



New breed of partners to deliver field comms

A dynamic and often unpredictable geopolitical landscape compels today's military operations to constantly evolve and expand in scope at a rapid pace. Deployed personnel and those who support them are looking for flexible field communications solutions that can be easily tailored to changing mission profiles. At the same time, they need more cost-effective solutions that can keep pace with increasing budget constraints. Whether the focus is defense, intelligence, emergency response or humanitarian aid, today's field forces must be able to connect and share information in real-time across multiple disperse locations both in theater and around the world.

The Defense Information Systems Agency has made this core necessity a priority within its newly issued Campaign Plan. Released in late June, the document directly addresses the need for deployed personnel to have reliable, real-time voice, video, and data communications to ensure situational awareness and improve decision-making throughout the chain of command.

The plan focuses on the changing and future requirements of DISA's broad customer base across the Defense Department and outlines guiding principles for DISA to follow in working to meet those challenges head-on. DISA has also taken on new approaches to defining and supporting its satellite communications (SATCOM) requirements. Proposed programs like Assured SATCOM Services in Single Theater (ASSIST) represent a new way of thinking about procurement that will increase flexibility and responsiveness to meet emerging mission requirements, while lowering total cost of operations.

Just as DISA is evolving to meet shifting warfighter requirements, so must its industry partners. High-performance communications are simply not optional. Military, intelligence, and civilian agencies alike depend on these digital lifelines to ensure mission success. In addition to greater use of commercial satellite communications, government users have become more sophisticated in their application. They need network service providers that possess the ex-

perience to create solutions unique to their specific operating challenges. To identify industry partners that possess both the breadth and depth of experience to address the dynamic MilSatCom landscape, DISA and the General Services Administration developed the Future Commercial SATCOM Acquisition (FCSA) program.

The third and final piece of the FCSA contract, Custom SATCOM Solutions (CS2), will mark a significant change in the way communications services are engineered and procured over the next several years. If administered properly, the contract could put an end to short-term stop gap measures, and promote the implementation of fully integrated communications systems. CS2 focuses on the delivery of complete end-to-end solutions requiring a various combination of bandwidth, terminals, teleports, terrestrial circuits, network management, engineering and field services.

Along with changing what and how it buys, DISA is also raising its standards and expectations. The new contract brings security and information assurance requirements that demand serious service providers with direct experience and proven in-house capability to deploy and manage complex military-grade communications. As a result, CS2 requires service providers to be truly invested in their customers' mission, owning and operating global network infrastructure and assets, rather than just serving as a general contractor that pieces together the unrelated offerings of other sub-contractors. In the end, the government customer will benefit from a higher quality communications solution, engineered from the start to perform from a service provider with "skin in the game."

Across the full spectrum of its operations, the next generation of DISA's mission partners will be vastly different than ever before. Nowhere is this more evident than with new procurement models like FCSA, which facilitate DISA's desire for true end-to-end SATCOM service providers with the facilities, people, processes, and proven experience to deliver high performance satellite communications solutions. ■

Deployed personnel need reliable, real-time voice, video and data communications that can be tailored for various mission profiles.

David Myers is president of government solutions at Harris CapRock.