting JCC-I/A; two administrative contracting officers, three contract administrators and three quality assurance representatives. At this time last year, our total staffing was 24 personnel. The fact that we’ve been able to reduce our staffing at JCC-I/A over the last year is a real testament to the tremendous progress our contract administration team, and the entire JCC-I/A organization, has made in reducing the backlog of completed contracts requiring reconciliation and close out. Over the past year, DCMA has closed approximately 9,000 contracts for JCC-I/A.

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C: How does DCMA Iraq work with JCC-I/A?

CA: In September 2004, DCMA and JCC-I/A entered into a formal Memorandum of Agreement to provide operational contracting support to JCC-I/A in support of the Chief of Mission, Multinational Forces – Iraq, and Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan. This support focuses on the performance of contract administration functions for contracts awarded by JCC-I/A and its predecessor organizations, to include the provision of material inspection and acceptance support at a number of material receipt and storage points inside Iraq. In support of this vital mission, DCMA Iraq has a dedicated team that has become fully integrated into the JCC-I/A organization, providing daily support and coordination to customers throughout the JCC-I/A itself, as well as the customers JCC-I/A supports and the wide range of companies with whom JCC-I/A operates. With regard to how DCMA Iraq works with JCC-I/A, it would be fair to look at it as if the DCMA team supporting this effort were part of JCC-I/A’s organic organization.

C: Please describe your working relationship with Air Force Maj. Gen. Darryl A. Scott, JCC-I/A commander, and his staff.

CA: It is an outstanding relationship. The fact that Maj. Gen. Scott was previously the DCMA director — and fully understands what DCMA brings to the fight as an organization — has been a tremendous asset for DCMA Iraq. At the same time, it’s a great challenge, as Maj. Gen. Scott has high expectations for DCMA as well. This serves as a great incentive to DCMA Iraq to ensure we continue to provide the high level of service and responsiveness that Maj. Gen. Scott expects and demands.

C: How do you define good customer service, and in what ways is DCMA providing it?

CA: Our view of customer service essentially lines up with the fundamental concepts of performance-based management. We ask ourselves the following questions: Do we know what the customer’s critical requirements are? Do we focus and prioritize our support to help accomplish these outcomes? Can we measure how effectively we are helping to achieve the customer’s goals? Can we use our performance data to improve our operations and offer the customer even better support in the future? If the answer to all these questions is, “Yes!” then we know DCMA Iraq is providing, and our many customers are receiving, good customer service.

The performance-based agreements that we’ve put in place with our customers here in Iraq, such as the performance-based Customer Service Agreement we have with JCC-I/A, reflect one of the ways we help ensure we’re providing good customer service. These are critical tools in evaluating what we need to do, where we currently stand and where we need to go to continue to provide superior support to those at the tip of the spear.

(Above) Col. Azemar (front row, 3rd from left) reviewing water operations at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq.

“One of the greatest contributions DCMA Iraq has made to JCC-I/A has been the creation and maintenance of the JCC-I/A contract management database.”

C: What are your greatest challenges in supporting JCC-I/A?

CA: Continuity of personnel and records. As with a great many tasks in supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, the frequent transition of personnel from all organizations makes it extremely difficult to ensure continuity of operations. Much of our support to JCC-I/A focuses on closing out completed contracts. Due to the continuous rotation of personnel in theater, one of our biggest challenges in supporting JCC-I/A in closing out contracts is reconciling the records and actions of personnel who left the theater several rotations ago. I believe one of the greatest contributions DCMA Iraq has made to JCC-I/A has been the creation and maintenance of the JCC-I/A contract management database. This database covers over 16,000 contracts awarded in the last three-plus years. While an arduous task, its development and maintenance by DCMA personnel has been critical to ensuring the continuity of JCC-I/A contract files. It has been the key tool in closing out over 11,000 completed contracts. It also provides the repository of all newly issued contracts and the template necessary to properly maintain and administer JCC-I/A contracts into the future. As contracting personnel continue to rotate in and out of JCC-I/A, this database will continue to serve as the backbone of JCC-I/A's contracting continuity.

C: The working conditions for employees at DCMA Iraq can be very difficult — long hours, periodic loss of electricity, extreme temperatures — to what extent do these and other such formidable working conditions hinder your work?

CA: Certainly the working environment in Iraq presents challenges for our personnel to overcome. A typical workweek consists of 80-plus hours, often enduring harsh environmental conditions. Not only do DCMA personnel have to deal with the desert conditions, they are

also under constant threat of small arms and indirect rocket and mortar attacks. In addition, many of our administrative contracting officer, quality assurance and contract administrator personnel must travel in convoys in order to provide direct and responsive customer care to LOGCAP-supported FOBs under their purview. Risk analysis is performed prior to every mission; DCMA personnel do not travel unless it is absolutely mission-essential to do so and it has been determined that no other means of communication is acceptable and that DCMA presence is a compelling requirement. This cannot be overemphasized. Our personnel live and work in air-conditioned trailers, and DCMA has provided each of us with CamelBak[®] hydration packs to facilitate the maintenance of proper hydration. Communication challenges exist in the form of dropped phone calls due to bandwidth limitations and very limited cell phone coverage. While the conditions described do hinder our workforce in performing their assigned duties, through their perseverance and dedication to duty, the men and women of DCMA Iraq will continue to prevail and successfully complete their mission.

