

# *FIRM-ing up* DCMA's information support systems

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**L**ike many government agencies, the Defense Contract Management Agency relies on a variety of automated information systems. To ensure their continued operation, DCMA provides functional and technical support for these systems to its personnel by delivering specialized training through a virtual center. This center — the Functional Information Resource Management Center — was established in 1996. Many know it by its previous name, the Functional Automation and System Support Team. FIRM combines years of DCMA-specific contract management knowledge and technical expertise to provide direct, enterprise-wide support to functional specialists.

“Our mission is to provide functional and automated information support systems throughout the agency,” said Felisha Hitt, DCMA FIRM Center director. “We are a multifunctional center with contract specialists, quality assurance representatives and industrial specialists who have actually worked in a contract management office as an administrative contracting officer, QA representative or industrial specialist. The center bridges contract management business process expertise with available automated information technology.”

One system DCMA uses is the Mechanization of Contract Administration Services, or MOCAS, established in 1962. What began as an interim integrated contract administration and contract payment solution has constantly upgraded and improved. MOCAS now has the highest on-time payment rate, the lowest interest penalty rate, the highest use of electronic invoicing, the most types of electronic invoices, the highest rate



*Kathy Schreiber (standing), Defense Contract Management Agency Functional Information Resource Management Center contract specialist, works with Jean Carter, DCMA FIRM Center, during a training session. In the background, other trainees practice the new skills learned. From right, Sung Hui Sin, DCMA Korea, Jeni Chung, DCMA Singapore, and Catherine Lee, DCMA Singapore. FIRM Center representatives were in Carson, Calif., conducting specialized training for DCMA International Pacific. (Photo by Tony Lorango, DCMA Public Affairs)*

of electronic contracts and the largest number of partners for electronic contracts compared to any other electronic government payment/administration system. The FIRM Center offers specific training and customer service in MOCAS and Wide Area Work Flow, which facilitates electronic commerce in contracting, as well as assistance with some DCMA eTools.

By keeping MOCAS running smoothly from a contract management perspective, DCMA ensures warfighters receive the supplies and services they need, on time and in compliance with the contract specification and terms, and that contractors are paid on time. MOCAS pays an average of 85,000 invoices per month. The average amount disbursed

is approximately \$20 billion per month. Timely processing of acceptance documents and requests for payment prevents the government from accruing interest and penalties for late or missed payments. These efficiencies directly translate to more dollars spent on critical warfighter needs.

“MOCAS is a complex automated Enterprise Information System,” Greg Jones, DCMA FIRM Center industrial specialist, said. “Our team monitors MOCAS ingress/egress, looks for data integrity trend issues and seeks solutions.”

## Support Information Systems

Every day, MOCAS and other databases help DCMA employees manage contracts

and their day-to-day workflow, while the center ensures the right workload gets to the right people. In January 2011, MOCAS took another leap forward, becoming one of the few systems that can pay contracts in any foreign currency. This 50-year-old system can also handle all International Standardization Organization/American National Standards Institute standards in measurements, numbers, etc.

Today, MOCAS data is stored in the Shared Data Warehouse, which is the basis for operating many of DCMA's eTools. By monitoring MOCAS data and working with the CMOs to ensure data integrity, the FIRM Center facilitates the flow of data to DCMA's eTools and ultimately to the functional specialist.

"Our experience is making sure that when we test software — we are looking at it from a technical and functional perspective," Jones said. "My role is to observe production-related anomalies in requirements, schedules and shipment data, etc., to ensure transactions are received and posting correctly in MOCAS." The FIRM Center monitors data flow from MOCAS to other databases and analyzes the results for accuracy to support employees' various functional risk assessment decisions.

Contract specialists within the center also support DOD and civilian organizations. They write system requirements and test conditions to troubleshoot MOCAS and develop new functionalities. "You have to have a passion for this kind of thing," said Kathy Schreiber, DCMA FIRM Center contract specialist. "Every morning, we look for errors, bugs and anomalies in the systems — day in and day out, so that others don't have to worry about it."

"We monitor the day-to-day workload and actions taking place within MOCAS and assist CMOs with the transfer of CMO workload," Hitt said. Along with its training responsibilities, the FIRM Center plays a significant role in identifying requirements, writing test conditions and testing the DOD's WAWF system.

