



Department of Defense Food Procurement: Background and Status

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Summary

Military food items, also known as subsistence items, are generally procured under the auspices of the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA), an agency of the Department of Defense (DOD) which provides worldwide logistics support for the U.S. military services. Under DLA, DLA Troop Services (formerly the Defense Supply Center Philadelphia) is the inventory control point for food, clothing, textiles, medicines, medical equipment, general and industrial supplies, and services for the military, their eligible dependents, and other non-DOD customers worldwide. DLA Troop Services buys and manages about \$13.4 billion worth of food, clothing, textiles, and other products. Under DLA Troop Services, the Subsistence Directorate serves as the operational manager for all food operations. These items are procured in accordance with the provisions of the Berry Amendment and the Buy American Act (BAA). The Berry Amendment requires DOD to give preference to the procurement of domestically produced, manufactured, or home grown products, notably food, clothing, and fabrics. This report will describe the origin, authority, and policy in the procurement of food for the military.

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Background

Prior to World War II, each United States (U.S.) military service organization procured and distributed its own food. Right after World War II, Congress mandated that a commission (ultimately called the Hoover Commission) study the logistical management of military food and supplies, and recommended a more centralized management of perishable foods, preferably in one organization. This effort resulted in the establishment of a joint Army-Navy-Air Force Support Center; for the first time, all military services bought, stored, and issued military items using a common system. In addition to food items, DOD and the military services defined other materiel that would be managed by this system as “consumables,” or “commodities,” meaning supplies that are not repairable or are consumed in normal use.

In the mid-1950s, the structure for the procurement of food and consumable items changed. Each military service acted as a single manager for various categories of consumables issued by all four services; each single manager would buy items, store and issue supplies, manage inventories, and forecast future requirements. For example, the U.S. Army bought and managed all military food and clothing; the Navy managed all medical supplies, petroleum, and industrial parts; and the Air Force managed all electronic items. The single manager system reduced costs by centralizing wholesale stocks, simplifying the supply chain, and persuading each military service to adopt the same standard items. However, the single manager concept was only partially successful because it did not provide uniform procedures among the services.

In 1961, then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara ordered that the single-manager agencies be consolidated into one agency, resulting in the establishment of the Defense Supply Agency,¹ the forerunner to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). In 1986, the Goldwater-Nichols Act identified DLA as a combat support agency.²

¹ The Defense Supply Agency (DSA), the forerunner to the Defense Logistics Agency, was established on October 1, 1961, and began operations on January 1, 1962. Eight single manager agencies became DSA supply centers. In 1965, DOD consolidated most of the contract administration activities of the military services to avoid duplication of effort and provide uniform procedures in administering contracts. Officials established the Defense Contract Administration Service (DCAS) within DSA to manage the consolidated functions. The agency’s new contract administration mission gave it responsibility for the performance of most defense contractors. The agency’s responsibilities extended overseas when it assumed responsibility for defense overseas property disposal operations and worldwide procurement, management, and distribution of coal and bulk petroleum products (1972), and worldwide management of food items for troop feeding and in support of commissaries (1973). In recognition of 16 years of growth and expanded responsibilities, on January 1, 1977, officials changed the name of the Defense Supply Agency to the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). See the History of the Defense Logistics Agency, at <http://www.dla.mil/history/storyboard.htm>.

² DLA is a global logistics combat support operation which oversees three supply centers to meet the needs of military and civilian customers: DLA Aviation in Richmond, Virginia, which is the lead center for aviation weapon systems and the primary source for approximately 930,000 repair parts and operating systems; DLA Land and Maritime in Columbus, Ohio, which supplies weapon system and electronic spare parts; and DLA Troop Support in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the troop support center supplying subsistence items including food, clothing, medical, and industrial support. According to DLA’s website, DLA employs 27,000 civilian and military employees worldwide working in 48 states and 28 foreign countries. <http://www.dla.mil/ataglance.aspx>.

