

# The OSD Fellows Program

■ By Randal Kendrick

Understanding different perspectives is crucial to working together across service, agency, and organization lines to accomplish the Department of Defense (DOD) mission. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Supply and Transportation Fellows Program offers a unique opportunity to gain new perspective by expanding both the breadth and depth of one's knowledge base.

Most DOD employees spend their careers within a particular service or agency, often within a specific career field, which limits their knowledge base. The OSD fellows program is designed to overcome this by exposing fellows to joint and interagency perspectives while providing experience in transportation policy and supply chain integration.

Different perspectives among the services are the inevitable result of the legal framework for the armed forces. Three separate sections of Title 10, U.S. Code, charge the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force to recruit, organize, supply, equip, train, and maintain their forces. Left unchecked, each service would likely achieve mission effectiveness without regard for economies of operation and scale.

However, Section 133 of Title 10 gives authority to the Undersecretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics to establish policies for logistics, maintenance, and sustainment support DOD wide.

By design, the OSD staff reviews business practices from each service and agency and formulates policy to implement the best ideas across the DOD. Whether tracking retrograde movements or developing demand forecasting algorithms, the services have much to learn from each other.

As a participant in the fellows program, I had the opportunity to participate in interagency discussions on ocean transportation with a number of federal agencies. I also represented OSD at an interagency meeting on hurricane preparedness where I briefed the DOD's role in Jones Act waivers for the use of non-U.S. built, owned, and flagged vessels in the event of an emergency.

To develop the depth of their knowledge base

(that is, the ability to understand processes from the strategic down through the operational and tactical levels), fellows work on special projects. One of my projects was to prepare an exception to policy for the Deputy Secretary of Defense to sign, which would allow contractors to depart Iraq on a space-required, nonreimbursable basis.

Although this appeared to be a straightforward task, I had to ascertain the details down to the forward operating base level and work with each organization, from the local contracting activity through U.S. Forces-Iraq to various DOD offices. Through this and other projects, I was able to make policy recommendations and see them move toward fruition.

The fellows program also provides participants with enough autonomy over their agendas to achieve a good balance between training objectives and work accomplishments. White space on the calendar can be filled with functional area meetings, shadowing OSD employees, or pursuing outside professional development. I pursued countless opportunities to enhance my leadership skills and gain familiarity with the logistics processes of the military services and DOD agencies. I attended joint forums, such as the Joint Logistics Board, Supply Chain Executive Steering Group, and Strategic Human Capital Executive Steering Group, and conducted site visits to the U.S. Transportation Command, Defense Logistics Agency directorates, and the Department of Energy. I also participated in university training, such as the Advanced Program in Logistics and Technology with the University of North Carolina, and the Congressional Operations Seminar taught by the Georgetown Government Affairs Institute.

A year from now I will have forgotten the specific commands required to navigate OSD's tasker system, but perspective does not fade quickly. The OSD fellows program broadened my perspective in a way that will in turn broaden my career and enhance my contributions to the DOD.

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