

DCN: 7462



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<b>Fax:</b>	(703) 699-2735	<b>Subject:</b>	HRC St. Louis
<b>Pages:</b>	<del>#</del> 13		
	(including cover sheet)		
<b>From:</b>	o Jacque Simon o Kim Gee o Debbie O'Neal	o Diana Price o Milly Rodriguez	

Attached is a copy of the AFGE correspondence sent to Col. Cook

BRAC Commission

AUG 15 2005

Received

BRAC Commission

AUG 16 2005

Received

**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO****John Gage**  
National President**Jim Davis**  
National Secretary-Treasurer**Andrea E. Brooks**  
National Vice President for  
Women and Fair Practices

15h/208771

August 15, 2005

Colonel Debra Cook  
Commander  
U.S. Army Human Resources Command St. Louis  
1 Reserve Way  
St. Louis, MO 63132  
Fax (314) 592-1257

Dear Colonel Cook:

I am writing to express my commitment, on behalf of the National Office of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO ("AFGE"), to work in partnership with you to address outstanding labor-management concerns at the Army Reserve Human Resource Center St. Louis (Missouri) ("HRC St. Louis").

Your team, AFGE, and the HRC St. Louis employees share the common goal of providing soldiers with the highest quality service possible. I appreciate your warm reception of the AFGE National Office staff members who visited HRC St. Louis last week and the access you provided them to your management staff and employees.

In order to start the collaborative process, I have attached to this letter a preliminary report outlining the comments we received from employees regarding barriers to providing the most efficient and highest quality service to soldiers, in addition to possible solutions. This document is intended not as a final, comprehensive report but merely as a starting point for discussion. In addition, I have attached a list of employees who are willing to consider participating in a labor-management partnership effort to address work process concerns.

The AFGE National Office has established working relationships with numerous Department of Defense components in the past, and I look forward to building a similar working relationship with your Command on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Gage". Below the signature, the name "John Gage" and title "AFGE National President" are printed in a standard font.

John Gage  
AFGE National President

Attachment

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## **HRC St. Louis: Overview of Business Process Concerns**

### **Preliminary Report: Employee Perspective**

August 15, 2005

#### **Executive Summary: Major Issues**

From the perspective of the employees interviewed, major barriers at HRC St. Louis to providing soldiers with the highest quality service possible are as follows:

- **Military Management Center:** HRC St. Louis is used as a military management training center in addition to providing human resource services to army personnel. This dual purpose prevents HRC St. Louis from becoming as efficient and high quality a service center as it could be if the only mission was to be a center of service excellence. Military personnel occupy the vast majority of supervisory and managerial positions at HRC St. Louis, and these soldiers are constantly rotated in and out of positions so that there is little continuity, institutional knowledge, or technical expertise among management, including low level supervisors.
- **Civilian/Military Personnel Ratio:** Approximately half of the personnel at HRC St. Louis are military personnel and private contractors, while the remaining half is federal employees. Almost all supervisory and management positions are held by military personnel, and private contractors make up a substantial portion of the Call Center personnel who provide customer service interface with soldiers.
- **Reorganization Along Geographic Lines:** HRC St. Louis has been reorganized from subject area directorates into geographic teams, so that subject area experts are no longer allowed to focus only on their areas of expertise, artificial staffing and expert shortages are created, and there is confusion in routing calls from the Call Center to the HRC St. Louis employee who can resolve the issue.
- **Customer Service Interface:** HRC St. Louis uses a call center structure that makes an attempt to separate the functions of answering and routing soldier calls from the function of resolving soldier questions. Because these functions are inextricably linked, this separation does not seem to be working. In addition, the technology used for the telephone system does not adequately serve the soldiers, and chain of command issues cause frustration for some soldiers.

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- **Personnel Training:** HRC St. Louis does not have a comprehensive formal training program to educate personnel in either human resource subject areas or the new operational structure of HRC St. Louis.

### **Methodology**

Two AFGE officials staff members, Mr. Eugene Martin, Assistant to the AFGE National President, and Ms. Diana Price, Senior Policy Analyst, spent three days at HRC St. Louis. Their mission was to identify (1) a handful of high-performing, well-respected employees willing to participate on a labor-management partnership committee to address barriers to service and (2) a broad outline of work process issues of concern to the employees. They interviewed local AFGE union officials, AFGE members, and civilian employees who are not union members. In addition, they met with the Commander of HRC St. Louis, Colonel Debra Cook, and other military management officials.

