

DFAS and AFGE Council 171  
Negotiation Session  
May 25, 2004

In attendance: Bob McNamara, Kelley Dull, Pete Heins, Teresa Briley, Mark Collins, Barbara McCowan, Frank Rock, Robin Smith, Ron Coe and Victor Davis. SME for EDM Dawn Colter. Note takers: Joe Dan Rawls and Angela Beltowski.

Begin with EDM.

Kelley requested that we get an overview of EDM and who is using it etc.

Barbara McCowan gave an overview. Questions. Will be moving toward centralized scanning. The biggest bulk of the mail will be sent to Columbus. Goal is to have everything electronic. Accounting has access, read only, for research purposes. How is the Agency going to generate a document control area for the sites that don't already have it? There should be a document control area anywhere that receives mail. CR controls the mailrooms would they also control the doc control area? Would be an agreement between business lines. What is the issue? Training of the employees in the mailroom when/if they start using EDM. Accounting would have access to view the documents scanned by VP. Vendor Pay is responsible for scanning. What is the grade schedule/series of the employees doing the scanning? Believe 525 Vendor Pay Technicians. When end of day is run it creates a completed packet for certification. Disbursing would also need to be trained on how to process the vouchers? Yes. Would EDM down the road cost employee jobs? It could, but it could also help DFAS pick up more work because of it bringing us closer to World Class org. Air Force side has not lost any jobs but we may not have filled positions when they come open. EDM help desk here at Columbus. Will the grades/classifications be standardized across the Agency? Will this change the security classification of the employee's using the system? To Barbara's knowledge, it will not change an employee's security classification. Do you have a standard position description for the technicians working with EDM? Can we get a copy of the job description of the positions in EDM-scanners and systems? There are some people in VP that are handling systems related problems. TASO would do the systems problems. Scanning, indexing, input invoices, remit to's, certifications, and bump between EDM and IAPS. We are trying to see what the basic structure is so that we can have an idea

of how the process is supposed to work. Individual PD issues will not be addressed here but we need the basics to address them in the correct way. Has there been any consideration/plans to outsourcing the function of EDM? None of Management team knows of any discussions like this. The monitor size went from 17 in to 21 in to support the multi-document view. Who is responsible for the funding when ergonomics issues come up? In the past, it has been the Business line that funds it. There is no archive solution. Everything that is scanned stays on the system as it is. We have never had a truly deleted/lost file. There is less need for storage, people to pull vouchers etc, and less need for space. Air Force did a study and there was a 15-17% efficiency gain. The system would have an electronic folder for each contract number with a list of the documents in the folder. There's a wild card search, you can check when a record came in, how it came in, what fax number it came from etc. Wide area workflow and Right-fax will work with EDM. If there is a problem with a document, the indexer should catch it and send it back to the vendor.

EDM Proposal:

Paragraph 1:

In order to perform in a manner expected by the agency, employees must have ample space that meets the needs of their respective DFAS EDM functions and adequate space must be provided to accommodate the EDM system, and downloads associated with these systems.

We have employees saying that they don't have adequate space when using EDM. Scanners are in open area's.

Kelley gave out the Union's updated proposal. 15 minute break so that Management can read and discuss.

Mgmt: The training will be conducted in conjunction with implementation.

Bob: recommend last sentence of para. 2. It is outside of the scope of EDM.

Mark: It would be more appropriate in contract negotiations to include all employees.

Just want employees to see that Management is encouraging development.

Pete: Article 27 already speaks to this. It's not appropriate here because we already have it in the MUMA.

Frank: We don't have the organizational structure. What we have is an organization that doesn't have a organized structure. Are the grades in all sites the same?

Kelley: what's wrong with restating it even though it's in the MUMA?

Pete: We feel we've already addressed it.

Language: The Parties reaffirm the goals set forth in Article 27 of the MUMA.

Para 3:

Bob: Change commensurate to addressed?

Teresa: We need to address those who are not under the MUMA. We can't go against the other agreements.

Language: All position classification issues shall be addressed in accordance with 31 of the MUMA or other applicable negotiated agreements, law, rule, or regulation.

Go back to the first sentence. Management's proposal is to take out the first sentence because we already have it in the contract.

Kelley: We just want it restated. There has been so much contention on the positions and the work people are doing.

Teresa: One of the goals was to not adversely affect anyone. They kept the structure that already exists at the sites.

Mailroom 301 stayed same series with electronic mail.

Pete: We are attempting to settle a ULP. The first sentence is just a statement. It is already in our collective bargaining agreement.

Teresa: There is no action addressed on our part in the first sentence.

Pete: We don't need to restate it. We already said it once in the Agreement.

Mark: Whenever parties enter into an agreement and a third party would want to know why each part was in the agreement. They may read into the statement something that wasn't intended since it is already in the negotiated agreement.

Teresa: The second sentence point's employees to Article 31, which is where the first sentence is from.

