

Assessing the Readiness of Contractor-Provided Space Operations Capabilities

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ISSUE

There are a significant number of private contractors performing space operations functions and tasks for the Air Force. This report examines how the Air Force evaluates its ability to deliver space operations capabilities provided by contractors.



APPROACH

We reviewed contractor personnel tracking in Air Force databases. We solicited data from Air Force Installation Contracting Agency contacts at Air Force Space Command (AFSPC). At the request of AFSPC/A3 and the Fourteenth Air Force, we examined two squadrons: the 2nd Space Operations Squadron and the 2nd Space Warning Squadron. For those units, we obtained Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS) reports, Quality Assurance (QA) reports, and Performance Work Statements (PWSs). We also solicited subject-matter expert input from the relevant contract managers at Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC) and uniformed operational SMEs within each of the two units.



CONCLUSIONS

- Contractors substantially contribute to operational space missions.
- Contractors often have more systems and technical expertise than the uniformed and civilian personnel they support.
 - To use a flying analogy, the arrangement could be compared to needing contractors to coach takeoffs and landings and perform the most challenging tactics for an operational flying squadron. This contractor reliance places space in a unique situation among operational military missions.
- AFSPC has the largest proportion of contractors across all Air Force major commands (MAJCOMs); twice the fraction of the next MAJCOM, which is heavily involved in acquisition (Air Force Material Command); and essentially four times the fraction of all other MAJCOMs.
 - Contractors constitute 25 percent of the AFSPC-identified Space Cadre.
 - Contractors are also prevalent in every space operations group.
 - Contractors constitute 17 percent of personnel across all space operations groups.

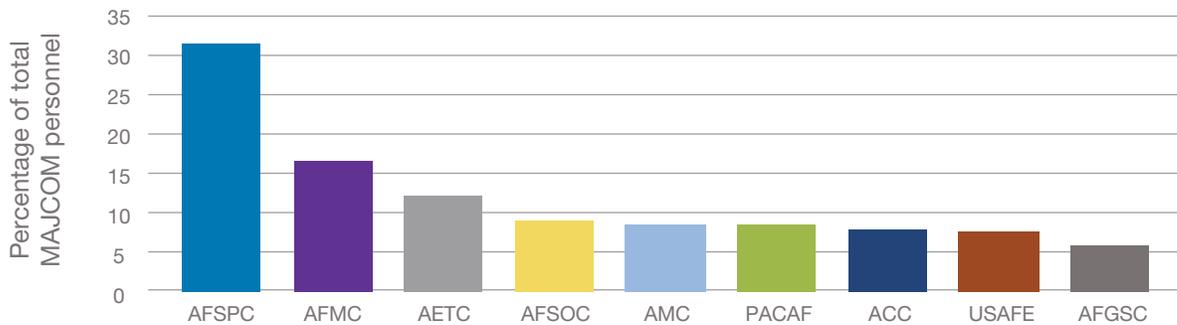
- The Air Force lacks a definition of contractor readiness and lacks a process for tracking the readiness of capabilities provided by contractors.
- Contractors' performance is tracked by SMC using acquisition and contracting tools and compliance constructs.
- The operational military hierarchy is unaware of the readiness status of the capabilities that contractors contribute to space operations.
- Contract management falls outside the operations' chain of command.
- Responsibility for tracking contractor numbers falls outside both operations and contracting chains of command.
 - Tracking contractor counts is at the discretion of the MAJCOM and, at AFSPC, falls to local manpower functions of force support squadrons.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop specific operational reporting criteria for contractor readiness.
- Incorporate contractor readiness information into operational reporting and personnel/ resource accounting.
- Improve personnel reporting by considering manpower needed to support the Space Mission Force and an integrated personnel picture by including component and contractor contributions.
- Examine more units across AFSPC and the Air Force to test these findings more broadly.

CONTRACTOR PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PERSONNEL, BY MAJOR COMMAND



NOTES: ACC = Air Combat Command; AETC = Air Education and Training Command; AFGSC = Air Force Global Strike Command; AFMC = Air Force Materiel Command; AFSOC = Air Force Global Strike Command; AMC = Air Mobility Command; PACAF = Pacific Air Forces; USAFE = U.S. Air Forces in Europe.



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