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### Training Support

Charles Anderson, DCMA Dallas Engineering and Manufacturing director, acknowledged the help his group has received from the FIRM Center in training industrial specialists and working with him after hours to find and repair errors during the realignment process and by providing trusted agent training to key personnel within the CMO. "The FIRM is always willing to help us produce a better product to improve performance, data quality or, indirectly, metric measures. Our Manufacturing Group would not be where we are today without their willingness to help," Anderson said.

"The FIRM Center helped us find thousands of items that needed to be brought up to date," Anderson said. "I am a big proponent of what they do and the individual attention they give us. On one Recycle project, I received a much needed set of briefing charts overnight, depicting exactly what we needed to help our workforce. The training the FIRM Center provides helps us take our experienced MOCAS users to the next level."

Another training event occurred over four days in February with DCMA International Pacific personnel in Carson, Calif. The training included ACO Direct Input, Trusted Agent, DD 250 and WAWF Processing, as well as a MOCAS and Foreign Currency Overview. These training sessions are also addressing

the growing skill gap with MOCAS and other systems.

The center has assisted in preparing several training packages for field training including fixed price incentive contracts, contract closeout, basic MOCAS training, foreign currency and MOCAS for industrial specialists. The center also assisted in preparing and delivering training across the agency for the business systems rule. Specialized CMO functional specialist training can be scheduled by contacting the assigned FIRM Center functional representative and, in the future, training may be made available through the computerized training management system. CMO-nominated individuals receive specialized training to become MOCAS Trusted Agents, and contract input personnel receive training that allows them to input DCMA-generated delivery orders and modifications and Other Disbursement Office contracts delegated to DCMA for administration. With more employees filling these roles, the training will assist DCMA in meeting its performance goals.

The FIRM Center's training filters up through operations, functional areas and even to groups outside DCMA. "We have extensive contract management knowledge and the technical expertise to help folks understand how to use the automated systems to accomplish their job," Hitt said.

The center works closely with DCMA-AQ Policy in matters related to financing and payment, and cost and pricing policy. They assist with implementation strategies, identify new process requirements and support testing new changes to MOCAS, eTools or other automated information systems, according to functional requirements. The center reviews the Federal Acquisition Regulation and the Defense Acquisition Regulation System proposed rules to identify any potential impact to DCMA's automated systems and to ensure DCMA's functional specialists will be able to comply with regulatory requirements.

Every time a general order is issued, the FIRM Center coordinates resulting workload changes with the CMO that must occur in various automated systems

such as MOCAS and WAWF. During the realignment to geographic regions, the center represented the Contracts Directorate from the beginning of the process, providing workload analysis and ensuring MOCAS workload adjustments were made, modifications were processed and updates were completed to WAWF and Commercial and Government Entity Codes.

In addition, the center is responsible for a variety of special projects for the Department of Defense and DCMA, such as participating as an ad hoc member on the DFARS Committee responsible for writing the DFARS Contract Business Systems rule, assisting with DCMA implementation of the rule, representing the agency for the transition to System for Acquisition Management, or SAM, and the Procure-to-Pay Advocates Working Group.

### Commitment

Working in the FIRM Center requires a level of commitment at all hours of the

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day. Since automated systems, especially MOCAS, are critical to DCMA's- and Defense Finance and Accounting Service's operations, they cannot be off-line during the day to allow for programming updates or system testing. Because of this, many

times FIRM Center employees work late in the evenings, weekends and holidays to ensure that daily operations remain uninterrupted. “We have 10 members in the FIRM Center, and it seems like these people work around the clock — they make it look easy from the outside perspective,” Hitt said.

“This group is amazingly dedicated. Our reputation for quality and dependability is important to us,” Hitt said. “We help maintain the MOCAS world and are here to answer any functional questions from CMOs or others throughout the agency.” 



*Kathy Schreiber (standing), Defense Contract Management Agency Functional Information Resource Management Center contract specialist, discusses the Mechanization of Contract Administration Services system with, from left, DCMA Singapore's Sue Hogge and Catherine Lee during training at Carson, Calif., in February. (Photo by Tony Lorango, DCMA Public Affairs)*