AFGE staff gathered a substantial amount of information that could be helpful to HRC St. Louis management. However, time constraints prohibited the performance of any fact-checking functions. Thus, the information contained in this summary is based upon employee accounts and some limited materials produced by HRC St. Louis (as noted).

### **HRC St. Louis Mission**

The stated mission of the U.S. Army Reserve Human Resources Command ("HRC St. Louis") is to provide human resource support for over 1.5 million customer soldiers, including the following<sup>1</sup>:

- 200,000 Troop Program Unit
- 150,000 Individual Ready Reserve
- 700,000 Ready Reserve
- 700,000 Retired Reservists

Human resource support provided includes<sup>2</sup>:

- Accession
- Training and Education
- Evaluation
- Retention
- Promotion and Awards
- Separation
- Retirement points
- Veteran and Retiree Programs
- Employment Verification
- Personnel Records Maintenance

### **HRC St. Louis Personnel and Management Structure**

HRC St. Louis personnel are comprised of approximately 65% civilians, 30% Active Guard Reserve soldiers, and 5% Active Component soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Civilian personnel include both federal employees and contractor personnel.

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According to the Department of Defense 2004 Fair Act Inventory, HRC St. Louis has 716 federal employee full time equivalents ("FTEs") (see attachment for details).<sup>4</sup> The list of bargaining unit employees provided by the local AFGE union indicates 761 current federal employees. We do not have an exact count of military personnel or contractor personnel.

Of the military workforce, the majority of the officers are Majors (O4) and the non-commissioned officers are Sergeants First Class (E7).<sup>5</sup> Most of the civilian employees are classified as GS-5, GS-6, or GS-7 (see attachment for details).

Almost all supervisory positions are filled by military personnel rotated through these positions on a regular basis. The average tour of duty at HRC St. Louis for military personnel is approximately 2 to 3 years, during which a soldier rotates through two or more positions. Military personnel hold almost all, if not all, director positions, in addition to the great majority of middle and lower level supervisory positions.

#### **Military Training Center vs. Center of Excellence**

HRC St. Louis is currently used primarily as a management training center for military personnel rather than as a center of excellence geared toward providing soldiers with human resource support at the highest levels of efficiency and quality.

Because almost all supervisory positions at HRC St. Louis, including middle and lower level positions, are filled with temporary military personnel, there is a chronic lack of stability and continuity in management practices and policies, in addition to a lack of institutional knowledge and technical expertise among management. While the rotation of military personnel through supervisory positions is a valuable training resource for the military, and the contribution of military personnel is vital, there is a trade-off in quality and efficiency of services provided because the training mission is not balanced with the mission of providing services to the customer soldiers in a consistent, expert, and most efficient manner.

Because of the high turnover of military supervisors, most supervisors have much less technical human resource expertise than the civilian employees that they supervise. Thus, many civilian employees use a substantial amount of staff time to assist a never-ending series of temporary supervisors in learning the technical aspects of their duties. Military supervisors are often given only one month of briefing before they are given supervisory responsibilities.

Temporary military supervisors often do not have the time or opportunity to fully examine and understand HRC St. Louis policies. This causes confusion for civilian employees who must, on occasion, choose between following HRC St. Louis policies and following direction from supervisors. Inconsistent application of policies leads to inconsistent service to soldiers.

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### Barriers Identified

The current military/civilian personnel balance and structure at HRC St. Louis results in the following barriers:

- Constant turnover in supervisory positions causes a chronic lack of consistency in management practices and policies and a chronic lack of institutional knowledge and technical expertise among HRC St. Louis decision-makers, which in turn leads to inconsistent service to soldiers.
- Constant turnover in supervisory positions means a permanent systemic requirement for civilian employees to spend substantial staff time assisting new supervisors in gaining technical expertise.
- Heavy focus on military training overshadows efficiency and service quality goals.

### Possible Solution

A possible solution to these barriers as identified by employees is:

- Clarify the priority of HRC St. Louis missions (military management training center, providing quality human resources support to soldiers, and using taxpayer dollars efficiently) and make staffing ratio decisions accordingly.

### **Operational Structure**

#### Subject Area Structure versus Geographic Structure

HRC St. Louis is formally organized into directorates consisting of experts in various subject areas. However, HRC St. Louis has been *functionally* reorganized into 10 geographic teams, each responsible for soldiers from particular states. Most subject area experts are now divided among these teams. Each team member is tasked with answering questions relating to all subject areas, although a subject area expert is generally available to handle more complex issues.