Ron: Everything in the contract is already in law somewhere.

Teresa: We are both committed to solving these issues. There has not necessarily been a 'foul' committed by the Agency. Why would the Parties waste/spend time to craft language that already exists in the negotiated agreement? If we have issues with classification, the second sentence points employees and management to the negotiated agreement. If we incorporate into sentence two: All position classification issues including concerns about job descriptions....

Kelley: we agree with the language.

Teresa: The intent of this is not that you can grieve the classification of a position.

Kelley: Yes, that would be a classification appeal.

Last sentence of paragraph 3. Employees doing like and similar work will be compensated fairly and equitably.

Pete: If an employee feels they are not compensated fairly and equitably it would result in a grievance. What are you getting from this statement? It's in Article 29. Why include it in the agreement when we've already said it in a broader statement.

Mark: What we are negotiating here is pay and it is not negotiable.

Frank: It's a clarifying statement. We're not negotiating pay.

Mark: Is this sentence clarifying something in this document?

Kelley: We discussed standardization. Like functions are like functions.

Pete: So if you have someone working in Orlando and Columbus, you are saying they will be the same grade if they are doing the same work?

Kelley: If you are telling us you are creating a standard organization than it should be standard. This is why we requested the organization chart.

Teresa: What I'm hearing is the concern is standard positions within that standard organization. There was an effort to not adversely impact employees at the sites and that is why the grades/series is different at different sites.

Ron: What can we put to address this issue? Add something to the end...in accordance with applicable rule, regulation, and law.

Pete: If you take out compensated we're 70% of the way there.

Kelley: I don't think each site can be identical. But they should be similar.

Pete: What do you want to see?

Kelley: If we are going to have standard classifications than they should be similar.

Pete: Who determines fairly and equitably? DFAS, the Union, or an arbitrator? What do we mean by that?

Language: Employees doing like and similar work will be classified fairly and equitably.

Robin: Fair and equitable speaks for itself.

Language: In the interest of fairness and equity, positions of employees performing similar work will be classified in accordance with applicable law, rules, and regulation.

Teresa: What are we trying to address that we didn't already address in the other sentence.

Kelley: Maybe we need to table this portion until we get the information that we requested. We are kind of doing this blind.

This is a double-edged sword because some people may be of a lower grade than they should be but others could be higher.

Break for Lunch 12:30

The language that begins “In the interest of fairness and equity...” the Union is ok with.

All approved language.

Para 4:

Bob: When it comes to the 15 min breaks, do we really want to go there?

Kelley: Where we are going is that we have been told that the screens used with EDM are very hard on the eyes. We want them to be able to get up and let their eyes rest.

Victor: Glare screens, larger monitors have all helped this.

Pete: The contract provides for 2 15-minute breaks. We’ve made vast improvements on the safety issue of this. We don’t have video display terminals anymore. The language for Article 22 was from back in the 1970’s. The 10-minute rest break in Article 22 is not a stop work break but is a change to work on something else. Would an employee going between paper and computer be ok? Tier II employees who are indexer’s are completely electronic.

Teresa: Would the 15-minute break, bathroom breaks, etc meet the issue of the Tier II employees?

Kelley: We have some areas where a supervisor doesn’t understand.

Dawn: With EDM there wouldn’t be any paper to shuffle or file because of the electronic environment.

Barbara: When it first starts up it is hard to get used to but once the employees get used to it they wouldn’t have a problem with getting up if necessary.

Kelley: The employees that won't get away from their desk because of the ones that has a supervisor that does not understand.

It is not a break but a relief period.

Pete: We have two rest breaks. On top of that, smokers take additional breaks.

Kelley: We are talking about a small portion of the employees.

Barbara: 4-6 at each site.

Robin: It's the Supervisors responsibility to ensure it's not abused.

Pete: The purpose of Article 22 is that work continues to be done. The concern is that the 10-minute issue could be burdensome on the performance measure.

Barbara: In an environment without paper it is difficult to give them another task.

Teresa: You do get the relief if you encourage the employee's to take their 15-minute breaks and lunch that is already authorized in the contract.

Ron: When I look at the language in Article 22, I would read it to mean the computer screen. So the employees are already authorized the 10-minute relief period.

Pete: You have a right to a break contractually but you also have the right to not take a break.

Teresa's Language: Tier II personnel who engage in continuous work viewing computer screens, are encouraged to use the two 15-minute breaks, to provide relief from the screens as necessary.

Union Caucus.

Ron's Language: Employee's that continuously perform EDM Tier II or related functions will be permitted to take a relief period not to exceed 10-

minutes every two hours. Supervisor will determine any alternative tasks/duties. Availability of alternative tasks will not be a basis for denial.

Management also has language: Tier II EDM employees are encouraged to take periodic relief from reviewing the screens to avoid eyestrain. These relief periods should not exceed 10-minutes every two hours.

