



Highlights of GAO-12-99, a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Arlington National Cemetery (Arlington) contains the remains of more than 330,000 military servicemen and women, family members, and others. In June 2010, the Army Inspector General issued a report identifying numerous deficiencies at Arlington, including those related to contracting. In response, the Secretary of the Army issued guidance creating the position of the Executive Director of the Army National Cemeteries Program (ANCP) to manage Arlington and requiring changes to address the deficiencies and improve cemetery operations.

Public Law 111-339 directed GAO to (1) identify the number, duration of, and dollar amount spent on current contracts used to support operations at Arlington and (2) assess the extent to which the Army has put processes and procedures in place to provide for the effective management and oversight of contracts supporting Arlington. GAO analyzed data from contracting offices and other sources on contracts active during fiscal year 2010 and 2011 and above \$100,000 and reviewed contract files; analyzed guidance, policies, plans and other documentation from Arlington and other organizations; and interviewed agency officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Army implement a method to track complete contract data, ensure support agreements clearly identify roles and responsibilities for contracting, and determine the number and skills necessary for contracting staff. DOD partially concurred with the recommendations, but said the report did not adequately reflect Army-wide efforts underway.

View GAO-12-99. For more information, contact Belva M. Martin at (202) 512-4841 or martinb@gao.gov.

December 2011

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Additional Actions Needed to Continue Improvements in Contract Management

What GAO Found

Roughly \$35 million was obligated under 56 Arlington contracts and task orders valued over \$100,000 and active during fiscal years 2010 and 2011. These contracts supported cemetery operations, construction and facility maintenance, and new efforts to enhance information technology systems for the automation of burial operations. ANCP does not award its own contracts, but instead obtains contracting support in two different ways. Thirty-five contracts in GAO's review were awarded by three contracting organizations that directly supported ANCP. For the remaining 21 contracts and task orders, ANCP partnered with other Army organizations with expertise in areas such as information technology and construction. Those organizations, in turn, used contracting offices to support Arlington needs. Many of the contracts GAO reviewed have now ended, while those still ongoing may continue through fiscal years 2012-2014, depending on ANCP needs. While ANCP has taken steps to improve visibility of contracts and financial management capabilities more broadly, it does not currently maintain complete data to identify and track contracts supporting its operations. Without such data, ANCP may continue to face difficulties in ensuring the effective management and oversight of its contracts and related funding.

ANCP has taken numerous actions to correct identified contracting deficiencies and improve contract management at multiple levels, including coordination with other Army organizations for specialized assistance and manpower. ANCP signed new agreements with the Army Contracting Command and the Army Corps of Engineers that identify broad responsibilities between these organizations for providing contract support. However, similar agreements in place with other organizations, such as the Army Information Technology Agency and the Army Analytics Group, do not specifically address contract management roles and responsibilities in support of Arlington's information technology efforts. Although these responsibilities are generally understood by officials at present, they may be less clearly understood in the future when personnel have changed. ANCP has also taken steps to improve internal guidance for contract management and staff training, although these efforts are ongoing. Likewise, ANCP has increased dedicated acquisition staff support for its contracting efforts, but has not yet fully determined the appropriate number, skill levels, and arrangements necessary to meet its contracting needs. Newer contracts supporting Arlington show improvement in the use of sound acquisition practices, with steps taken to consolidate requirements and better document acquisition planning, award, and oversight activities. The success of ANCP's acquisition outcomes will depend on continued management focus from ANCP and its contracting partners to leverage their expertise while mitigating associated risks. While the Army has made significant progress, further actions are necessary to ensure sustained attention to contract management, and institutionalize progress made to date, particularly as the current spotlight fades.