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The Whitestone Group of Columbus, OH has been awarded a \$104 million contract from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to provide security services at Control Towers and Airport Centers at 34 sites in the agency's Eastern Security Area, which includes Washington, D.C. and ten eastern states.

The 5-year contract, signed after a competitive bidding process, calls for Whitestone to provide patrolling, access control, screening and credential checks and general electric monitoring at the sites, according to the company.

In an interview with *Government Security News* following the announcement, Whitestone president and chief executive officer John Clark, Sr. said Whitestone is looking forward to close cooperation with the FAA "to explore options and diligently enforce whatever security procedures are necessary to protect the public from any escalation in international or domestic terrorism."



*John Clark, Sr.*

Although Whitestone offers a wide range of security services, ranging from facility management and critical infrastructure protection to force protection, general investigations and executive protection, the company has seen a dramatic increase in its contracts with federal agencies in recent years, according to Clark. The company, he said, has entered into contracts with the Hoover Dam, NASA, the U.S. Army, U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA, the Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Energy, Social Security Administration and the Department of Agriculture, Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of the Interior.

Asked about the standards and procedures for selecting companies in the bidding process, and the reasons for the company's growing business in the federal market, Clark said he believed that selections were made by committees who voted on the competitive bids, making their selection based on value, past performance and reputation for quality. He attributed the recent growth to the company's philosophy that if you focus on providing value and service to clients, "the money will take care of itself". The company and its management take their job very seriously, he said, and place the major focus on quality assurance and dependability.

"We want to exceed our clients' expectations," said Clark, expressing his opinion that another factor supporting Whitestone's growing client base in the federal space was that the company was investing in "the right systems, the right training and the right people." In the systems area, Clark credited Whitestone chief operating officer Pamela Gentile for providing sophisticated management techniques and upgrading the company's technologies to keep pace with the rapid growth by acquiring software tools such as Valiant and People Track workforce management software.

The majority of the company's training, according to Clark, comes directly from the Federal Protective Service Security Guard Information Manual (SGIM), which provides information on virtually every possible situation a Security Officer may encounter while on duty, as well as the best and most efficient methods of preventing a situation from escalating further. Supplementing the SGIM, Whitestone's Basic Training, generally a 120 hour course, includes Basic Training, Supervisory Training, Refresher Training, Weapons Training (Auto Pistol, Baton and OC Spray), Annual or Semi-Annual Weapons Refresher & Firearms Qualification, First Aid and COR-AED.

Clark pointed out that the company goes out of its way to instill its security professionals with the concept that “clients are not an interruption in our work. They’re the purpose for it.” Whitestone’s training process is extremely intense and comprehensive, he said, and only those who pass the training are hired, despite the fact that the failure rate in testing can go as high as 30 percent. He added that every one of the company’s 73 site managers supervises mandatory firearms courses and conducts weekly inspections of the apparel, grooming and firearms of each official.

Whitestone also takes great care to hire only highly qualified instructors who are former military or law enforcement instructors, including former academy commanders. “We find that we have better control over the quality of instruction by employing our own instructors,” said Clark. “This ensures the client of well-trained and professional Protective Service Officers.”

In the end, said Clark, the security business is a people management business that can only be successful with a clear statement of mission and training strategies and by tailoring security training to meet organizational objectives. In keeping with these policies, he said, Whitestone’s Strategic Services group can provide clients “with state of the art solutions for all of their program management needs, tactical training, consulting services, training seminars in personal protection, fundamentals of terrorism and can provide services in threat assessment as well as facility risk and vulnerability assessments.”

He added that the company’s Strategic Services group utilizes academically-founded instructional experiences which use simulations and practical exercises to train tangible human skills by meshing realistic experiences with academic instruction. These experiences, he said are designed “to expose initial responses and internalize preferable alternatives while still being enjoyable and immersive”.

Summing it all up, he said, Whitestone’s ultimate mission statement is to provide “the highest level of tactical security training to government and non-governmental agencies tailored to meet organizational objectives.”

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