Kelley: We can accept that language.

Replaced first three sentences with above approved language.

Bob: We don't see where this is linked to EDM.

Kelley: This was a bullet sent to us by employees that are working with EDM.

Dawn: We are giving them a 21" monitor but nothing else changes about their work area.

Frank: We should be encouraging employees to have healthy work habits.

Barbara: They already have a monitor, mouse, keyboard etc. If there is an ergonomics issue it should have already been taken care of. It is not a factor of EDM.

Kelley: The employees doing the work raised the concern. They see or feel a potential problem.

Barbara: Before it was a paper environment. I typed based on a paper sitting on my desk. Now the document is on my computer already.

Kelley: What about the scanning function? Are they sitting or standing?

Dawn: It is their decision. Most sit in a chair next to the scanner at a pc for problem resolution.

Bob: Who makes the decision if something is necessary?

Frank: The safety officer would.

Mark: We have in place a method for employees who have a need for special equipment.

Kelley: What about if they don't have a current medical problem but are wanting to prevent it.

Teresa: If it's because of a medical problem that already exists, they should already have the items needed.

Kelley: Can we put something in here about how employees request the ergonomic equipment?

Ron: Can we get an overview of the ergonomics program?

Kelley: In this I would like something. Employees may request ergonomic equipment through the proper channels.

Language: Employees performing EDM functions may request ergonomically suited equipment through supervisory channels or other appropriate Agency representatives.

Language accepted.

Next sentence: Supervisor will also be trained on the Agency's policies relating to employee disabilities, and ergonomically suited equipment.

Mark: This is not negotiable it is an assignment of work.

Ron: It doesn't have to say Supervisors.

Language: Agency will provide training on policies on employee disabilities and ergonomically suited equipment.

Teresa: We have this program set up. Why are we attaching this to EDM? This doesn't exist because of EDM it would have already been there.

Robin: As a technician I would go to my Supervisor to ask questions about this.

Kelley: We are going to delete the last two sentences.

For the Record: We will get the information on the ergonomics program.

Teresa: We are already working on it.

Kelley: We have some additional issues. We don't have specific language on these but have come up as discussion has taken place. Some of the 3's and 4's in the mail room that will become the scanners are our disabled employees and we are concerned that they will not be able to grasp the change and the process will be started to terminate them.

Pete: So these people's jobs don't entail working with computers? They will be given a job description/standards that they will be given training period etc. If they are qualified individual and have requested accommodation then it will be considered.

Kelley: You have to go to our world and see what we have to deal with. Maybe they have a documented disability; maybe they are just slower than others, why would we want to harm them in this process.

Dawn: We have worked with employees with disabilities and they have the equipment needed to do their jobs. In the mailroom area, you can separate the actual separation of the mail and the scanning of the documents. In most places the same person does both.

Teresa: The additional duty would be laying it on the scanner and then going to the computer and hitting a button to start the scanning.

Victor: We know we have employees that cannot be retrained. Work processes have changed. Is there a chance that these individuals would down the road be put out of a job?

Dawn: In the past it was normal for the least performing employees to be put in the mailroom. There is very little additional work for the scanners. It is not hard to grasp putting it on the scanner and hitting a button on the computer to start it. We have not migrated any employees out of a job in the mailroom because of their inability to do the EDM function.

Ron: Are there internal controls or an SOP in place?

Barbara: The mailroom is a controlled area. It is in a locked area.

Ron: Is there something in writing telling employees how the documents are to be controlled/handled.

Dawn: Orlando has put together an SOP on the scanning function that is being looked at to modify for all. Will email training manuals and SOP tonight.

Barbara: Was completely down in 1997. Since then it has only been down for a couple hours (four hours max).

Dawn: Upgrading system and both main systems in Indy and Columbus would have to be down for the system to not work. Backups are done weekly.

If you had a hardware problem EDS would handle it.

Ron: What about quality control?

Barbara: When a document is scanned in there is an error that comes out that says that it couldn't be read and a technician would need to rescan or adjust the image. Every site that has EDM right now, accounting has view only access. The sites that don't have EDM can request it through the commercial pay business line to have read only access.

Ron: Are there standards on the Tier II employees?

Barbara: Yes, they are required to index 200-250 a day. There have not been any problems meeting these requirements. Some people have a harder time adjusting to an electronic document than others. People who have the computer knowledge may not have as much of a problem as those with less knowledge/use.

Dawn: We work extensively with the underachievers.

Kelley: Do you see site-specific issues that would need addressed?

Dawn: The biggest one is changing the mindset. An example is that we had to put printers off of people's desks because they wanted to print everything.

The problems have been the same; the way they were handled may have been different.

Ron: Is there anything we can do to help you with implementation of EDM?

Dawn: We give notice to the Union 30 day's prior. If you could give us some information about exceptions that are already obvious before implementation, it would help us be prepared to address the issues.