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# Security Assistance Database and Communications Network: An Introduction and Update

By

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Communications dominate war; broadly considered,  
they are the most important single element in strategy,  
political or military.

Admiral A.T. Mahan  
*The Problems of the East* (1900)

## INTRODUCTION

Anyone associated with security assistance management for very long soon realizes that it is *data*, ultimately processed into meaningful *information*, which is crucial to program monitoring and decision making. Ironically, although vast amounts of data are collected among a number of security assistance management information systems, this data compilation process *doesn't* necessarily mean that the following results will occur: (1) that the resulting data or information is readily available to everyone who needs to have access to it; (2) that the information provided is as current as the user needs it to be; or (3) that the user fully understands what the information is telling him or her. In this regard, the problems just described are not unique to the security assistance community, but are most likely applicable to a number of governmental and commercial endeavors. However, the security assistance community has a plan and commitment to improve its information management. The remainder of this article relates how some of these traditional Twentieth Century problems of data *accessibility*, *timeliness*, and *understandability* are being addressed by a relatively new project called the *Security Assistance Database and Communications Network*.

## BACKGROUND

In the early summer of 1990, Lieutenant General Charles W. Brown, USA (Ret.), then on active duty as the Director of the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA), appointed a special task group to examine security assistance automation among prospective users. In August 1990, General Brown's successor, Lieutenant General Teddy G. Allen, USA, issued a message to the military services, unified commands, and other defense agencies announcing that one of his objectives was to enhance the opportunity for access by unified commands and security assistance organizations (SAOs), as well as CONUS-based security assistance activities, to existing security assistance management information systems and to provide users labor-saving ADP administrative tools. The DSAA Director noted that substantial financial investment had already been devoted to developing and maintaining new automated systems for security assistance management use, and that the time had arrived to pursue the following goals:

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- *tie* these automated systems and users together;
  - provide *simplified access* procedures to a range of automated systems; and
  - *interface* automated systems through existing or expanded telecommunications networks, providing automated communication and data exchange support.

Thus, with the above goals so outlined, the *Security Assistance Database and Communications Network* project was born with a clear mission statement. However, in order to carry out the mission, a number of questions had to be researched and answered within the following areas:

- **Needs:** What are the information needs of the user audience? How can these needs be verified?
- **Database Access:** What databases contain the necessary, relevant information? Are they readily accessible? Are their products displayed in a manner which is conducive to the informational needs of unified commands and SAOs?
- **Telecommunications:** How is the information going to be transmitted to the overseas user? Can we establish reliable, cost-effective communications with overseas activities?

In an effort to begin the process of researching these questions and to provide a project management structure, the DSAA Director appointed a project steering group chaired by DSAA with representation from the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM) and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service - Denver Center (DFAS-DE)/Security Assistance Accounting Center (SAAC). Members of the project group were assigned certain functions to coordinate. In this latter regard, DISAM was assigned the role of initially identifying and refining user requirements, DFAS-DE was assigned the task of gaining access to identified DoD and military service databases, and the DSAA/COMPT/IRM staff assumed functional responsibility for telecommunications matters. At the outset, it was recognized that this steering group could not do the assigned tasks in a vacuum; rather, many security assistance activities would be called upon to assist inasmuch as this would be a SA community-wide project.

## USER REQUIREMENTS ANALYSIS

The first step in the Network project was to identify user requirements. Accordingly, in November 1990, the steering group met at DISAM with selected unified command and SAO (i.e., Korea, Morocco) participants to develop a "strawman" data requirements package. Because of the magnitude of the project, initial emphasis was to be placed on *training management* and *financial management* needs during the implementation phase. These two functional areas were selected because they were considered to be the most centralized as contrasted to the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case management and logistics databases. While the training and financial areas were admittedly enough, in and of themselves, to keep the project group occupied for some time to come, the "total package" requirements of the user nonetheless had to be examined during the comprehensive requirements analysis phase. Later that month, the steering group continued the requirements review process by chairing a workshop in Washington DC with military department, defense agency, Joint Staff, and unified command representatives in attendance. The workshop agenda focused on the overall project concept, technical telecommunications options, and unified command headquarters and SAO data requirements.

