



**JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER  
AND FORT POLK  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE  
*Press Release***



7073 RADIO ROAD  
FORT POLK LA 71459-5342  
Voice: (337) 531-1418  
Fax: (337) 531-2403

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: Dan Nance  
337-531-7203

## ***Commercial Activities Award Decision Announced***

On December 11, 2002, the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk was notified that the Army Contracting Agency (ACA) made the final award and issued the notice to proceed with the phase-in to AECOM Government Services, Inc. The phase-in, or transition period, will commence on January 3, 2003 with the contractor beginning performance on June 15, 2003.

“I remain committed to ensuring the integrity and fairness of the remaining Commercial Activities process through which we will transition to AECOM Government Services, Inc., on June 15, 2003. Most important, I take great pride in our commitment to taking care of people. Thus, I will continue to optimize all resources to make this transition as smooth, efficient, and caring as possible,” said Col. Mark D. Rocke, Fort Polk’s Garrison Commander.

On May 10, 2002, Fort Polk announced that a conditional contract had been awarded to AECOM Government Services, Inc. to perform a range of Base Operations (BASOPS) support services. The company’s adjusted bid was \$197,696,595, which was \$54,431,110 less than the government’s proposal of \$252,127,705.

This contract award was conditional due to the requirement for public review of cost comparison documents and an appeal filing period. There were no appeals filed by other commercial firms competing for this contract. There were appeals by union and employee representatives; however, an appeals board upheld the decision to award the contract.

A new timeline for issuance of Reduction in Force (RIF) notices and contract implementation has been developed. Four key objectives were considered in developing the new timeline: 1) Accomplish the Fort Polk mission, 2) Take care of people, 3) Develop an orderly plan for transition, and 4) Establish a stable, predictable climate.

The revised timeline is as follows:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>
December 11, 2002	Contract Award
January 3, 2003	Notice to proceed with Phase-in
January 13 – 17, 2003	Open window for Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA)/Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP)
January 29, 2003	Issue VERA/VSIP Approval/Disapproval Letters
March 31, 2003	Issue RIF Notices
June 14, 2003	Reduction in Force Effective Date and Date of Termination of Temporary Employees
June 15, 2003	Contract Start Date

Early in this process, the JRTC & Fort Polk sought and received approval to offer voluntary separation and retirement incentives giving eligible employees options to voluntarily leave government employment. To date, 356 employees have been tentatively approved for VSIP, of which 185 have been tentatively approved for VERA. VSIP is offered to encourage employees to voluntarily retire or resign from federal service and can result in a lump sum payment of up to \$25,000. VERA will allow employees to retire earlier than otherwise eligible to reduce the adverse impact of a reduction in force. To ensure fairness, Fort Polk will open a final window for those employees who may now be eligible for either of these benefits.

Fort Polk has also been hiring temporary employees and carefully managing vacant positions throughout the commercial activities study to reduce the impacts of the RIF on the workforce. Because of this successful strategy, the actual number of permanent employees who will be involuntarily separated from service is estimated to be about 200 employees or less.

There were some alleged violations of regulation or law by Fort Polk officials during the recent Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-76 (Commercial Activities) study conducted at Fort Polk. The Army has thoroughly investigated these allegations and the Army Audit Agency (AAA) has returned findings that validate the process and find no basis to support the allegations.

In addition, the United States Office of Special Counsel has requested the Secretary of the Army to investigate these alleged violations. As a result, the Department of the Army Office of the General Counsel has tasked US Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) with conducting an investigation into these alleged violations. FORSCOM and ACA were directed not to delay final contract award. Upon completion of this investigation, a report will be prepared by the Secretary of the Army. This report will be available to the public. Until then, it is Army policy not to comment on ongoing inquiries or investigations. I will inform you of the results of this investigation.

A wide variety of transition assistance is available to employees through federal and state government programs. This includes priority consideration for job placement through the DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP), the Retained Grade Placement Program (RGPP) and the Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS). OPM has enacted other placement programs including the Reemployment Priority List (RPL) and Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTA), which also give priority consideration to eligible employees seeking other federal employment.

The Fort Polk command has negotiated with the Louisiana Dislocated Workers Service to provide a variety of workforce transition services on site. Several workshops/seminars are planned in the months ahead to provide information on a variety of topics to include Workforce Investment Act services; stress management; financial planning and budgeting; interviewing skills; and unemployment compensation benefits for temporary, term and permanent employees.

The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) will also be available to employees affected by the reduction in force. The Fort Polk ACAP Center provides transitioning services to employees to include job assistance training, interview preparation, resume assistance, federal job application assistance, skill and job assessment and one-on-one counseling. Job fairs are also planned. The ACAP center is located at Building 2155 at the intersection of 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Alabama Ave. Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For employees who receive RIF notices, our Civilian Personnel Advisory Center (CPAC) will be available to provide counseling on their rights and benefits throughout the RIF process.

An employee hot line continues to operate at 531-4708. Employees can also go to the Fort Polk web page for a link with information about the CA study decision and employee assistance. The Guardian and the Polk Channel will also serve as a resource for information to assist employees.