
Notes From the DISAM SAN Man

By

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A great deal has happened to the Security Assistance Network (SAN) since the first installations were made in May 1991 at such SAO sites as JUSMAG-Korea and ODC Portugal. Significant enhancements occurred in 1994 with the distribution of Version 3.1 of the Training Management System (TMS) and Version 8.22 implementation for LinkPC. And it is not over yet, as 1995 and 1996 will see more changes to make the SAN a better and friendlier system for all the security assistance community to use.

Here at DISAM and as I travel around the U.S. and to different countries talking about the SAN, perhaps the four most asked questions are: What is it? How can I use it? How many people use it? And for what do they use it? The first two are pretty easy, but the last two were questions that even I asked.

The SAN is a PC based dial-in information network, designed with the SAO, unified command, and CONUS users in mind, to provide up-to-date data on questions relating to all areas of security assistance. Section 1504 of the SAMM describes the SAN and details the hardware requirements for SAN use. Anyone who deals in security assistance can be a user, and the easiest way to become a user is to have another user request access for you. If you don't know a user or SAN group administrator, you can call DISAM for help. That brings us to the last two questions.

SAN USAGE

Since 1991, the SAN has really grown. In February 1993 (the oldest statistics that I could find), there were 525 registered users on the network and 252 of those (48%) logged on the network that month. By December 1994, there were 1131 registered users and 535 of them (47.3%) logged on. The SAN more than doubled in registered users in that 22-month period. What didn't change much though was the percentage of users who were active on the network. That's one of the areas we would like to see improved in 1995.

Table 1 shows SAN use for 1994. Notice that as the year progresses, the number of users increase. But the best rate for active versus total users (although the rate goes up) was not quite 48%. There are several possible explanations for this low percentage. First, people who retire, change jobs, or change duty locations are not reporting the fact that they no longer require SAN access to their user group administrators. Second, group administrators are just not deleting all inactive users from the system, even when they realize they no longer require access. And third, there are some user groups out there who have established users strictly for the purpose of having SAN E-Mail forwarded to their DDN E-mail systems.

One goal for the SAN in 1995 is to reach a 75% rate for active use within groups. Right now, the unified commands are closest to that rate with 54.33% of their users active during the 4th quarter of CY 1994 and an average of 55.82% of their users active each month of the year. The responsibility for reaching this goal, by necessity, must rest mainly with the systems/group administrators.

SAN NETWORK USE 1994	TOTAL USERS	ACTIVE USERS	PERCENT ACTIVE
JANUARY	999	353	35.34%
FEBRUARY	999	398	39.84%
MARCH	999	418	41.84%
1ST QTR AVG.	999	392	39.24%
APRIL	999	446	44.64%
MAY	1041	459	44.09%
JUNE	1080	502	46.48%
2ND QTR AVG.	1041	470	45.15%
JULY	1090	520	47.71%
AUGUST	1141	542	47.50%
SEPTEMBER	1155	502	43.46%
3RD QTR AVG.	1129	523	46.32%
OCTOBER	1155	529	45.80%
NOVEMBER	1133	537	47.40%
DECEMBER	1131	535	47.30%
4TH QTR AVG.	1140	534	46.84%
MONTHLY AVG 1994	1076	478	44.42%

TABLE 1

Along with the rest of their day-to-day tasks, the user group administrators will have to ensure that users no longer requiring SAN access are removed from the system in a timely manner. It would also help a great deal if individual users informed their group administrator that they no longer required access. One idea being taken into consideration is the possibility of automatic deletion from the system after a period of non-use. Perhaps any user who does not access the system in a 180-day period would be deleted. Whatever the method used, raising the percentage of users who are active on a month-to-month basis should not be an overly difficult task for any of us. In fact, what is even more impressive to me when looking at Table 1 is the steady increase in the number of active users. It's nice to see over 500 individuals logging on to the system each month, and the numbers keep increasing.