C: In what areas do you see room for improvement in DCMA's support of JCC-I/A?

CA: To date we've closed 9,163 Development Fund Iraq (DFI) contracts issued by JCC-I/A and its predecessor organizations — over 99.9 percent of all completed DFI contracts. We have 10 extremely difficult DFI contracts left to close out. Maj. Gen. Scott has stated that his expectation is for DCMA to close out 100 percent of completed DFI contracts, so our area of focus is on making that happen.

C: In what ways are you implementing performance-based management at DCMA Iraq, and how will these measures help support JCC-I/A?

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CA: DCMA and JCC-I/A established a performance-based Customer Relations Plan in January 2006, and the results to date have been a real good-news story. Through this agreement, JCC-I/A has clearly defined their desired outcomes impacting each area of DCMA support, including contract reconciliation and close out, Prompt Payment Act interest penalties and material inspection and acceptance. In concert with JCC-I/A, DCMA developed performance measures that allow both organizations to determine how well DCMA is contributing to the accomplishment of JCC-I/A's desired outcomes. By tracking and evaluating our performance, we've then been able to continuously raise the bar so that we're not only meeting JCC-I/A's performance expectations but exceeding them. For instance, the Customer Relations Plan calls for DCMA Iraq to maintain a cumulative closure rate for DFI contracts of 80 percent. Today, that rate is over 99 percent. It also calls for DCMA to reduce fiscal year 2006 Prompt Payment Act penalties by at least 10 percent from fiscal year 2005 totals. For fiscal year 2006, to date, DCMA personnel have reduced Prompt Payment Act interest penalty totals by 82 percent from the previous fiscal year.

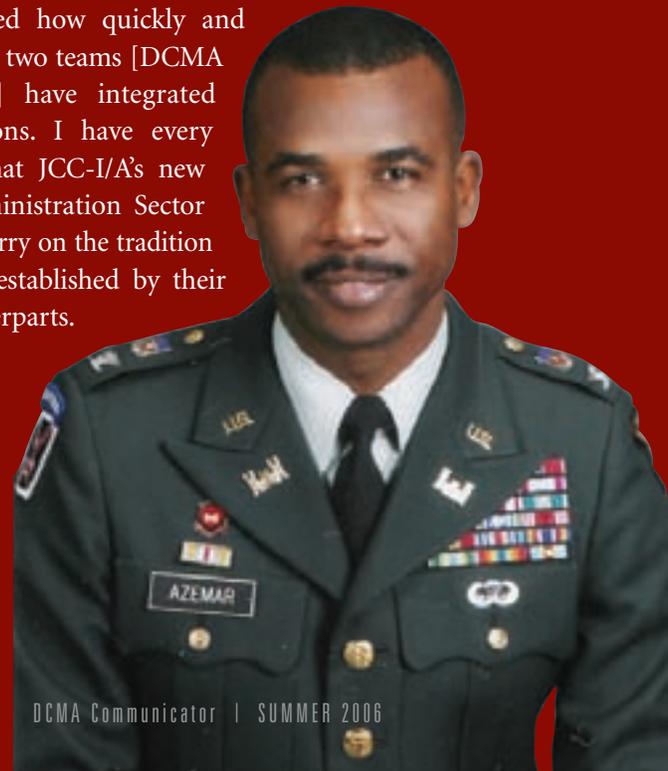
C: What type(s) of feedback, if any, have you received from members of JCC-I/A about DCMA's support?

CA: The DCMA Iraq leadership has had an opportunity to visit with a great number of the JCC-I/A staff, including Maj. Gen. Scott; Principal Assistant Responsible for Contracting Reconstruction Mr. Doug Packard; and Contract Administration Sector Chief Ms. Cheryl Miles. The comments we continually receive have been unanimously laudatory. This is largely due to DCMA's impressive results on the ground, from achieving a 99 percent cumulative DFI contracts

close out rate to deobligating \$475 million of unexpended funds, to name a few. That notwithstanding, JCC-I/A does receive weekly performance reports from DCMA. Consistent with our performance-based management approach, these reports enable both organizations to engage in a healthy dialogue concerning resolution of outstanding issues as well as desired outcomes. No commander could be more proud of the outstanding support DCMA has been providing to our warfighters.

C: In providing support to JCC-I/A, what do you see ahead?

CA: Our mission in supporting JCC-I/A will draw to a close in December of this year, as JCC-I/A sets up its own organic contract administration and material inspection and acceptance capabilities and our DCMA personnel are realigned to support the overall Contingency Contract Administration Support mission. In the meantime, we're focusing on training JCC-I/A's incoming contract administration personnel to ensure our mission with JCC-I/A is transitioned back to them as smoothly and seamlessly as possible. Some of JCC-I/A's new Contract Administration Sector personnel have already arrived, and I've been impressed how quickly and effortlessly the two teams [DCMA and JCC-I/A] have integrated their operations. I have every expectation that JCC-I/A's new Contract Administration Sector will proudly carry on the tradition of excellence established by their DCMA counterparts.



(Right) Army Col. Jacques A. Azemar, commander, DCMA Iraq