

NATO signals network success for Cygnus

Safeguarding the defence of 19 (soon to be 26) countries, and a major factor in preserving world peace, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has a mission more awesome than any commercial corporation. Nevertheless, they do have the same demands for global communications. Outside their own highly robust, secure communications network, it was recognised that internet-based email communications for unclassified traffic, coupled with access to web-based information services, could provide an added benefit for users. Cygnus Technology Solutions was selected to implement a suitable LAN linking NATO locations in three countries, to provide all user training and assistance, and to implement an efficient helpdesk facility.



The project involved implementing networks at one of NATO's two strategic commands, Supreme Allied Command Atlantic (SACLANT) in Norfolk Virginia, plus subordinate headquarter sites in the UK (EASTLANT) and Portugal (SOUTHLANT). The aim was, from scratch, to provide internet capabilities for around 1,000 staff, a mixture of military officers and civilians, leveraging information available on the web and providing unclassified e-mail capability between sites.

The NATO Consultation, Command and Control Agency (NATO C3 Agency) is responsible for developing, procuring and implementing cost-effective system capabilities to support NATO. The decision was made to outsource everything and the NATO C3 Agency invited tenders from NATO approved contractors in 19 countries. Cygnus won the engineering part of the project - installation and set-up of the LAN capability, all training and assistance to allow users to become familiar with the new capabilities, plus establishment of an internal helpdesk. The contract began in October 2001 and was successfully completed by February 2003. During that period, Cygnus professionals were assigned to the three locations.

Implementation went very smoothly and Cygnus determined the best way to operate the helpdesk, as well as documenting procedures and policies, so that they were able to leave it in the hands of a confident NATO staff.

Treci Dimas, Captain US Navy, on assignment to NATO, works on a number of projects involving outside contractors, sums up: "I must say we all found the Cygnus approach very refreshing. Their 'unique' quality was in the way they managed the relationship, becoming very much part of the NATO team, rather than the traditional contractor relationship."

Each of the Cygnus people adapted to the unique cultures of each location - so much so that on completion of the project, messages from the sites recognised the Cygnus people on departure for the contribution of their efforts. Mr. Alban de la Soudiere, Head of the Functional Services Project Management Office had this to say: "Their level of integration and the outstanding service they had provided meant the sites were sorry to see them go."



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