
Training Management System (TMS)

By

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INTRODUCTION

This article is a follow-on to one entitled "Security Assistance Database and Communications Network: An Introduction and Update" that was published in the Spring, 1992 issue of *The DISAM Journal*. The present article explains and expands upon the information presented on the Training Management System (TMS). For further information on the entire database system, see the above-mentioned article.

BACKGROUND

It has long been recognized that Security Assistance Organization (SAO) training managers have needed an automated system to use in the management of the security assistance training program. Thus, in the fall of 1990, work was begun by the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA) and the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM), along with the contractual support of LOGICON Fourth Generation Technology, Inc., to meet this need. The result was TMS which is a computer software system designed for the SAO training manager and which provides a database management system that will greatly facilitate and assist in the management of the security assistance training program. In the Fall of 1991, the first version of TMS was distributed to a few prototype SAOs in the USPACOM AOR [Area of Responsibility]. Since then several upgrades have been made to the system, and TMS version 1.22 is currently being distributed for implementation throughout the world. Though this prototype version does not encompass all of the requirements the SAOs may need in a training system, it does greatly enhance the ability of the SAO to perform its training management functions. As more SAOs use the system and provide comments to their unified command points of contact, recommended enhancements will be evaluated for possible inclusion in future releases of the TMS software package.

HARDWARE REQUIREMENTS

TMS can be run on an IBM compatible PC (this includes most Wang PCs, and it has also been successfully operated on a Macintosh) with a laser printer. It requires approximately 10 MB of memory and 560k RAM in order to use the entire system. It does not require a color monitor or any other special equipment, with the exception of a modem, which is only required for users of the Interoperability Decision Support System (IDSS). [See discussion of IDSS below.]

SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

Three separate software packages are required to run TMS. The first is the TMS software itself. This consists of five floppy disks which can be installed in about 10 minutes. The second is an off-the-shelf product called Perform Filler. This program allows the SAO to print invitational travel orders (ITOs), waiver requests, etc. directly from the computer. The third is DOS 5.0, which upgrades the operating system of the computer and allows for better use of memory, RAM, etc. There is a fourth software package that is required if the SAO will be in

direct communication, via modem, with IDSS. This is the PC LINK software. It allows for the use of a modem to download information from IDSS.

TMS APPLICATION

There are two ways in which TMS can be used. The first is through IDSS with on-line access to training data, and the second is through the use of data disks mailed to the SAOs at two week intervals throughout the year. The following is a brief discussion of each.

If the SAO has a 300-9600 baud modem, a reasonable quality direct-dial-capable phone line, and the PCLINK software, that office can dial into IDSS to gain on-line access to the Integrated Standardized Training List (ISTL) database. The Military Departments are currently downloading STL data to the ISTL database every two weeks and Military Articles and Services List (MASL) data once a quarter. The SAO will have the capability to go in and view or download both the STL and the MASL. The advantage of this system is that the SAOs will no longer have to wait for printouts of the STL to arrive once a month. Instead new data is available every two weeks and in one database file, not three separate printouts. The MASL data that is currently available once every six months will be available every three months. Another advantage of using IDSS is the E-mail capability it possesses. Communications that are now being sent by electronic message, data fax, or by telephone, such as arrival messages, waiver requests, authority to implement training, etc., may be able to be sent by E-mail as the IDSS user network expands.

For obvious technical telecommunications reasons, some SAOs are not going to be able to access IDSS. However, this does not mean that they will not be able to use TMS. For those SAOs which cannot dial into IDSS, floppy disks with the STL data will be mailed to them by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service-Denver Center (DFAS-DE) every two weeks, and MASL data will be mailed every quarter. This still provides an advantage over our current system because the updates will arrive more frequently and they can be manipulated in TMS to provide custom reports.

TMS DATABASES

There are three main databases in TMS: the training MASL, the STL, and the student information databases. The MASL and STL databases are established and updated through the use of either ISTL data downloaded from IDSS or through the floppy disks mailed by SAAC. These databases contain all of the information presently found in the STL and MASL. The student database is established and updated by the SAO user who inputs applicable personal information on each international military student receiving training.

MAJOR TMS FUNCTIONS

There are several interesting functions available to the SAO when using TMS. The first involves forms. By using the forms menu option, the SAO can generate and print several standard forms including the invitational travel order (ITO), IMET waiver requests, International Student Information forms, student arrival messages, and student (post training) questionnaires. The system draws most of the information straight from the database and automatically fills in the form; therefore, the SAO's job should be much easier than was the case under manual procedures.

The next option is the reports' function. This is one of the most useful features of TMS and, in many ways, is the focal point of this database management system. It allows the training manager to design and format up to 30 different management reports (10 internal STL, 10

external STL, and 10 MASL) by manipulating the data fields found in both the MASL and the STL so that the report is of the most use to the program manager. In addition there are four summary data reports that are programmed to provide key management data of a summary nature.

In addition to these functions, there are several other options available to the TMS user. These include viewing the databases, housekeeping tools, updating the system, and working with the country profile. For further information and a more detailed explanation of these functions, a TMS user's handbook is available from DISAM.

Figure 1 is a graphic depiction of TMS inputs and outputs discussed in this article.

CONCLUSION

The future of TMS is very bright. Most countries will have the system installed by the end of Fiscal Year 1992. As more SAOs work with the system and provide comments on problems, upgrades will be made. Though it is not yet a perfect system, the responses received thus far are quite positive. The system is user friendly and has proven to be a real time saver.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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FIGURE 1

TRAINING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (TMS) APPLICATION

