

Air Force Combat Command 90-Day Staffing Requirement

ICF International

VALUE / SCOPE **\$70M (\$50M initial + \$20M surge)**

SITUATION

When the Air Force Combat Command (ACC) launched the consolidation effort at Langley, the government made it clear that staffing readiness would be the single most critical evaluation factor. General Kelly needed to demonstrate to Congress that ACC could achieve full operational staffing within 90 days of award to support mission continuity. There was no incumbent, but two of the large competitors—Booz Allen and Peraton—were heavily focused on technical narrative rather than staffing execution, despite the Air Force repeatedly emphasizing that readiness and surge capability would be examined first. Because I had led Defensive Cyber Operations for the Army and Critical Infrastructure programs for the Navy—with CPARS consistently above 4.0—the Air Force viewed staffing execution as the gating factor for credibility. If we could not prove 90-day readiness, we would lose outright.

TASK

I had to design a staffing solution capable of meeting an accelerated 90-day requirement, demonstrate to ACC that we had the hiring pipeline, muscle, and repeatability to deliver, and convince the evaluation board—along with General Kelly—that our readiness posture was superior to competitors. At the same time, I needed to preserve as much margin as possible, even though building a rapid-hire machine would require partnering with large staffing vendors that typically came with a cost.

ACTION

I built the entire solution around one principle: certainty of execution. First, I partnered with KForce and Insight Global—two firms with national talent networks and high-volume clearance recruiting capabilities—to supply all Tier 1 and Tier 2 cyber, IT, and operations personnel. This allowed me to create a pre-vetted pipeline of candidates ready for immediate contingent offers. I also built a structured hiring process with on-site hiring events in Newport News, where we interviewed, screened, and validated candidates for key positions, including senior cyber analysts, network specialists, and ops managers.

To further reduce risk, I created a three-deep staffing model in which every position had three fully vetted candidates with salary alignment, relocation approval, and availability timelines documented. This ensured no single candidate loss could jeopardize readiness. I integrated these three-deep contingencies directly into the solution narrative, demonstrating not just a pipeline but a fully architected staffing engine capable of producing repeatable results.

Finally, I reinforced confidence by presenting strong past performance in cyber operations—highlighting my leadership on the Army Defensive Cyber Operations program and Navy critical infrastructure programs, backed by CPARS above 4.0. I showed the Air Force that I had already executed cyber missions at scale in high-pressure, time-sensitive environments and could replicate that performance immediately at ACC.

RESULT

The Air Force rated our staffing readiness as the strongest among all bidders, specifically calling out our three-deep contingency approach and partnerships with large-scale staffing firms as the deciding discriminator. We won the contract—valued at \$50M—based largely on staffing credibility and readiness assurance. While the heavy use of staffing

firms initially compressed margins, the quality and speed of execution positioned us as the most trusted performer. That trust directly led to additional surge work at Cheyenne Mountain, adding another \$20M in contract value on top of the original award. In the end, our focus on certainty of delivery not only won the program but expanded it by 40% after award.

LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES DEMONSTRATED

This example demonstrates Ownership (building the entire staffing engine myself), Customer Obsession (aligning to General Kelly's Congressional readiness pressures), Bias for Action (creating rapid-hire pipelines), Insist on the Highest Standards (three-deep contingencies), Dive Deep (candidate pipelines, vetting, and relocation readiness), and Deliver Results (winning the contract and expanding it by \$20M).

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