



1600 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 203 Arlington, VA 22209 P: 703-522-5828 | F: 703-522-5837

 lexingtoninstitute.org

<http://lexingtoninstitute.org/lockheed-martin-government-relations-wizard-greg-dahlberg-launches-consulting-practice/>

Lockheed Martin Government Relations Wizard Greg Dahlberg Launches Consulting Practice

August 3, 2015

Loren B. Thompson, Ph.D

The mastermind of Lockheed Martin's government-relations strategy during the most challenging years for the F-35 fighter program has retired from the company, and will establish a Washington consulting practice. Gregory Dahlberg spent a dozen years managing the Washington office of the world's biggest defense contractor, and during much of that time he was the most senior political confidant of the company's chairmen. Dahlberg's staff led government relations for scores of programs impacting the jurisdiction of virtually every congressional committee during his tenure, and he can claim credit for having rescued some of them from legislative oblivion.

In typical Dahlberg fashion, he managed to retire on the very day that the Marine Corps declared the F-35 fighter operational — a fitting conclusion to a corporate career in which he devoted so much energy to assuring the world's biggest military-technology program stayed on track. Prior to joining Lockheed Martin, Dahlberg spent most of his career in government, ending his federal stewardship as Under Secretary and then Acting Secretary of the Army. However, the experiences that most shaped his approach to government relations occurred during the many years when he was a professional staffer on the House defense and transportation appropriations subcommittees.

In the latter capacity, Dahlberg was a confidant of the legendary Representative Jack Murtha, and assimilated the arcane folkways of the appropriations process in a way that few other staffers could match. The appropriations staff on which he served was noted for its discretion and precision in crafting legislation, frequently taking the lead in recommending funding tradeoffs and exercising oversight. Nobody who knew Dahlberg was surprised when the biggest defense contractor of all hired him to its lead legislative strategy, and then elevated him to oversee all facets of Washington operations. It was in the latter capacity that I first encountered him, because one of his many responsibilities was managing the company's relations with Washington's contentious think tanks.

You might think that was a small part of what his job at Lockheed was about, but shaping the tenor of public discourse on military priorities can be crucial to a defense company's fortunes. Over the years, many suppliers have been driven out of the business or forced into the arms of competitors because of reverses in the political system. Think tanks can play an important role in providing the rationale, or at least the pretext, for such shifts. So in addition to dealing directly with key members of Congress and the Executive Branch in his job at Lockheed Martin Washington Ops, Dahlberg worked hard to shape public perceptions of the company's programs.

In general, he fostered a collegial work environment emphasizing collaboration and sensitivity, but he could be downright difficult when the company's operating units sought to freelance on Capitol Hill or in the Pentagon. Dahlberg understood that everybody representing the company in Washington needed to be on the same strategy and espousing the same values, because any seams in the public image would be exploited by competitors. He also understood the importance of ideas in driving political outcomes; the most disconcerting experiences I had with him

is when he would send me thoughts on policy he had pounded out on his Blackberry while sitting in an airport lounge that were deeper and more detailed than anything I could have composed.

All of that expertise on the political culture and the legislative process and the interactions of key players will presumably now be available to his consulting clients. Gregory Dahlberg is a truly unique Washington insider, a repository of political knowledge and insight without equal — especially when it comes to the defense business. He understands as few others do how crucial government relations are to securing the interests of Pentagon suppliers, because in the end the customer isn't a military service or a defense agency — it's a political system. Lexington Institute wishes him well in his new enterprise, which we have no doubt will continue the tradition of civility, agility, insight and humanity that he established as head of Lockheed Martin's Washington Operations.