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NEED TO KNOW

Acquisition Research Program Newsletter

September 2, 2022 — Issue 115

This week our top story brings an assessment of the defense acquisition landscape from **Bill LaPlante**, current Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment.

- He hits on the time-consuming--and unexpected--task the DoD has taken on in arming Ukraine in its self-defense against Russia.
- This segues into the need for an inherently adaptive acquisition system, which includes responsive relationships with industry. We appreciate that he connects this responsiveness to a "learning mentality," a shared priority we here at NPS support every day.

In evidence of that shared mission, check out the **latest article from NPS President VADM (Ret) Ann Rondeau**, who makes a compelling case for a balanced understanding of technological leadership.

- As other leaders have pointed out, technology is only one part of the equation; the human thinker is the enabler of any technological innovation.
- Her nine recommendations for how to achieve this balance between the "art and science of war" includes one specific to acquisition: the need to integrate processes that build hardware with those that build networks, digital systems, and decision-advantage technologies.

One more leader rings in today on the need for -- and the challenge of -- cultural change. Air Force chief of staff **CQ Brown** has graded his performance over the past two years with a solid "C."

- He notes the slow process of realizing his mission to foster a culture determined to "**accelerate change or lose**," and notes how long culture change takes.

- On a positive note, the article also offers some examples of how the change is already underway with airmen taking initiative to propose creative solutions to leaders.

In acquisition news, Bill Greenwalt has penned an excellent (and scathing) reflection of what it means that Michael Brown is stepping down as Director of **Defense Innovation Unit**.

- He contextualizes DIU within the larger push from Congress for DoD to innovate its acquisition processes begun in 2015, and bemoans the fact that Brown leaves feeling defeated by the bureaucracy.
- One of the more biting critiques in the piece: "... the current Pentagon's approach to finding a new DIU director speaks volumes about how the organization is currently valued. An absolutely nonsensical formal notice and application process, reminiscent of how to fill a GS-9 analyst position, was recently announced by R&E to fill the spot."

In other acquisition news, **Microsoft is protesting** the latest giant tech award-- a \$1 billion award for cloud computing to the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. We also have updates on the continuing evolution of the cybersecurity maturity model certification process.

In ARP news, our latest symposium video brings research and conversation on a perennially hot topic: **earned value management and agile development**.

- Chair LTG David Bassett, Director of DCMA, reflects on his own past experiences as a program manager with software development and from his current seat. He shared that he has talked about creating a companion to the adaptive acquisition framework -- an **adaptive contract administration framework** "so that we have multiple tools in our toolbox as we administer contracts." Watch the video for the full conversation and to hear some solid research!

Happy Labor Day weekend! Cheers to the end of summer.

This Week's Top Story

The Way Forward

Dr. William LaPlante



In this first of a series of columns, Dr. LaPlante discusses guiding principles for adopting a learning mentality, managing program risk, driving innovation, and making an impact.

Since I took on the role of Under Secretary in late April, A&S has remained at the forefront of a historic mission—supporting Ukraine in its fight against unprovoked Russian aggression. Every day, Ukraine is at the top of our list, and how we support this effort extends into everything we do.

We face tremendous challenges in determining which capabilities we’re going to draw down from U.S. inventories, what we can procure from industry directly, and how we can move rapidly on replenishment. While the fight evolves seemingly every couple of weeks, our defense acquisition workforce continues to answer the call. I applaud your professionalism and dedication to the mission. And with this administration’s leadership in concert with allies and partners, we will continue doing whatever is required to help Ukraine fight and win.

For nearly a decade, defense acquisition has emphasized developing new, more expedited authorities. The multi-domain, pacing threat posed by China now requires that we use those authorities to produce capability relevant to the high-end fight—both at scale and with the appropriate doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities.

We must continue in a deliberate campaign to build the capacity, resilience, and acquisition tools to enable that capability delivery. This means that our efforts must be a series of coherently linked events aimed at a greater outcome. From experimentation to policy pathfinders, it's all about learning and continuous improvement.

[Read more.](#)

ARP and NPS News

Panel #21: Rethinking Earned Value Management in Incremental Acquisitions



Chair: Lieutenant General David G. Bassett, USA, Director, Defense Contract Management Agency

Papers/panelists:

AIRC Study - Third Party Business System Compliance Assessment - A Streamlined Approach

- Gordon Kranz, Acquisition Innovation Research Center

Improving Software Cost Estimating Methods in Defense Programs

- Nick Biancalana, Air Force Institute of Technology

[Watch now.](#)

Rebalancing the Science and Art of War for Decision Advantage

VADM Ann Rondeau, USN (Ret.) | Proceedings



From NPS President Rondeau, a reflection on how (and why) to ensure intellectual overmatch in the Naval education and operational enterprises.

The paradox in warfighting is that while we prize, hail, and reward initiative, we organizationally expect initiative as a natural phenomenon, rather than as a deliberately leveraged manifestation of considering the human being the decisive element. The further paradox is that as we pursue technologies such as unmanned systems, we distance the human from the system while also counting on the human to design, intuit, and interact with the system. We expect and will demand accountability at the point of decision-making. As such, the local human element—properly equipped both technically and cognitively—is essential to achieving intellectual overmatch and gaining decision advantage.

So, how do we get to the optimal balance? The answer is in part by overhauling how we think about education, learning, and innovation at the enterprise level. Here are some suggestions. [Read more.](#)

Work with us!

The Department of Defense Management (DDM) at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) seeks candidates for **non-tenure track positions in defense acquisition management**. Responsibilities include teaching graduate courses in program management, advising student theses and projects, conducting defense acquisition-related research, and managing course/curriculum development and administration. [Learn more.](#)

Acquisition and Innovation

[DIU's director tried to overcome a calcified defense innovation system. It beat him. Now what?](#)

Bill Greenwalt, Breaking Defense

[Amazon-Microsoft rivalry now turns to \\$1B NGA contract](#)

Nick Wakeman, FCW

[Mike Madsen to take helm as acting director of Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit](#)

Brandi Vincent, Fedscoop

[Cyber accreditation body says key CMMC document to face changes](#)

Justin Doubleday, Federal News Network

[DHS looks to cyber self-assessments over CMMC model](#)

Natalie Alms, FCW

[Steve Blank on Rebuilding the Department of Defense \(Audio\)](#)

Solarpunk Podcast

[DoD Announces \\$6.8 Million Defense Production Act Title III Agreement with Burlington Industries, LLC to Strengthen the Domestic Clothing and Textile Industrial Base](#)

DoD Press Release

What's going on at NITAAC

Adam Mazmanian, FCW

Research

Expired and Expiring Authorizations of Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2022

Congressional Budgeting Office

Events

Acquisition Next

George Mason University Center for Government Contracting & DAU

November 4, 2022

Defense and Federal Government

Air Force top general gives himself a 'C' grade after two years on the job

David Roza, Task & Purpose

Hicks says Pentagon moving too slowly in transitioning DARPA tech to warfighters

Jon Harper, Fedscoop

Time to 'block and tackle': Draft strategy outlines Air Force's future digital environment through 2028

Jaspreet Gill, Breaking Defense

Russia and China's space weapon plans spur high-level Pentagon meeting

Joe Gould and Courtney Albon, Defense News

The US military is running low on ammo after sending so much to Ukraine

Nicholas Slayton, Task & Purpose

Much-hyped effort to help DHS land cyber talent is slow to make hires

Natalie Alms, Defense One

Navigating the Navy's Future featuring Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Gilday (video)

The Heritage Foundation