Just what are these users doing on the network (i.e., Question 4)? Table 2 shows data on the different areas of access within the SAN and the usage on these systems. Before discussing this data, note that unlike access

SAN USE 1 JAN - 30 SEP 1994	IDSS LOGINS	DSAA LOGINS	ISTL LOGINS	DIFS LOGINS	CISIL LOGINS	MISIL LOGINS	SAMIS LOGINS
JANUARY	4195	254	578	124	90	222	116
FEBRUARY	4539	232	702	146	80	156	117
MARCH	5396	254	714	143	118	229	120
1ST QTR AVG.	4710	246	664	137	96	202	117
APRIL	5125	168	681	174	140	159	101
MAY	5728	214	710	214	109	232	151
JUNE	6173	143	719	208	111	235	174
2ND QTR AVG.	5675	175	703	198	120	208	142
JULY	5645	156	548	146	81	117	162
AUGUST	6574	198	693	195	152	186	325
SEPTEMBER	5776	200	532	126	108	119	173
3RD QTR AVG.	5998	184	591	155	113	140	220
TOTAL USE 1 JAN - 30 SEP	49151	1819	5877	1476	989	1655	1439
MONTHLY AVG 1 JAN - 30 SEP	5461	202	653	164	109	183	159

TABLE 2

data, system usage data was not available for the 4th quarter of 1994. It is apparent that the Interoperability Decision Support System (IDSS) area, with 78.8% of the average monthly logins, is the prime use area of the SAN. This extremely high percentage is surprising at first glance. But further research showed that when the SAN was first considered, a prime area of concern for all parties, especially the SAOs, was having an E-Mail capability to the rest of the security assistance community. The IDSS area provides this and is being put to good use with its 5400+ accesses per month.

One reason for the lesser use of the other SAN areas is that they are job specific and not required by all users. The Material/Finance areas are also not as easily accessible as other areas, requiring individual passwords and user ids for entry. But their use is still substantial and will likely increase in the future. Moreover, the military departments have developed standardized tailored screens for SAO use which are more user friendly. One note here for those SAN users who have access to one or more of the Material/Finance systems: **It is mandatory that you access each system of which you are a user at least once every 30 days.** If you don't you will be suspended and will have to call an administrator for that system to be reset for use. And believe me, that's not always easy!!

SAN USE 1 JAN - 30 SEP UNFD CMDS	ACTIVE USERS	PERCENT ACTIVE	IDSS LOGINS	DSAA LOGINS	ISTL LOGINS	DIFS LOGINS	CISIL LOGINS	MISIL LOGINS	SAMIS LOGINS
1ST QTR AVG									
USACOM	9	39.13%	28	2	21	3		14	
CENTCOM	33	47.83%	301	7	46	8	4	9	9
EUCOM	41	58.57%	448	28	117	12	6	2	10
PACOM	74	69.81%	1026	11	102	21	33	6	10
SOUTHCOM	25	28.88%	248	12	74	6	13	6	28
TOTAL	182	50.42%	2081	60	360	50	56	37	57
2ND QTR AVG									
USACOM	9	40.91%	54	1	22	4		13	
CENTCOM	53	67.01%	488	15	101	50	16	2	3
EUCOM	46	59.74%	551	13	106	7	2	2	12
PACOM	83	76.15%	1223	14	123	26	25	6	13
SOUTHCOM	41	43.16%	423	12	69	5	12	3	19
TOTAL	232	60.73%	2739	55	421	92	55	26	47
3RD QTR AVG									
USACOM	9	42.86%	53	3	16	3		3	
CENTCOM	71	53.79%	745	17	77	32	13		103
EUCOM	58	60.42%	613	15	132	1	6	1	1
PACOM	80	72.73%	1100	6	81	16	17	1	1
SOUTHCOM	49	45.37%	584	10	54	5	34	2	24
TOTAL	267	57.17%	3095	51	360	57	70	7	129
MONTHLY AVG									
1 JAN - 30 SEP			2639	52	381	67	60	24	78
TOTAL USE									
1 JAN - 30 SEP			23751	470	3425	600	543	219	700

TABLE 3

Since the primary reasons the SAN exists is to provide file transfer, database access, and E-mail communications to the unified commands and SAOs, Table 3 is included to show their use of the system. There are now 65+ SAOs connected to the SAN and they constitute about 40% of the registered users, 50% of the active users, and about 50% of the IDSS logins. CENTCOM, EUCOM, and PACOM have a consistently high percentage of active users and should have no trouble reaching the network goal of 75%. Unified commands also account for over 60% of the

Integrated Standardized Training List (ISTL) logins, which tends to show that the ability to download training data electronically every two weeks is an aid to the SAOs.