The benefit of a geographic organization is unclear to the employees. Almost all HRC St. Louis personnel are located on one campus, so there is no geographic division of HRC St. Louis personnel. Also, subject areas are not location-specific. This geographic structure limits expertise available to answer any given soldier's question on a particular subject area to one or a few employees on a team instead of a dozen or more employees in a subject area team.

#### Specialization versus Generalization

Human Resource subject areas are complex and require extensive experience in order to develop expertise. Most HRC St. Louis employees were originally hired to handle a particular subject area, and those employees have developed expertise in that area. Currently, HRC St. Louis employees are expected to possess a level of expertise in all

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subject areas instead of just their specialty area, but the employees have not received sufficient training in all areas. (Please see additional comments in the "Training" section.)

#### Access to Experts Artificially Constrained by Geographic Structure

Any given team of employees has a limited number of experts in a particular subject area (usually only one employee and possibly no employees). It is our understanding that if a team member cannot answer a question outside his or her expertise, then that employee is asked to route the question to the team subject matter expert. However, if the subject matter expert is on vacation or dealing with a high workload, then that soldier's question goes into a queue rather than being forwarded to a subject expert from another geographic team. There is no system that allows a soldier's question to be routed to an expert in another geographic team that can deal with the question more quickly.

#### Extraneous Information Collected

The rules used to determine which geographic team should handle a soldier's call cause confusion in routing calls from the Call Center. A soldier can have nexus with more than one state and are often in transition from one state to another. This causes an artificial layer of inquiry (what geographic team should handle this question) to be inserted between the soldier and resolution of his or her question, as this geographic information may very well be incidental to resolving the question.

#### Barriers Identified

The current operational structure of HRC St. Louis results in the following barriers:

- Difficulty in allowing subject matter experts to focus on their areas of expertise.
- General staffing shortages and expert shortages inherent in dividing employees into discrete operating units without overlap.

#### Possible Solution

A possible solution to these barriers as identified by employees is:

- Allow HRC St. Louis to return to day-to-day operations along the formal structure that divides the workforce into subject matter experts so that soldier calls can be routed to the proper experts based upon type of inquiry rather than the geographic location of the soldier.

#### Customer Service Interface

When a soldier calls the main phone number at HRC St. Louis, his or her call is answered by Call Center personnel. There are approximately 11 civilian employees (8 of them are subject matter experts) and 12 contract employees at the Call Center. Call Center personnel then route the call to the appropriate HRC St. Louis employee for resolution.

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Several aspects of the customer interface system cause frustration for the customer soldier.

#### Referral Back to Troop Program Unit

If a customer soldier assigned to a Troop Program Unit ("TPU") calls, Call Center personnel are instructed to refer the soldier back to his or her unit for assistance in resolving human resource questions. Each unit has a Unit Administrator charged with resolving human resource issues, and military policy dictates that the chain of command begins with the Unit Administrator. Call Center personnel can handle questions for soldiers assigned to a TPU only via a Unit Administrator or if the soldier has tried but failed to get resolution from the Unit Administrator. This policy is not mentioned on the HRC-St. Louis website, so customer soldiers may call as instructed by the website and then be told that they should not have called.

#### Preference for Written Requests

Call Center personnel are instructed to ask customer soldiers to send in written requests instead of phoning in requests. This policy is not mentioned on the HRC St. Louis website, so customer soldiers calling in as instructed by the website can then be asked to submit a written request instead.

#### Limit Call Time and Call Forwarding

Some Call Center personnel have had years of experience in specific subject areas, which means that they can sometimes assist a customer soldier right away without forwarding the call to anyone else. However, Call Center personnel have been given the conflicting goals of (1) limiting calls to 3 to 5 minutes and (2) limiting the calls that they forward to teams.

#### Tracking Calls

Some HRC St. Louis employees have been told not to give out their direct extensions or phone numbers, even to customer soldiers whose cases they are working on, so that all calls will go through the Call Center for call tracking purposes. This policy increases the volume of calls to the Call Center and the corresponding hold times.

#### Routing Calls through Teams

When customer soldiers call the Call Center and ask to speak to a specific HRC St. Louis employee, that call is routed through the geographic team, not directly to the requested employee. This adds an extra step in the process for the customer soldier and requires extra staff time for someone to forward the call from the main team phone to the requested employee.

