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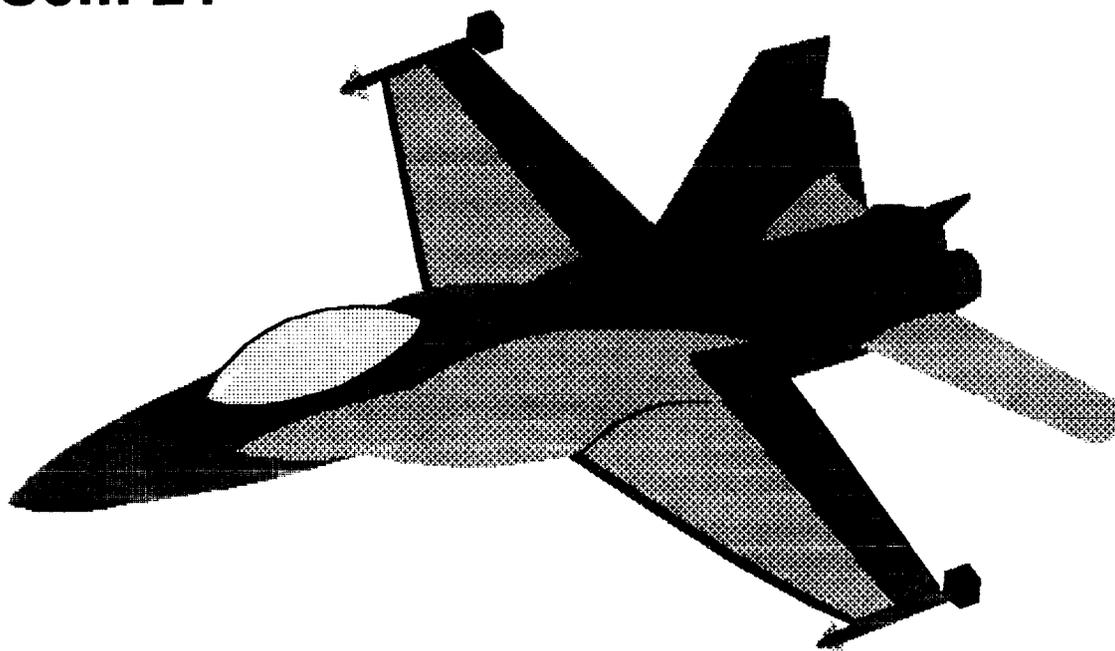
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# History Research of Enlisted in Air Force Contracting

By SMSgt George F. Dupin

Class 94 D

Sem 21



**Research History of  
Enlisted Personnel in  
Air Force Contracting**

By SMSgt George F. Dupin /94D

**Why research the history of enlisted in Air Force contracting?**

In 1989, I had the privilege of working on a project to review Utilization of Contracting Non-Commissioned Officers for the Air Staff. A continued push for professional designation in Federal contracting had raised some questions about the effective use of our contracting enlisted work force. Air Staff was not questioning the need of enlisted personnel. They wanted information to help identify training and job utilization needs.

During the data gathering phase of the project, I was able to review a report for the 101st Congress Investigations Subcommittee titled, "The Quality and Professionalism of the Acquisition Workforce." The report provided information about DoD manning levels, training requirements, age averages, experiences levels and even military to civilian comparisons. However, one paragraph raised a couple of my own questions. The paragraph read as follows:

*The Air Force is unique among the Services in that it has both an officer and an enlisted workforce. There are a small number of enlisted personnel in the Marine Corps assigned to contracting organizations and functions.(4:267)*

The question, "Why are we unique?" came to mind. This also made me start wondering, "Why did the Air Force have 1600 enlisted personnel in the contracting career field?" There was not time under the Air Staff Utilization Project to research the matter further, although I remained puzzled.

Now, as part of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy curriculum, I have been provided time to do some research. I was amaze at how little written information I would find. I reviewed Wing historical reports dating back to 1944 which did not provide a single clue about enlisted in contracting. However, in the 18 years that I have been in the contracting career field, I

established many points of contact. The historical information that this document provides, I gathered contacting active duty and retired enlisted contracting members.