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In February 1991, DISAM distributed a comprehensive draft of users' data requirements for training management, financial management, FMS case process and logistics, direct commercial sales, and international cooperative programs relative to the project and invited any recommendations for refinements. Subsequently, during the months of April and May 1991, DISAM visited selected SAOs (i.e., Korea, Thailand, Spain, and Portugal) to further validate and refine the database needs relative to the FMS/IMET training management program in order to develop a personal computer (PC) software package and to collect users' requirements relative to an automated SAO administrative/forms package.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS GATEWAY ACCESS

Following a review of the telecommunications options addressed during the Washington, DC workshop, it was decided that the *Interoperability Decision Support System (IDSS)*, operated by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) for the R&D/armaments cooperation community, would serve as the prototype "telecommunications gateway" for the SA database project. One major consideration in selecting IDSS for SA use was the fact that IDSS was already approved by the State Department for introduction into U.S. embassies. Under the IDSS approach, on-line SAOs use a telephone/modem attached to their personal computers to dial into the IDSS gateway and then, using the accounts/passwords provided by individual data managers, are granted on-line access to the available data systems. IDSS is a versatile system which is capable of being accessed through a number of communications connections, such as the Defense Data Network (DDN), commercial leased lines (e.g., INFONET), and regular long distance lines.

## FINANCIAL/LOGISTICS SYSTEMS

The IDSS telecommunications concept was tested in the Spring 1991 with the Navy's Management Information System for International Logistics (MISIL). Today, over 15 countries in USEUCOM, USPACOM, and USCENTCOM, are connected to MISIL through IDSS. In similar fashion, the Army's Centralized Integrated System for International Logistics (CISIL), the Air Force's Security Assistance Management Information System (SAMIS), and DFAS-DE's Defense Integrated Financial System (DIFS) are also accessible through the IDSS gateway.

In February 1992, DSAA, DFAS-DE, and the military services met at DISAM to discuss the development of tailored screens and reports in DIFS, MISIL, CISIL, and SAMIS for SAO use. The participants agreed to this initiative and used, as a model, strawman MISIL screen and report formats which were drafted with SAO participation (i.e., Spain, Portugal, and Singapore) during an earlier concept definition meeting in January. It is felt that this step, once completed, will greatly enhance the utility of available information at the SAO level. Current projections are for some tailored screens and reports to be completed as early as July 1992 with others to follow in succeeding months. In the meantime, the unified commands and SAOs will be able to access existing financial and logistics products within the aforementioned automated systems, recognizing that the current formats were originally designed with the technical needs of the CONUS FMS case and financial managers in mind.

DSAA has also included access to the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) Program. In this regard, DSAA is in the final stages of providing formats for allowing users to access summary data with respect to "Brooke Amendment" and "FAA, Section 620Q" sanctions via a DSAA bulletin board on IDSS. Moreover, DSAA is working with DFAS-DE to develop screens relative to accessing "FAA, Section 506, Emergency Drawdown" funding status, as well as status on excess defense articles (EDA) and other FMF program restrictions or suspensions.

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## TRAINING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TMS)

When many folks, especially the overseas community, hear the term *SA Network*, they might immediately think of *TMS*. This is because *TMS* has been a real, highly visible winner with the unified command and SAO community. In this respect, a prototype *TMS* software module, which operates on a PC and a laser printer, has been developed to assist the SAO in electronically downloading, through IDSS, initial files from and updates to the training program Military Articles and Services List (MASL) and Standardized Training List (STL) provided by each military department training agency. These collective STLs are identified as the Integrated STL, or ISTL, on the IDSS menu screen. *TMS* also provides the capability to generate selected products (e.g., Invitational Travel Orders) and local management reports. In November 1991, initial testing of *TMS* was conducted on-site at selected SAOs in the USPACOM AOR. A refined version of *TMS*, which capitalized on the lessons learned after the prototype testing, was fielded in early 1992. A desirable feature of *TMS* is that it is a local stand-alone software package which can be used by SAOs which cannot be connected to IDSS due to technical telecommunications problems or lack of cost effectiveness considering the size of the SA program. These non-IDSS SAOs can still have MASL/ISTL disks mailed to them by DFAS-DE for use in the *TMS* module.

Another aspect of the *macro TMS concept* involves providing worldwide and/or regional *summary* training program information via IDSS to DSAA/Plans/TO&MD and the unified command staffs. This requirement was addressed during a meeting at DISAM in January 1992, and DSAA and the unified commands agreed to revisit the matter during a follow-on meeting this May with the military service training agencies also present. Moreover, the participants will use this forum to explore additional improvements to the *TMS* module for SAO use.

## ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS

**Administrative/Forms Package.** The steering group continues to explore an automated administrative/forms module to assist SAOs in a variety of ways, such as the preparation of officer and enlisted evaluation reports as well as other commonly used forms at the field level. At the moment, this initiative is intertwined with progress being made by the DOD Electronic Forms Working Group, which is responsible for developing approved forms which can be automatically generated by a PC/laser printer.

