

INTERVIEW:

William E. Taylor

BY SCOTT R. GOURLEY

Program Executive Officer for Land Systems

Looking back over the first five years of the United States Marine Corps Program Executive Officer for Land Systems, Bill Taylor offered that it was “very appropriate and very prudent to look back and reflect on where we came from, where we are today, and how to best utilize any lessons learned in trying to map out a strategy for more efficient and effective operations downstream.”

“In summary, I think we are in ‘a very good place’ now,” he said, although quickly contrasting today’s assessment with the situation that existed when the office was initially created.

“It was almost humorous,” he recalled. “I think back more than five years ago when I came aboard as the PEO. I actually came aboard in January 2007 and it wasn’t until April that I actually got my first staff employee. So for a number of months I was ‘the PEO’ in every sense of that description. And not only did the PEO staff consist of ‘me, myself and I,’ my very first meeting on my very first day as the PEO coincided with the Secretary of the Navy announcing the Nunn-McCurdy breach of our Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program. Quite a few folks in the room knew me from my previous days as the V-22 program manager so there were several looks in my direction at that point. In fact, one individual even offered a special ‘Welcome aboard, Bill’ as an aside.”



“So EFV was basically ‘on the rocks’ and just beginning the long journey through the Nunn-McCurdy process,” he continued. “Our CAC2S [Common Aviation Command Control System] and G/ATOR [Ground/Air Task Oriented Radar] programs were both struggling. The LVSR [Logistics Vehicle System Replacement] program was still in the middle of its development. The most healthy programs at that time were MTVR [Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement] and Lightweight 155 mm Howitzer, which were both in production and focused on trying to achieve their ultimate inventory objectives.”

According to Taylor, many of the program challenges at that time were exacerbated by resourcing issues.

“In my view none of the programs were adequately staffed,” he explained. “For example, we were sharing one contracting officer between three and four programs. Moreover, there was no linkage back then between our programs and Marine Corps Systems Command in terms of technical authority. So each individual program pretty much operated as its own independent entity, relying on itself with no other degree of independent thought, analysis or support – just frightening programmatic times. And everyone was operating without a safety net, so to speak. That really was the picture of where we were five years ago.”

Shifting his assessment to the current situation surrounding PEO LS programs, Taylor added, “We are certainly operating under a competency alignment construct. We are inextricably linked at the hip with Marine Corps Systems Command. My program managers and I maintain program management authority and responsibility, but we are no longer in it alone. Through our competency alignment we are linked to Marine Corps Systems Command’s technical authority and we now have an infrastructure of support around the programs. And it is that partnership with Brig. Gen. Frank Kelley, commander, Marine Corps Systems Command, and the resulting organization that facilitates program success.”

Acknowledging that “there might be a few rubs here and there, and there might be a few people who chafe a bit under the oversight,” he offered a personal analogy. “When I was the V-22 program manager at NAVAIR, where they had been operating for the better part of two decades under competency alignment, I hated the help too. But now, looking back to the time when I first came to PEO Land Systems, I missed that support. Brig. Gen. Kelley and I both grew up in NAVAIR and we have ‘gotten there’ – we are in a good place as far as harmonized missions and roles and responsibilities between Marine Corps Systems Command and the PEO. We have now got adequate staffing on the programs with dedicated billets for each program. We’ve got teams of contracting officers supporting each program now. Now, I need to emphasize that these offices are not fat by any stretch of the imagination. But they are appropriately staffed. And being appropriately aligned and resourced means that we are operating more effectively than ever before.”

Contrasting today with the situation that existed five years ago, Taylor described “a paradigm or a culture back then where these program managers not only operated kind of on their own, but sometimes they didn’t realize or understand how bad they had it. I came aboard with big expectations, having come from NAVAIR where you had that infrastructure; you had that support of senior leadership; you brought program issues to their attention; and they helped you resolve them.”

“But the culture here let program managers think they were on their own and had to solve their problems on their own. And that’s how they tended to do it. But today we go out there and ‘beat the drum.’ We get leadership’s involvement and engagement early on and, as a result, we have got programs that are more than adequately resourced – they are properly resourced,” he said.

Taylor reinforced his overall assessment with a programmatic review of PEO portfolio systems.

“For example, although EFV did not ultimately survive, I will defend the program in this regard: the program manager brought it back to a state of health to where technically and programmatically it was succeeding,” he began. “However, collectively the enterprise – the Marine Corps, the Navy and OSD – made a decision that the program was too costly. So it was terminated for affordability reasons. But

the program manager had brought it back to a state of *technical* and *programmatic* health to where it was succeeding.

“Today G/ATOR is executing superbly,” he continued. “And it has gone through quite a journey to get there. Back in 2009 it had ‘breached’ for cost and schedule issues. But at this point it has completed its journey back into line. It is adequately structured. It is appropriately costed and funded. It has been re-designated as an ACAT IC. And, lo and behold, it is so successful that Northrop Grumman is now turning over the prototypes for government testing [the prototypes entered government-led developmental tests on Aug. 20, 2012]. It’s on a great track towards success.”