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### No Walk-In Meetings

HRC St. Louis employees have been instructed to no longer accept walk-in meetings with customer soldiers. Only customer soldiers who have made appointments can be seen by staff. This change in policy has caused some dissatisfaction among customer soldiers.

### Dropped Calls and Long Hold Times

Most employees reported complaints by customer soldiers of being on hold for over 30 minutes in addition to dropped calls. This issue is discussed in the "Technology" section below.

### Barriers Identified

The current customer interface process at HRC St. Louis results in the following barriers:

- Confusion for TPU customer soldiers in determining when they should call HRC St. Louis versus going through their Unit Administrators.
- Confusion for customer soldiers in determining when they should submit a written request versus a telephone request.
- No longer accepting walk-in customers without properly managing the expectations of customer soldiers.
- Call tracking concerns that dramatically increase the volume of calls to the Call Center.
- Contradictory policies of Call Center to limit calls forwarded to teams and also keep calls under 5 minutes leads to short-shrift of customer soldier concerns.

### Possible Solutions

Possible solutions to these barriers as identified by employees include:

- Allow customer soldiers to call HRC St. Louis employees directly once they have identified the appropriate person to help them.
- Clarify the mission of the Call Center and restructure the policies that Call Center personnel follow to reflect the mission. Call Center policies currently reflect an attempt to separate call routing from call resolution. These two functions seem to be inextricably linked, so a review of this separation is in order.
- Clarify chain of command issues for TPU soldiers.
- Clarify appropriate method of submitting a request for all customer soldiers.

### **HRC St. Louis Training**

Based upon reports from employees, there is no comprehensive training program for HRC St. Louis civilian or military personnel. Personnel, including those in the Call Center with responsibility for routing calls from customer soldiers, have not received meaningful training in the new operational structure changes at HRC St. Louis. In addition, there is no formal training provided for personnel either in their own subject area specialty or in any other subject area. All training is informal, on-the-job training.

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Because the new operational structure separates subject area experts from each other physically and in terms of workload, on-the-job training will be much less effective in the future than it has been in the past. In addition, reports indicate that military supervisors receive a 1-month debriefing session before being given full supervisory responsibility, while military personnel working alongside civilian employees receive less or no formal subject area training.

### Barriers Identified

The current lack of formal training at HRC St. Louis results in the following barriers:

- Military direct-line supervisors do not have the training or experience in the subject areas handled by HRC St. Louis to provide adequate supervision of the technical aspects of the jobs performed by civilian employees.
- An inordinate amount of civilian employee staff time is spent performing on-the-job training support for temporary military supervisors and co-workers.
- Unnecessary confusion in routing calls from customer soldiers from the Call Center to the employee who can resolve the problem.
- Civilian employees placed on geographic teams and expected to answer customer soldier inquiries about all subjects have difficulty providing satisfactory service to the customer soldiers.

### Possible Solutions

Possible solutions to these barriers as identified by employees include:

- Allow HRC St. Louis to return to day-to-day operations along the formal structure that divides the workforce into subject matter experts.
- Subject matter and organizational training for Call Center employees so they can correctly route calls.
- Subject matter and organizational training for all civilian and military personnel so they can better assist customer soldiers.

## **HRC St. Louis Technology Systems**

### The Telephone System

The HRC St. Louis Call Center telephone system routes calls on the toll free number to a Call Center employee. That employee gathers certain information, then routes the call to either a regional team or a subject area team. When calls are routed to a regional team, the call goes first to the team main phone number. If no one answers that phone, then the call is rolled over to one after another of the regional team employees. If none of the regional team employees is available to answer the call, then the call is eventually rolled back to the regional team main phone number, and the customer soldier is able to leave a voicemail message. Employees report the following complaints from customer soldiers:

- They are left on hold for a very long time (over 30 minutes).
- Calls are dropped, even after being on hold for a long time.

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- Calls are rolled over and over without resolution.
- They must wait for a call to roll through several extensions before being able to leave a voicemail.
- If they know an HRC St. Louis employee's extension, their call is dropped when they try to dial that extension or there is no option in the system to enter an extension.

### Database Access

HRC St. Louis employees are asked to provide some service to active duty soldiers who call but do not always have access to those soldiers' information due to security restrictions. The database is organized so that there is no single point of data entry for a soldier. The database is divided into two branches of information for any soldier: reserve and active duty. This leads to frustration for the soldiers who call in for information and longer processing times for certain tasks, including processing information for promotions.