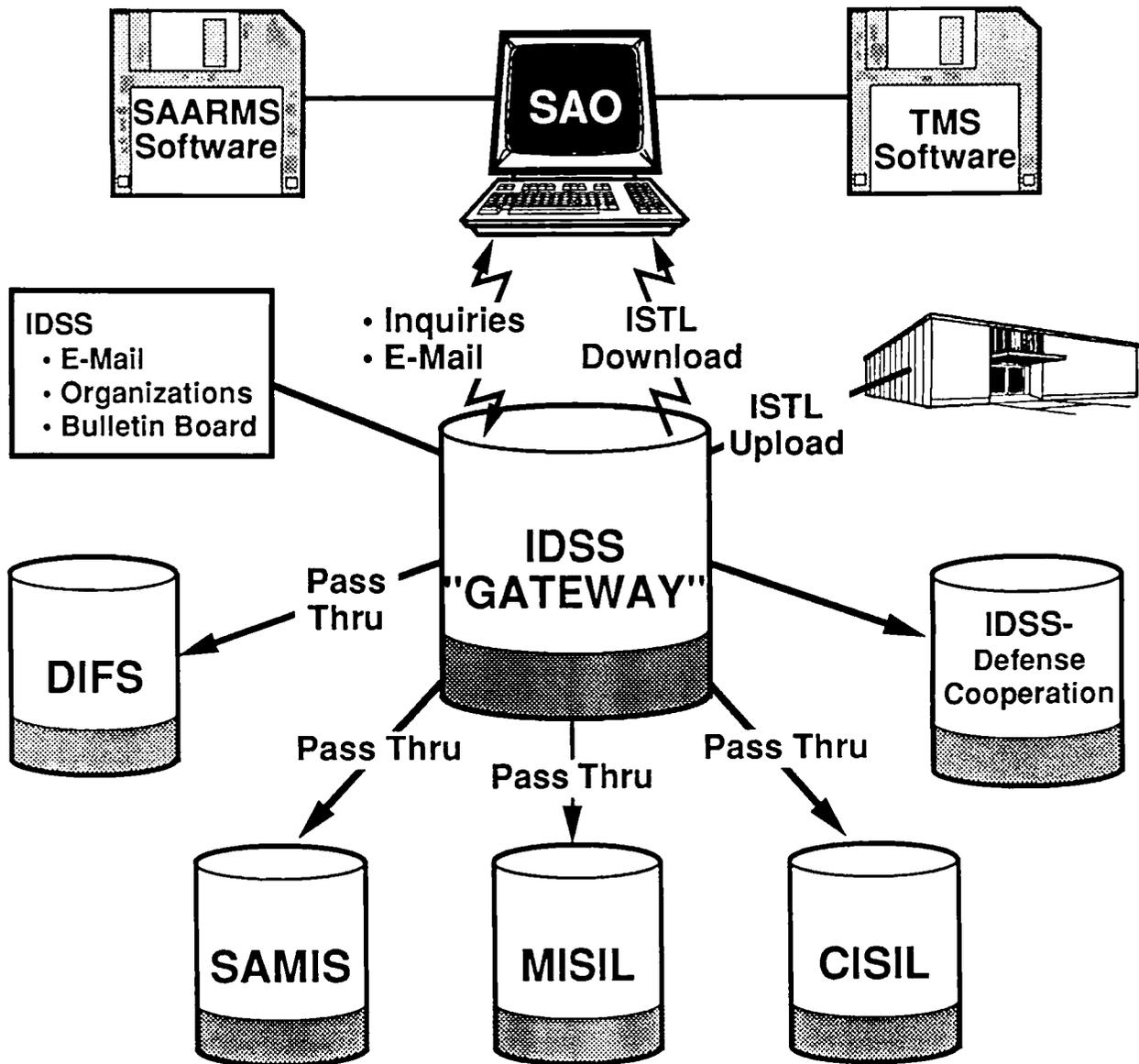
**Resource Management Package.** DSAA and DISAM representatives have held meetings with the unified command budget/accounting/property/personnel points of contact to obtain their requirements. During meetings hosted by USCENCOM and DISAM, it was decided by all concerned to utilize the USCENCOM budget/accounting system, known as the Security Assistance Automated Resource Management System (SAARMS), as the baseline system for further collective enhancements. Current planning calls for the *financial execution module* of SAARMS to be modified and ready for worldwide use by the end of FY 92. The SA community is looking at personnel and property modules for future application.