There are occasional complaints from the overseas users that, "The SAN is no good," or "The SAN doesn't work." When the complaints are investigated, the results are generally the same. The user doesn't really mean the SAN is no good or doesn't work because, once connected to the network, users are normally quite happy with the data they are able to get as well as their E-Mail capability. A real problem is the initial connection to the network, especially the communications lines. State-side users, too, occasionally have communications line problems and can't connect, and the U.S. has the best comm lines in the world. Once outside the U.S., good communications lines go down hill fast! That is one area which is constantly being looked at for improvement, and many more improvements were made to the SAN in 1994.

NEW IN 1994

In 1994, there were changes made to every area of the SAN, some of which have not been visibly apparent to the user. There were hardware and software changes to the network host, a new version of the LinkPC connection software, and a new version of TMS released in 1994. The host was changed to Pentium processors with a Novell network file system which greatly increased the system speed. The old 28 concurrent user limitation has been greatly increased and should not be a problem in the future. The system no longer slows down when many users are logged on or when ISTL updates are being run. System/group administration has been enhanced to make it easier for administrators. Storage capability has been upgraded from 1.3 gigabytes to 4.2 gigabytes, and E-Mail size has been increased from 64 kilobytes to file size. There were several other changes to E-Mail to help users. You can now attach files to your E-Mail via upload and these files can be in any format (WP.51, LOTUS, DBase, etc.). This eliminates the need to transfer files via the Library when they are individual-to-individual and not intended for general network use. You can also create mail lists with the list members being DDN or INTERNET mail addresses. This is a great improvement over the old system which required mail list members to be registered SAN users and allows "aliasing" of E-Mail addresses to make sending E-Mail more user friendly.

LinkPC was changed, along with the host, to enable file transfers via upload to occur up to four times faster. Printer control has been enhanced to allow specifying printer names. LinkPC utilization has been made more user friendly. More robust interfaces for modems, especially internal modems, have been used to facilitate communications connectivity. Auto file upload has been facilitated with the new host system to maintain existing capabilities such as AUTOMAIL, which is used with the Training Management System (TMS).

TMS was improved with the release of version 3.1. With conversion to FoxPro, it is now much faster. There is now a requirement for TMS users to have at least a 386 processor and a Laser II printer. Users now have the capability to edit their STL and they can add, delete, or change existing ISTL lines. There have been improvements to the view (search) function and the system now allows greater use of an historical/archive database. But, there are even more improvements coming.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

There is already a Windows version of LinkPC being developed to allow Windows users to access the SAN without exiting Windows. The prototype is currently being tested. There is presently a group working on existing menus to make the system more user friendly by combining functions and getting rid of unused options. Some other changes being considered are: creating a bulletin board area to combine all existing bulletin boards, allowing automatic deletion of E-Mail older than 60 days, automatic deletion of users who have not logged on in 180 days, and more

improvements to make systems/group administration easier. The State Department black packet switching network is expanding and we are expanding with it. It has been approved for use as a SAN communications connection and, as embassy installations are completed, SAN connectivity is possible. As the SAN grows, changes will make its use easier, faster, and more user friendly.

In March 1995, DSAA promulgated a message which advised that planning has started for development of a follow-on system to the current SAN. This replacement system will be based on DoD ADP standards and will provide increased processing and communications abilities.

SUMMARY

The SAN has come a long way since its inception, but there are always things to be done to make it better. The statistics show the SAN is being used more each month and E-Mail is still a common denominator in its use. Although the network design traditionally had the SAO in mind as a user, there may be areas to improve the network for other users as well. For instance, the CONUS-based DoD schools, with their International Military Student Officers/Managers (IMSOs), are now SAN users. Also, security assistance headquarters activities (e.g., Navy IPO, SAF/IA, and USASAC) and ILCOs (NAVILCO, USASAC, and AFSAC) are SAN users.

If you have any new ideas to improve the SAN we would like to know about them. I've created a mailing list called NEWIDEAS. If you would like to see the SAN changed in some way, just send an E-Mail to NEWIDEAS and it will be discussed with DSAA and considered for implementation. DSAA also uses the periodic training management and SAO budget community reviews, as well as other forums, to address SAN improvements. If you have any questions or comments on the SAN, send me an E-Mail at JCLELAN for SAN users or JCLELAN@SAN.IDSS.IDA.ORG for non-SAN users.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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