Defense Logistics Agency

DLA is an agency under the Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. DLA is DOD's largest logistics, combat support agency. Today DLA provides worldwide logistics support in both peacetime and wartime to the military services, civilian agencies, and foreign countries. DLA supplies almost every consumable item America's military services need to operate, from groceries to jet fuel. DLA supported every major war and contingency operation of the past four decades, from the Vietnam War to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The subsistence acquisition mission is carried out by DLA Troop Support, formerly Defense Supply Center, Philadelphia (DSCP); a field activity within DLA.³ According to DLA, the DLA Director has been designated by the Deputy Secretary of Defense as the Executive Agent (EA) for Subsistence, Bulk Fuels, Construction and Barrier Materials, and Medical Materiel.⁴ As described on DLA's website:

As DLA Executive Agent, the Director of DLA is the focal point for providing continuous, sustainable and global end-to-end supply chain support as required by end users. The DOD EA ensures effective support throughout operations by developing coordinated processes and support plans for transition from peacetime to wartime and/or contingency operations.⁵

Under DLA, DLA Troop Support is responsible for nearly all of the food, clothing, and medical supplies used by the military. DLA Troop Support is comprised of the following business areas: (1) Clothing & Textiles; (2) Construction & Equipment; (3) Weapon Systems Detachments; (4) Medical; (5) Subsistence; and (6) Customer Operations. Under Subsistence, DLA Troop Support has developed a new approach to industrial base preparedness, through the development of an "Industrial Base Preparedness Toolbox."⁶ DLA Troop Support operates as a Defense Working Capital Fund activity; all operating costs must be charged back to the individual customer on a break-even basis.⁷

Procurement Authority and Policy

Military food items are procured in accordance with the provisions of the Berry Amendment and the Buy American Act (BAA).⁸ The Berry Amendment [Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 2533a] requires DOD to give preference to the procurement of domestically produced, manufactured, or home grown products, notably food, clothing, and fabrics.⁹ The Berry

³ In 2010, DSCP Philadelphia was renamed DLA Troop Support. <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/history.asp>.

⁴ Department of Defense Directive 5101.1, DOD Executive Agent, September 3, 2002 (Updated May 1, 2003)

⁵ <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/ea/index.asp>.

⁶ http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/ibp/ibpbrief_files/frame.htm

⁷ Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.) § 2208.

⁸ The Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 10a through 10d, as amended) is the principal domestic preference statute governing most procurement by the federal government. It restricts foreign access to U.S. government procurement by giving preference to domestically produced, manufactured, or home grown products. For further discussion of the Buy American Act, refer CRS Report 97-765, *The Buy American Act: Requiring Government Procurements to Come from Domestic Sources*, by (name redacted).

⁹ The Berry Amendment can be found in 10 U.S.C. 2533a For further discussion of the Berry Amendment, refer to CRS Report RL31236, *The Berry Amendment: Requiring Defense Procurement to Come from Domestic Sources*, by Valerie Ann Bailey Grasso.

Amendment is referenced in the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS), Part 225.7002, as described below.

Unless a specific exception in law applies, the products, components, or materials listed below must be grown, reprocessed, reused, or produced in the United States if they are purchased with funds made available (not necessarily appropriated) to DOD. Except for manufactured or processed food, and chemical warfare protection clothing as explained in DFARS 225.7002-2 “Exceptions,” this applies to prime contractors and subcontractors at any tier.¹⁰

Current Status of the Military Food Acquisition Process

The various stages of the military food acquisition process are described below:

- From the customer’s perspective, the acquisition process begins with the generation of a product need or requirement. The customer receives an introductory presentation about the Prime Vendor Program¹¹ and identifies their organization’s ongoing, new, or anticipated requirements.¹² DLA Troop Services gathers the data and develops a formal solicitation package to meet the requirement.
- At the same time, a DLA Troop Services specialist prepares a formal solicitation which incorporates federal laws, regulations, and guidelines for the acquisition of subsistence items. The solicitation is prepared based on what represents the best value to the federal government, and is amended and modified as more information is received. A broad range of potential vendors are invited to participate in an industry forum to learn more about requirements and resolve or clarify questions about the solicitation.
- The solicitation is announced and remains open for bids for approximately 50 days; meanwhile a pre-proposal conference is also held. Prospective vendors may contact the DLA Troop Services specialist to raise questions, offer suggestions, and to discuss and review all elements of the solicitation; further changes to the solicitation may occur, based on the feedback received from potential vendors. Based on the pre-proposal conference findings, any additional amendments to the solicitation must be issued to all prospective vendors on the mailing list.
- The evaluation phase begins; each technical proposal is received from prospective vendors and individually evaluated to identify its strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation is conducted by a team of subject matter experts. Each technical proposal must demonstrate that the prospective vendor can meet

¹⁰ Restrictions on DOD Purchases from Non-U.S. Sources Imposed by 10 U.S.C. 2533a.

¹¹ The Subsistence Prime Vendor Program is an electronic order and receipt system used for managing the food distribution system.