### Barriers Identified

The current technology available at HRC St. Louis results in the following barriers:

- Delays and unneeded frustration for customer soldiers in getting their calls answered by the appropriate employee.
- Delays and unneeded frustration for customer soldiers in getting certain tasks completed due to restricted access to active duty information.

### Possible Solution

Possible solutions to this barrier identified by employees include:

- Testing and analysis of the capabilities and flaws in the current telephone system.
- Examination of the database access allowed to HRC St. Louis employees and artificial separation of information into more than one database without appropriate links between those databases. .

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<sup>1</sup> HRC website, <https://arpwww/arpstl.army.mil/facilities/cmdmission.asp>.

<sup>2</sup> Undated HRC St. Louis Powerpoint presentation.

<sup>3</sup> HRC website, <https://arpwww/arpstl.army.mil/facilities/cmdmission.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> DoD FAIR Act Inventory website, <http://web.lmi.org/fairnet>.

<sup>5</sup> HRC website, <https://arpwww/arpstl.army.mil/facilities/cmdmission.asp>.

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**HRC St. Louis**  
**Federal Employees by Grade**  
**8/15/05**

<u>Grade</u>	<u># of Employees</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
GS-3	7	0.92%
GS-4	12	1.58%
GS-5	184	24.18%
GS-6	163	21.42%
GS-7	199	26.15%
GS-9	56	7.36%
GS-11	75	9.86%
GS-12	59	7.75%
GS-13	4	0.53%
GS-14	2	0.26%
WG-various	13	1.71%
	<b>761</b>	<b>100%</b>

**HRC St. Louis  
Congressional Partnership Committee  
Suggested Employee Participants  
8/16/2005**

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Ext</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Poston	Karen	x3602	<a href="mailto:karen.poston@arpstl.army.mil">karen.poston@arpstl.army.mil</a>	Customer Service	GS-7
Curry	Wendie	x3194	<a href="mailto:wendie.curry@arpstl.army.mil">wendie.curry@arpstl.army.mil</a>	Personnel Actions/Services	GS-6
Streeter-King	Linda	x4285	<a href="mailto:linda.streeter-king@arpstl.army.mil">linda.streeter-king@arpstl.army.mil</a>	Chief Information Office	GS-13
Daniele	Pat	x3200	<a href="mailto:patricia.daniele@arpstl.army.mil">patricia.daniele@arpstl.army.mil</a>	RWS-O	GS-7
Johnson	Ouida	x3418	<a href="mailto:ouida.johnson@arpstl.army.mil">ouida.johnson@arpstl.army.mil</a>	ARAAD - Full-Time	GS-7
Tate	Cynthia	x3762	<a href="mailto:cynthia.tate@hrcstl.army.mil">cynthia.tate@hrcstl.army.mil</a>	Enlisted Personnel Mgmt	GS-7
Harris	Lillie	x3338	<a href="mailto:lillie.harris@arpstl.army.mil">lillie.harris@arpstl.army.mil</a>	Officer Personnel Mgmt	GS-6
Adkins	Benjamin	x4983	<a href="mailto:benjamin.adkins@arpstl.army.mil">benjamin.adkins@arpstl.army.mil</a>	Resource Mgmt	GS-12
Dorsey	Sheila	x3221	<a href="mailto:sheila.dorsey@us.army.mil">sheila.dorsey@us.army.mil</a>	Officer Personnel Mgmt	GS-9
Hicks	Alva	x4555	<a href="mailto:alva.hicks@us.army.mil">alva.hicks@us.army.mil</a>	Officer Personnel Mgmt	GS-9
Warner	Deborah	x3826	<a href="mailto:deborah.warner@us.army.mil">deborah.warner@us.army.mil</a>	Officer Personnel Mgmt	GS-9
Watkins	Beverly	x2804	<a href="mailto:beverly.watkins@us.army.mil">beverly.watkins@us.army.mil</a>	Officer Personnel Mgmt	GS-9
Skinner	Janyce	x3711	<a href="mailto:janyca.skinner@arpstl.army.mil">janyca.skinner@arpstl.army.mil</a>	AMEDD	GS-5
Elgin	Michelle	x2035	<a href="mailto:michelle.elgin@arpstl.army.mil">michelle.elgin@arpstl.army.mil</a>	RSW-O	GS-6