**How did Air Force enlisted start performing a job normally restricted to officers and civilian in the other services?**

One possible answer came from an interview with retired CMSgt Salvador Mauro. (6:1) Chief Mauro enlisted in the Supply Career field of the Army Air Corp on 13 March 1947. He said at that time, Procurement and Contracting (P&C) was under supply. The chief of Supply was a Warranted Contracting Officer.

"Contracting Officer" means a person with the authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings. This contracting authority is delegated to contracting activities to manage contracting functions. (3:66)

Contracting officer authority was delegated down to the Supply P & C officer. Civilians and enlisted worked as procurement clerks for the Chief of P & C. Procurement clerks are personnel who handle the day-to-day contracting activity of the Government, but generally do not have authority to order additional work or commit the Government by virtue of their position. (3:65) The Supply enlisted personnel may have worked to receive item price information, but it still took the contracting officer's signature to bind the Government.

One of the first airman to enlisted into the Air Force Procurement career field was the now retired Chief Wallace F. McLamb. (7:1) He entered the Air Force service on 10 September 1948 as a Purchasing and Contracting (P & C) Clerk. Chief McLamb left basic training for a direct duty assignment to the P & C office, Tyndell AFB Florida. He stated that he worked as a buyer in the all civilian office. In this position, he reviewed descriptions, called for prices and placed orders similar to the duties of our enlisted buyers today. He had been promoted to TSgt during his 5 years at Tyndell. Chief McLamb did not know if there were other enlisted coming into the career field at that time.

We do know that from 1958 - 1961 the Air Force was eliminating some career fields and cross training enlisted into P & C. Retired CMSgt Rex Branch was one of the airman forced out a

career field. (2:1) Chief Branch enlisted in the Air Force on June 7, 1951 as a Combat Operations Clerk. He assignments in this career field included Japan, Maxwell AFB, AL, Iceland, Orlando AFB Fl; and Hunter AFB. As a TSgt, assigned to Tyndell AFB Florida, his career field was cut and we was told he had to cross train. He said he met all the requirement for contracting, which were second term airman, married and good records with no debts. So in Feb 1960 he became part of the contracting team.

Retired MSgt Gary R. Bates is another airman who was told to cross train or get out in 1960. (1:1) He had enlisted in the Supply career field in April 1954. Since he had worked near P & C he said he felt that was the best way to go. He met the requirements and cross trained at Luke AFB AZ.

Retired Chief Harry E. Ivey enlisted directly into contracting in 1961. (5:1) After completing basic training at Lackland AFB, he was assigned direct duty to Grand forks AFB SD. He started work as a Procurement Clerk/Supply Buyer for commissary items. He wad promoted to SSgt while at Grand Forks and worked as a Construction Contract Administrator.

**What type of training was provided to enlisted in contracting prior to 1970?**

The only training for enlisted contracting personnel before 1958 was On-The Job. Enlisted members worked in offices that were nearly all civilian. The first Contracts course for enlisted was established in 1958 at Amarillo AFB TX. I was unable to find specifics about the course, such as, course requirements, content, number of attendees and course length. Further research in this area might uncover these facts.

Chief McLamb said he was lucky because he not only attended Contracts Course at Amarillo in 1958, he was sent to Wright-Patterson AFB to complete the Air Force Contracting Officers School in 1960 and became the first enlisted member to do so. He also was able to attended the Contract Price Analysis and Advanced Contract Administration Schools at Wright- Patterson, both of which had previously been only for officer and civilians.

Chief Branch did not feel happy about the OJT part. He said the civilians in the office would not let the enlisted do any real contracting work and he spent the entire time there as a supply buyer. He was the first at Tyndell to attend the new Contracts school at Amarillo TX in 1961.

MSgt Gary Bates said he never got to attend a contracting school while on active duty.

It wasn't until 1970, that new enlisted contracting personnel were able to attend a tech school to obtain initial job knowledge.

#### **What type of assignments and duties have contracting enlisted personnel performed?**

Air Force enlisted contracting personnel have had assignments around the world. Chief McLamb left Tyndell in 1953 to go to K47 Air Base Chun Chon, Korea. He was the only enlisted assigned to an office that had two officers, several civilians nationals. His duties required him to make cash purchases of supplies needed to support the close air support provide by the 147th Tactical Group. About once a month, he got to travel to Japan to fill requirement.