¹² DLA Troop Support customers include, but are not limited to, the following groups: the military services, Defense Commissary Agency, Military Exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Facilities, Job Corps Centers, Veterans Administration Hospitals, Federal prisons, as well as schools and Indian reservations.

the requirements as set forth in the solicitation, in accordance with “Best Value” selection criteria.¹³

- At the conclusion of the evaluation phase, the contract award decision is made and a contract award decision is announced. The contract becomes effective usually between 30 to 60 days after the award announcement. The DOD regional manager arranges a post-award conference at the selected vendor’s facility, typically within two weeks after the announcement. During the post-award conference, which is jointly conducted by the DLA Troop Services specialist and the vendor, all issues involving the structure and execution of the contract are discussed.
- At the conclusion of the post-award conference, the installation, vendor, and DLA Troop Services specialist will develop a catalogue of the vendor’s product line. This step ensures that all of the items required by the customer are properly coded and contained in the catalogue.

The DLA Troop Services Subsistence Directorate

The Subsistence Directorate is divided into the following business units: Food Services, Operational Rations, Produce, Food Safety Office, and Supplier Support. A description of the work of each business unit follows.

Under Food Services, the Subsistence Prime Vendor Program (SPV) has replaced the former depot stock distribution system with an electronic order and receipt system. Through the use of electronic data interchange (EDI) orders are transmitted and received at the vendor’s plants within minutes, allowing for reduced local inventory levels. EDI enhances the accuracy and timeliness of orders as well as the quality of the products; as a result, both the inventory and associated overhead costs are reduced, and the goal for the maximum turnaround time (from order to delivery) is 48 hours. According to DLA, there are about 50 prime vendors who manage and supply food in regions around the world.

The Operational Rations Unit provides the managerial and logistical support for supplying meals for the military, including individual rations, group rations, survival rations, ultra high temperature milk, emergency and sterile drinking water, humanitarian daily rations, and field feeding equipment. While the “Meal, Ready-to-Eat (MRE)” is the core individual combat ration for the military, the military services also consider the special dietary needs of the soldiers (including vegetarian and kosher needs).¹⁴

¹³ Each subject matter expert independently reviews the technical proposal and, in accordance with solicitation guidelines “best value” selection criteria. Such criteria may include the following factors: the distribution and delivery system, location, record of past performance, corporate experience, electronic data interchange capability, socioeconomic considerations, and others; the subject matter experts may make site visits to the prospective vendors warehouse or operations site. The evaluation phase may take longer than 50 days. See Federal Acquisition Regulation - Part 15, *Contracting by Negotiation*, for a discussion of the term “best value” as a type of contract acquisition strategy.

¹⁴ <http://www.natick.army.mil/soldier/media/fact/food/mre.htm>. One MRE provides an average of 1,250 calories composed of 13% protein, 36% fat, and 51% carbohydrates. DLA Troop Support does not sell rations to individuals; DOD regulations and policy permit the sale of rations to certain U.S. military and federal government organizations. The prices for the various Operational Rations can be found at <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/rations/prices.pdf>.

The Produce Unit provides fresh fruits and vegetables to the military services, the Defense Commissary Agency, Military Exchanges, Morale, Welfare and Recreation facilities, Job Corps Centers, Veterans Administration hospitals, federal prisons, as well as DOD schools and Indian reservations. Under the Produce Unit, the DOD Fresh Program is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service, and the Produce Division, whereby DLA Troop Services buys and distributes fresh fruits and vegetables to schools using the USDA's federal commodity entitlement dollars. The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 contained statutory language that sets aside \$50 million annually for DLA Troop Services to continue to support school lunches. The Produce Unit distributes over 300 different produce items to schools.¹⁵

The Food Safety Office is responsible for food safety and quality assurance policies for the services, DOD agencies, and components, in partnership with the U.S. Army's Research Development and Engineering Command, a division of the U.S. Army Soldier Systems Center; the U.S. Army Veterinary Command, the Food and Drug Administration, and the USDA.¹⁶

The Supplier Support Division supports the supplier operations within the subsistence supply chain by providing a wide variety of administrative and logistical support.¹⁷

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¹⁵ For background and funding on the National School Lunch Program, see <http://www.dscp.dla.mil/subs/produce/index.htm> and CRS Report R40397, *Child Nutrition and WIC Programs: A Brief Overview*, by (name redacted). The Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act was signed into law (P.L. 111-296, Dec. 13, 2010).

¹⁶ <http://www.troopsupport.dla.mil/subs/fso/index.asp>.

¹⁷ <http://www.troopsupport.dla.mil/subs/support/index.asp>.

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