**Other Capabilities.** While the steering group has necessarily focused its attention on the above capabilities, the database project has other current and planned features as well. For instance, it is possible to access through IDSS a current Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM), using a subject/word search capability. IDSS also has an electronic mail (E-Mail) capability which allows any authorized IDSS user to correspond with any other IDSS, as well as DDN, users. And, of course, SAOs with international cooperative programs still have access to those IDSS files under the oversight of OUSD(Acquisition).

The SA information systems which are now, or soon will be, accessible through IDSS are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

SECURITY ASSISTANCE DATABASE AND COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK



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## FORMALIZATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Until recently, the steering group and other participants have been communicating through meetings, briefings at unified command conferences, and occasional status messages and letters. Due to its magnitude and expected continuance, the project has now reached the point of needing formalized procedures. In this regard, two important efforts are underway. First, DSAA recently issued a draft Section 1504 to the *Security Assistance Management Manual (SAMM)* for coordination with the military services and unified commands. This section prescribes Network policies, assigns organizational responsibilities, and contains information on minimum specifications for SAO ADP/microcomputer equipment replacements in order to ensure compatibility with State Department and DoD security and maintenance standards. Second, DISAM, working in conjunction with security assistance systems managers, has been asked to develop a *Network User's Handbook* which will describe IDSS log-on/off procedures and compile access procedures and applicable products attendant to the various database systems such as MISIL, DIFS, etc. DISAM has already developed and issued a *TMS Handbook* to prototype users of that system.

## USER INDOCTRINATION/TRAINING

**SAO On-Site Indoctrination.** A natural follow-on to the subject of SAMM changes and user handbooks involves mentioning how new SAO users get initial training and indoctrination on the Network applications. During the conceptual phase of the project, it was established that a DSAA/DISAM installation team would visit all unified command headquarters as well as selected prototype SAOs within each area of responsibility (AOR), and provide training on basic IDSS access procedures, TMS utilization, and so forth. Upon completion of these prototype visits, the unified commands are responsible for conducting the necessary indoctrination for the remainder of their SAOs. It is appropriate to acknowledge that the Naval Supply Systems Command visited several unified command and SAO sites during project infancy to install IDSS access and provide the requisite indoctrination on MISIL. This effort by NAVSUPSYSCOM really helped get the overall project off to a good start. Subsequently, with the development of TMS, DSAA and DISAM, together with unified command members, have revisited some of these same sites and will continue with this phased installation and indoctrination schedule.

**Classroom Training.** DISAM has currently incorporated a "core" instruction block on the Network capabilities into its Overseas Course (SAM-O). Additionally, DISAM has developed a Network demonstration software package, using canned data for the nation of Bandaria, which allows each student to sit down at the PC keyboard during laboratory seminar sessions and simulate getting into IDSS and associated financial and logistics systems. In time, students entering the Material Management Track will be provided limited on-line, read-only access to the "live" financial and logistics systems which contain data relative to their specific countries of assignment. Students entering the Training Management Track will be able to practice on the TMS module, using up-to-date data which applies to their countries' training programs. Finally, those students entering the International Cooperative Programs (ICP) Track will receive exposure to the ICP-related products which are already within IDSS. The overall objective is to provide as realistic a tailored training environment as possible so that the SAM-O students depart DISAM with a good appreciation of capabilities which will exist at their SAO sites. As the Network project progresses, DISAM will also look at training requirements for the CONUS-based students.

## CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

All told, the security assistance community has come a long way during the past year and a half as illustrated by the above completed and ongoing actions. The project direction has followed the intent of the original goals which were established by the DSAA Director—that is, keep

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everything simple, within minimal cost, and utilize existing equipment and databases wherever possible. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that much of the initial project thrust was begun under the leadership of Colonel Jackson E. (Jack) Todd, USA (Ret.), who from July 1990 until his retirement from active duty in late January 1992 served as the DISAM Deputy Commandant. Drawing upon his many years of SA experience at the unified command, SAO, and SAAC levels, Colonel Todd focused considerable time and attention on this project and helped get it off to a solid start and accelerated momentum.

For those currently involved in the day-to-day management and implementation of the project—and the list is constantly growing—the future likely holds several more challenges and occasional frustrations, as well as the deep satisfaction which is realized once a new system or capability is fielded for prototype testing and eventual field-wide use. The enthusiasm which has been shown to date has been electrifying, and our collective imaginations—tempered, of course, by some practical cost and workload realities—are the only limits to what we can possibly accomplish through this initiative in the future. This is a project whose time has finally arrived and one may confidently predict that SA database automation is just around the corner for many sites within the SA community.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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