

Congress weighs program to groom Defense civilian leaders

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As the Defense Department gears up to hire thousands of new workers -- including 20,000 contracting specialists -- Congress is considering a program to help the Pentagon recruit and train thousands of future civilian leaders.

The program -- called the Department of Defense Civilian Leadership Program -- would select candidates from inside the department as well as the private sector for special training and assignments designed to help the government develop a "new generation" of civilian talent. Under the proposal, included in the 2010 Defense Authorization bill ([S. 1390](#)), the Pentagon could select up to 5,000 people each year for the program. According to a [Senate Armed Services Committee report](#) on the authorization bill, the program is aimed in part at helping Defense add thousands of new acquisition professionals.

In April, Defense Secretary Robert Gates [announced](#) the department would convert 11,000 contractors to federal positions and hire an additional 9,000 employees to beef up its acquisition workforce.