In 1954, Chief McLamb returned to Tycon Air Port, Knoxville Tennessee and served as NCOIC of the Base Contracts Office. More importantly, the Chief held Contracting Officer Warrant opening the door for other enlisted.

After serving several stateside assignments Sgt McLamb was assigned to Ankara, Turkey 1961-1962, Sgt Mclamb served as Deputy Chief, Contracts Division in an office of 3 officers, 2 civilians and 13 enlisted. He was promoted to the rank of Chief Master Sergeant, becoming the first Chief in Contracting.

By the start of the Vietnam War, enlisted were well established in contracting. They were no longer P & C clerks, but many were warranted contracting officers. Chief Rex Branch was serving an assignment at Etain, France from 1962 - 63. He had been promoted to MSgt and served as the NCOIC in a 11 person office. He held an Unlimited Contracting Officer Warrant.

MSgt Bates was at Manila AB RP from March 1962 - 1964 The office had a Warranted TSgt NCOIC, three other enlisted plus several local nationals and was responsible for buying local commodities for the base. He then moved to Clark AB and served from Mar 64 - Sep 66, Promoted to SSgt and worked as a construction Buyer.

MSgt Bates only returned to the states for three years before he was assigned to Bien Hoa Air Base, Vietnam, for the period of Dec 67 - Apr 70, At grade of SSgt and held an Unlimited Contracting Officers Warrant. The Chief of the office was MSgt. The office provided commodity support for the base and other outlying locations.

This job required MSgt Bates to travel TD to Vietnam Forward locations. He had to go to Pleiku Air Field on several occasions, where the contracting Office and Pleiku was located outside the secure gates. This meant he had to be escorted from the barracks to work each day. He was at Pleiku in January of 1968 when Vietcong units initiated the Tet Offensive. (8:372-73)

Chief Ivey was also in the area assigned to Clark AB RP working as a services buyer providing contract repair, local purchase of fuels and cargo movement to Vietnam.

By 1970 enlisted contracting officers were serving around the world.

**How were enlisted contracting personnel accepted by members of other services?**

Many in contracting have had problems working with officers and members from other branches of service. Chief McLamb said he never had a problem working with anyone. He may have been the exception.

Chief Ivey said he encountered his first problem while at Grand Forks AFB as a Construction Contract Administrator. Ten a SSgt, he was the administrator on the new base runway contract. The wing commander scheduled the Pre-Performance Conference in the officer's club. When SSgt Ivey, who is supposed to conduct the meeting, arrived at the club, they would not let him in because he was enlisted.

He said it was several years later when he was assigned to Young Sung AB Korea, form May 73 - May 74. He was a SMSgt working in a Joint Service Contracting Center. There were several problem between Army officers and Air Force Enlisted in this Center. The Army Captains were give limited, Small Purchase warrants (actions below \$10,000) while several Air Force NCOs held Unlimited Warrants. He said it situation created a lot of friction.

MSgt Bates said he almost got courts martial at Bien Hoa, Vietnam because of an Army Captain tried to order him to purchase something. MSgt Bates attempted to explain his contracting

officer authority but the Capt did not want to listen. The base commander eventually got involved and set the Capt straight concerning CO authority.

Chief Mauro stated he had several while he was stationed in Japan in 1969. He said he had problems with both officers and civilians who would deal with him on the phone, but when they found out he was enlisted, they would want to talk to someone with authority. He said allot of officer were cross trained pilots had no idea about contracting authority and would try to give him a direct orders to sign contracts.

**When was the Contracting Senior Enlisted position establish at the Pentagon and who has served in that position?**

In 1972 General Tremble was the Director of Contracting at the Pentagon. The number of enlisted serving in Air Force contracting was over 1500. HQ TAC had a staff with six CMSgt who he asked to provide the duty description for a Contracting Senior Enlisted Advisor on his staff.

Chief Wallace McLamb, was the first to fill the position for a 90 day trial period. Chief Salvador Mauro was the second and served for eight month. He said he was followed by Chief Vance Giver in 1974. Others in order were CMSgt Harry Ivey, Chief Ray Toffeey, Chief Trievino, Chief George Parks, and Chief Lenier Webb. The current Contracting Senior Enlisted Advisor is SMSgt Dave Williams.

**Is there more?**

I feel I've only established a starting point for a search in many directions. There are still many retiree enlisted contracting personnel to contact. For me, It won't end here.

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