

# SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

## Leaders Pave Way for Defense Sector Diversity

### **DEFENSE:** Women in Top Jobs, Programs Open Industry

■ By BRAD GRAVES

Those wondering about opportunities for women in the defense sector may be heartened by developments at **General Dynamics** and **Lockheed Martin Corp.**

In January, both defense giants put women at the helm.

Locally, there are other signs that defense contracting's network is no longer, by definition, an old-boys' network (see related story).

Women are an integral part of San Diego's defense contracting community.

The San Diego chapter of the Women in Defense organization is the largest and fastest growing in the nation, reports **Robin Lipka**, the chapter president. The group grew from a handful of members in 2005 to more than 300 today.

**Tricia Ward**, who works in the local office of **Booz Allen Hamilton**, heads the national Women in Defense organization, which is affiliated with NDIA (aka the National Defense Industrial Association).

Opportunities for women in the federal and defense industry "have never been higher," Lipka said, mentioning the federal government's improved women-owned small business federal contract program, known as 8(m).

The Pentagon has similar programs benefiting small businesses and businesses run by service-disabled veterans. Those entities have been able to grow very fast with government help, Lipka said.

### **Cap Lifted**

As part of the recently passed national defense authorization act, the government lifted a cap on the size of contracts that may be awarded to woman-owned small businesses under the government set-aside. It was a move Lipka welcomed. Previously women-owned small businesses could compete for contracts worth up to \$6.5 million. The sum is not much when spread out over five years, Lipka observed.

Even with the improvement, Lipka warned that the community needs to use the new 8(m) program, or risk losing it.

"If women in this industry don't take risks, start their own businesses, mentor and work together to pursue and take advantage of these opportunities, the 8(m) program will not be a success," Lipka said.

Women in Defense works to cultivate, advance and recognize women in national defense and security, Lipka said. The local chapter also includes men, including many U.S. Navy leaders.

The chapter's May program, incidentally, covers risk taking. See <http://WIDSanDiego.org> for details.

Lipka is CEO and part owner of **The Marlin Alliance Inc.** The San Diego company, which has 25 employees, is a consulting firm that specializes in business and information technology strategy. The company recently won its first prime contract in excess of \$15 million. The five-year deal supports the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command, or Spawar.

In addition to girls studying STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and math), Lipka would like to see women be more assertive. The CEO said women need to go after opportunities, put in for promotions, accept leadership when offered and pursue work.

### **Looking to the Leaders**

There are role models out there.

On the national scene, **Phebe Novakovic** took the CEO job at General Dynamics in January, around the same time that **Marilyn Hewson** took the CEO role at Lockheed Martin Corp. Both advanced from senior executive positions. Hewson was recently named to the board of Lockheed Martin, which had \$47.2 billion in revenue during 2012; Novakovic is chairwoman at General Dynamics, which had \$31.5 billion in 2012 revenue.

Both firms have offices in San Diego; General Dynamics owns the Nassco shipyard, and operates General Dynamics IT in Mission Valley.

Opportunities for women seem to be opening up, observed **Stacy Reddan**, principal owner and CEO of **Technology Unlimited Group**, or TUG.

In the 1970s, Reddan recalled, women in the defense industry were assumed to be bad at what they did, until proven otherwise. Men, on the other hand, were assumed to be good until proven otherwise.

Early in her career, while working for a big defense house, Reddan recalled a wave of hiring. Contractors were offering high salaries, enticing people to jump ship. Men left. The women? Many preferred not to quit, because starting a new job meant the arduous process of proving oneself again.

Reddan said she observed another interesting trend in the old days: Women in positions of relative power, such as secretaries, did not want to see other women succeed in their jobs. "Back when I started, women didn't want other women to be successful," she said.

Reddan went on to earn a medical degree.

The inequality didn't seem to apply in medicine, she said. "You had been through medical school; you're all the same," she said.

When she returned to defense work 10 years ago, she found the bad-until-proven-good principle was gone.

Technology Unlimited Group incorporated in 2004 and now has 20 employees. It offers system and software engineering for government clients. "We're super geeks," Reddan said.

In the final analysis, Reddan said, the ability to do the work at hand is what really matters.

She recalled a meeting where subcontractors met with prime contractors about possibly doing business with one another. As the women-owned business representatives made their pitches, she recalled, they seemed to be arguing that they should get hired simply because they are woman-owned.

The argument seemed off-base, Reddan said.

"To me, personally, sex is not the issue," the CEO said. "It's getting the work done."