



# Federal Health Matters

## Camp Solutions to be Provided to U.S. Army

Global Defense Technology & Systems, Inc., (GTEC) provides mission-critical, technology-based systems, solutions, and services for national security agencies and programs of the U.S. Government. On September 15, GTEC announced it recently secured a \$37 million contract to provide camp solutions to the U.S. Army. The contract will support the military's force modernization and mobility efforts.

Mission critical technology, as described on the GTEC Web site, is designed to counter the threat of terrorism through watchlisting and intelligence analysis systems and solutions. Programs are developed beginning with a set of requirements that is received from the client. The company then develops new operational approaches and methodologies to fit those requirements.

As part of this contract, GTEC will deliver Expeditionary Tricon Systems, representing 18 force provider modules and incorporating the most recent advances in technology for reusing shower water. The camp solutions are specially designed to provide support to U.S. troops operating at home and overseas. All systems feature a modular design that allows for rapid deployment and can be fully functional in just 45 minutes.

According to their delivery schedule, \$20 million of the contract revenue is expected to be delivered throughout the remainder of 2010, leaving the rest of supplies and services to be delivered in 2011. On September 27, GTEC announced that it received an additional \$26 million contract to provide similar systems to the U.S. Army.

## International Study Offers Insights Into Atherothrombosis

According to a recent international study, patients with deposits of fatty plaque in their arteries are faced with a higher risk for cardiovascular complications if they have been diagnosed with diabetes, have disease in multiple arteries, or have a history of heart complications (such as myocardial infarction [MI] or stroke). The study, which was published online by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, was led by Dr. Deepak Bhat, the chief of cardiology at the VA Boston Healthcare System (VABHS) and the director of the Integrated Interventional Cardiovascular Program at VABHS and Brigham and Women's Hospital, both in Boston, Massachusetts.

The 4-year study focused on more than 45,000 patients in 30 countries. Patients were included in the study if they had clinical evidence of or risk factors for atherothrombosis.

Medical history and current status of each patient were thoroughly examined to organize groups. Patients in the study were separated according to if they were at higher or lower risk for stroke, MI, or cardiovascular death. Those at the low end of the risk scale—7%—included patients without diabetes and only risk factors for atherothrombosis. The risk reached as high as 25% for patients with evidence of atherothrombosis in multiple arteries as well as a history of MI or stroke. The risk also was raised considerably in the presence of diabetes.

Bhatt and his colleagues believe that aggressive efforts for prevention are necessary even in stable patients who previously have experienced an

MI or stroke. These patients are still at a high risk of recurrence if the plaque builds in several arteries or if they have been diagnosed with diabetes.

VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki said that "This study was an impressive international collaboration that may hold important clinical benefits for veterans and others with cardiovascular disease...[the results] are likely to be of great significance to physicians—particularly cardiologists—in VA and worldwide."

## Initiative for Improved Service

The VA recently launched Veterans Relationship Management (VRM), a multiyear initiative intended to improve veterans' access to information about health care and benefits. The initiative has 4 main objectives: (1) to improve the quality and accessibility of health care, benefits, and memorial services while optimizing value; (2) to increase veteran client satisfaction with health, education, training, counseling, financial, and burial benefits and service; (3) to protect people and assets continuously and in time of crisis; and (4) to improve internal customer satisfaction with management systems and support services to achieve mission performance and make the VA an employer of choice by investing in human capital. Through the VRM initiative, the VA seeks to enhance communication with the use of innovative 21st century technologies.

The enhancements will be introduced in 6-month increments to guarantee success of the project. By year's end, VRM technology will deliver improved telephone services designed

to assist veterans in reaching call center agents faster. To guarantee the improved quality of services offered to veterans, calls will be recorded and then reviewed.

A new Web site (<http://www.ebenefits.va.gov>) also will be created under the VRM initiative that gives veterans complete control for searching and retaining information. The VA collaborated with the DoD to provide a single sign-on feature on the site for both veterans and service members. This feature will establish each individual's identity and retain the individual's information, which, in turn, will enable faster transactions.

## VA House Committee Approves Bills Regarding Veteran Employment

On September 15, the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs approved 6 bills that would improve the benefits and services offered to veterans by the VA. Chairman Bob Filner (D-California), who led the committee, said the "bills address the emerging needs of our veterans by expanding certain benefits to address their employment needs.... We can never fully repay our brave troops for their service, but we can continue to thank them by providing the education and training they missed while serving our country."

The Veterans Benefits and Economic Welfare Improvement Act of 2010 will establish a military transition program for new veterans to provide them with skills relevant to the civilian job market. Employers who provide programs of apprenticeship or on-the-job training for veterans would receive payments through the program. To take part in the program, veterans must be ineligible for other programs that assist with employment placement and have military special-

izations that do not easily transfer to positions within the civilian job market. This bill also will increase the pension amount for veterans who have received a Medal of Honor, establish an award program permitting the VA to recognize businesses for contributing to veterans' employment, and protect veterans from losing non-service-related pension benefits for various reasons.

The Housing, Employment, and Living Programs for Veterans Act of 2010, another bill approved by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, will improve programs offered by the VA such as vocational rehabilitation, internship, work-study, and on-the-job training. Under this bill, support for programs and facilities that provide services for female veterans and their families who have become homeless will be modified. Improvements for specially adapted housing assistance also will be made.

The promotion of the VetSuccess Web site—which provides information about the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program for veterans with service-connected disabilities—also was approved. The bill requires that a link to the VetSuccess Web site be provided on the homepage of the VA's Web site. The 3 other bills that were approved include the Veteran Status for Certain Reserve Components (that would honor certain individuals with status as veterans under the law), the Qualification for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Employment Coordinators (that would provide qualifications for vocational rehabilitation counselors and vocational rehabilitation employment coordinators employed by the VA), and the SAVINGS Act of 2010 (that would ensure the receipt of financial counseling and information regarding life insurance payments to beneficiaries of Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance).

## New Legislation for Veterans With Traumatic Brain Injury Proposed

Congressman Tim Walz (D-Minnesota) has introduced legislation to the U.S. House of Representatives that seeks to ensure fuller and more independent lives for veterans who have sustained traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) in Iraq and Afghanistan. The legislation also encourages urgent action on this measure.

Should the Veterans' Traumatic Brain Injury Rehabilitative Services' Improvements Act of 2010 pass, the VA will be required to provide veterans who have severe TBI (one of the most complex injuries incurred by service members involved in the Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom conflicts) with continuing, long-term rehabilitative care. Although symptoms from mild or moderate TBI often may disperse, severe TBIs may result in lasting neurologic and cognitive complications.

Steve Nardizzi, executive director for the Wounded Warrior Project, applauded Walz for his introduction of the legislation and said, "These complex injuries often require long-term rehabilitative care. The legislation would help ensure that rehabilitation is not prematurely cut off and that these veterans get the support they need...to achieve maximum independence and quality of life." The Wounded Warrior Project was created to honor and empower wounded soldiers by raising awareness and enlisting the public's aid. ●