“CAC2S – talk about a success story! As a program manager I had made a career of trying to push my programs ‘over the finish line’ successfully. And when I first started out as the PEO I was still in uniform on active duty. After standing up the PEO I ultimately retired in June of 2008. And I really had struggles with my conscience over this, but my last official act ‘in uniform’ as PEO Land Systems was to walk into ASN(RDA) [Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development and Acquisition] and, with the support of the Marine Corps, recommended that they terminate the CAC2S program.”

“Now, technically it was never terminated, because among other things we didn’t want to have to go through all of the struggles of re-establishing it as a new start,” he acknowledged. “That meant that we kept the program budget line and program title of CAC2S. But in reality we terminated the program. Now look where we are with it today. Back in December the program successfully got through the equivalent of a full rate production decision for Phase I. And today as we talk [Aug. 31, 2012], we are completing 2/3 of that Phase I fielding. We had previously fielded to the 3rd Marine Air Wing on the west coast and today we are finishing 2nd Marine Air Wing fielding. And we’ve got one more wing to go. And the ‘bonus’ was that the program manager was able to write a check back to the Marine Corps for \$41 million in Phase I savings because he executed his program so efficiently.”

“And Phase II is on the fast track,” he added. “We just recently finished a yearlong demonstration and we are now down to a matter of weeks before we award a Phase II contract. And likewise I anticipate the program manager ultimately writing a check back to the Marine Corps for savings on Phase II.”

Summarizing the journey, he observed, “So whereas the CAC2S program was effectively terminated in 2008, in June 2012 the program was awarded the Department of the Navy’s ‘Program of the Year’ and the program manager was awarded ‘Acquisition Professional of the Year’ by the Marine Corps.”

“LVSR is another great success story,” he noted. “The program is completing fielding as we speak. And both MTVR and Lightweight 155 mm are finishing filling out their inventory objectives. In fact, we awarded the follow-on MTVR contract on Sept. 4, 2012.

“In terms of JLTV I will leave the majority of the ‘programmatics’ to the Army, since they are the program lead,” he offered. “But these are very exciting times on the program, with the recent announcement of three teams for engineering and manufacturing development awards. So by about this time next year those three teams will be delivering prototypes for government test. And that’s another program that had been on the brink of termination, primarily because of the fact that the Congress and the services viewed the price tag of this vehicle as too costly. But industry has risen to the challenge; they heard the government; and working collaboratively while negotiating trades on requirements they are holding the lid on cost containment and



// Bill Taylor, PEO LS, presents outgoing and retiring program manager Capt. Pat Costello with a Legion of Merit Citation for his successful tour of duty as program manager of the Common Aviation Command and Control System (CAC2S), in overseeing the first phase of CAC2S successfully fielded to the Marine operating forces at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Cherry Point, N.C.

Photo by Kathy T. Reesey, Combat Camera Photographer, Combat Visual Information Center, Marine Corps Base Quantico

promising to deliver vehicles for under \$250,000 apiece. So we're looking good on that program."

Coming full circle, Taylor presented the example of the Amphibious Combat Vehicle (ACV), the Marine Corps' follow-on to the ECV.

"ACV is another program that's doing real well," he said. "It is indicative of how the environment under which we have to operate is driving changes in the way we develop and manage programs. It is 'the poster child,' if you will, for the manner in which we are changing the way we do business. Instead of having the service requirements community define the requirement and then 'throw it over the fence' for development, we have worked very collaboratively right up front in having our engineers and 'costers' in the same room with the requirements generators. And essentially, as they mull over capability alternatives, those engineers and costers have been able to hang a price tag on the range of capabilities. So in an iterative sense, over time, the Marine Corps' requirements generators – under the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration – have been able to essentially pick from a menu for a given capability across a range of capability versus cost. So they have actually been able to bound the estimated cost of the vehicle."

Without mentioning specific requirements emerging from the recently-conducted ACV analysis of alternatives (AoA), Taylor offered, "The bottom line here is that the estimate for this vehicle is not based on unbounded requirements. Instead it is requirements based on full

knowledge of the price tag associated with those requirements. That's a refreshing new way of doing business where the three elements of the triangle – requirements, resourcing and acquisition – are all working together up front, iteratively, to try to define what the capability is and what it should cost. And that's the environment from which this program emerged from its very beginnings."

"The AoA is now complete, and in summary it validated the need for the self-deploying amphibious capability," he added. "And the program can now move forward as a result of that. So the Marine Corps is now in the process of bounding and firming up those specific requirements that they need along with this capability. And once we have that, hopefully sometime later this fall to early winter, we will be going out to engage industry, to assess their capability and to hear from them regarding their creative solutions for ultimately delivering this capability."

Summarizing what he called "the long journey over the past five years," Taylor offered, "We have nursed these programs back to a state of health to where PEO programs are now firing on all cylinders. It is a great time in the life cycle of PEO Land Systems."

Closing with one strategic objective as the elements of the program portfolio look toward the future, he concluded, "Given the environment that we are facing in the coming months and years ahead, if we have one strategic objective across all of our programs it is the pursuit of continuing to look for ways to operate and manage these programs more efficiently so that we can return savings to the resource sponsor."