

Turret

Knox gate guards undergo thorough checks
By JOHN NEVILLE/Turret Staff Writer

The men and women who check vehicles and oversee security at the gates to Fort Knox DO NOT have criminal records, despite what an article which appeared last week in the Washington Post might have led some people to believe.

The story, which ran in the Post April 5, cited a Government Accountability Office report which stated, “The Army’s procedure for screening prospective contract guards is inadequate and puts the Army at risk of having ineligible guards protecting installation gates.”

The article was referring to the guards who are hired by private contractors, not the guards hired by the Department of the Army, who are federal employees.

Fort Knox employs both. The contracted guards are hired to supplement and assist the guards hired by the Department of the Army.

The article named two firms—Chenega Integrated Systems and Alutiiq Security and Technology—that were awarded no-bid contracts by the Department of the Army. Two other firms that weren’t named in the article were awarded contracts through a competitive bidding system.

Each company was contracted to staff the gates of 46 military installations around the country, including Fort Knox. According to the article, 89 guards with criminal records were hired at two of the 46 bases.

The article did not list whether Fort Knox was one of the installations where guards with criminal records were employed. It also failed to name the two installations, but because Fort Knox was mentioned in the article as an installation that uses contractors to hire gate guards, Matthew Galyean, the post’s guard commander, worried the article

could be misinterpreted by the community.

“Those weaknesses that were identified by the GAO (guards with criminal and felony backgrounds) don’t apply to the company that services Fort Knox,” Galyean explained. “These little problems that came up don’t exist here.”

Fort Knox’s contract is with Chenega, but Chenega wasn’t named as the contractor responsible for hiring guards with criminal records.

Galyean also said the article is misleading because it implies that the hiring process ends with the contractor.

Chenega does a thorough local records check on each applicant. If the applicant passes Chenega’s background check, he or she can be hired by the contractor.

But each applicant must still pass the government’s background screening before being hired.

“I review the packet, I view if it’s been processed by the G-2 (the post’s security office), and I do a background investigation with a different resource to look for criminal history,” Galyean said.

“The contractor can hire anyone they want, but (those hired) can’t go out and work this mission unless I’ve approved it.”

The government’s background check is thorough, according to Galyean.

During the check, the applicant’s name is entered into a database which pulls up information about the person’s criminal history, as well as his or her employment and residence history for the past five years.

But convictions for serious offenses, such as murder, that were committed more than five years ago will also show up.

The article also said that the GAO report, “found that the Army does not adequately confirm that guards have been trained; that guards

were certified by contractors before training was finished; and that in one case a contractor falsified training records.”

But Galyean said that he oversees and assesses all the guards’ training and certifications, not the contractor.

“I don’t know where these failures were, but they weren’t here,” said Galyean, referring to the report. “They look like people failures to me.”

“I have full confidence in the program here,” said Fort Knox Provost Marshal Lt. Col. Edward Baker. “We’re not having any of the problems other places are having.

“We have professionals running that business (guarding the gates) out there,” Baker added. “As an indication of that success, I can tell you that 50 percent of (the post’s) alcohol and drug offenses and all of (Fort Knox’s) insurance cases are found at the gates, not on Fort Knox property.

“We have sharp people out there protecting the community.”