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# **Training Management System (TMS): The Past, Present, and Future**

**By**

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The Training Management System (TMS) is a Microsoft Access based software application that is designed to aid security assistance organizations (SAOs) with the management of all facets of international training. DISAM has been the program management office for this software since its inception in 1991. The software has changed greatly over the years in response to recommendations from personnel in the field and to keep up to date with the ever-changing technology available in the world.

## **The Past**

In 1991 it was determined that there should be an easier way for SAO training managers to manage their programs other than by using paper and a pencil. At the time the U.S. Army would send the SAO training information on a 5 1/4" floppy disk each month. This information was in a read-only format and did not allow the SAOs to manipulate the data in any way. The Air Force and Navy would mail a paper printout of their training information to the SAO on a monthly basis. The result was that SAOs had great difficulty in managing their programs because the information was in three different formats, there were time delays in mailing (up to six weeks in some instances), and while reading through these complex documents SAOs often missed new information. Thus TMS was born.

Version 1.0 of TMS was written in a computer language called Clipper and simply automated all of the standardized training listing information and put it in the same format. Versions 2.0 and 3.0 of the software were primarily written in FoxPro language by a contractor and added new features such as report generation and invitational travel order (ITO) preparation to the system so that training managers could more easily perform their mission. All subsequent versions of TMS, including version 4.0, have been written in Microsoft Access language and the programming of the software has been taken in-house at DISAM to improve support and to decrease costs. With the downsizing that has occurred in most organizations over the past decade most training managers have come to rely very heavily on the software and continue to provide valuable input to DISAM on enhancements that need to be included in future versions of the software.

## **The Present**

In the spring of 2000, version 5.0 of the TMS software was released at each of the unified command training program management reviews (TPMRs). A demonstration of the software along with training on its use was given to each SAO at these conferences. The overwhelming response from the training managers was "thanks for a job well done."

Several new enhancements were added to the software in the 5.0 release. The largest change was that the software was completely rewritten from Microsoft Access version 2.0 to Microsoft Access version 1997. This allowed DISAM to overcome Y2K problems with previous versions and to add in several new functions that were not available in previous versions of the TMS software. Chief amongst these enhancements was the ability to easily e-mail all reports and ITOs via the internet.

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In late calendar year 2000 several personnel changes were made within DISAM that precluded an in-depth rewrite of the software prior to the TPMRs scheduled for the spring of 2001. Therefore, at the TPMRs in the spring of 2001, there will not be many changes to the TMS software. Primarily the changes include fixes to any known bugs in the system and a few new management reports. DISAM will offer a version of TMS written in Microsoft Access 2000 at the TPMRs, but as of yet, the software has not been totally tested so it is not ready for worldwide distribution. A new TMS programmer has joined the DISAM team and will attend several of the TPMRs to learn first hand from the users what their concerns are, but new programming changes will not start until the conclusion of the TPMRs.

As has been done in the past, as users come across bugs in the system or determine that there is a new requirement for the software, they should continue to forward them to DISAM for review and implementation into future versions of the software. The specific points of contact at DISAM are Tom Dop [tom.dop@disam.dsca.osd.mil](mailto:tom.dop@disam.dsca.osd.mil) and Aaron Prince [aaron.prince@disam.dsca.osd.mil](mailto:aaron.prince@disam.dsca.osd.mil). As these requirements are gathered, DISAM will put together a plan for implementation and then send it to DSCA for final approval before any programming progresses. In this way we can ensure that all user requirements are viable and appropriate for use in the software worldwide.

## **The Future**

The future of the TMS software is very much up in the air. The security cooperation community, specifically DISAM, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and DSADC, is currently undergoing a review of all information technology (IT) processes to determine which IT functions should be performed at each location. The survey was completed during April with projected decisions on possible ways of changing the way IT is managed from the Director, DSCA by June.

Regardless of who ultimately ends up with responsibility for the software it is clear that several enhancements are needed. First, the software will be fielded in Microsoft Access 2000 language. There are several advantages to this, the most important of which is that it allows the programmer greater flexibility in designing and managing the TMS software. The final fielding of this version of TMS is projected for late summer of 2001.

Once the software is stable in an Access 2000 environment the real work will begin. The plan is to add several high priority items to the software. Some of these enhancements include the capability of uploading the ITO and biographical information directly to the security assistance network (SAN), providing the ability to download the standardized training listing from within TMS, basing temporary living allowance calculations on actual school location data, extending the two year training plan to a seven year plan, and enhancing and adding several new reports.

Once these priority items have been created, tested, and fielded the focus will change to other items personnel have requested be added to the software. Examples include building an interface between the SAO, international military student office (IMSO), and foreign purchaser versions of the software to electronically pass student and course information, enhancing error messages to more clearly define problems in the software, and allowing for the modification of the report structure in the custom reporting function. These enhancements, both high and low priority, are expected to take approximately two work-years worth of effort to complete.

Another major focus of the software that must be addressed in the near term is that of compatibility with the Defense Security Assistance Management System (DSAMS). The DSAMS training module is expected to come on-line within the next two years and will require a major rewrite of the TMS software. Because so many processes and requirements change within DSAMS, nearly all of TMS will need to be scrubbed to ensure it can accept and transmit

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data to DSAMS. The current projection is that this will take an additional two man-years of effort to complete.

With the possibility of up to four man-years worth of work ahead and only one programmer currently scheduled for tasking on the TMS project, the near term outlook for TMS is somewhat murky. Most likely the system will be fielded in an Access 2000 version and then the focus will turn to required DSAMS changes. In other words there will be few, if any, changes to the software in response to user input. Once the entire conversion has been made to make the software compatible with DSAMS, the focus will return to user requirements.

### **About the Author**

Mr. Thomas M. Dop is an assistant professor and Asia-Pacific Regional Studies Director at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management and has been the program manager for the Training Management System software since 1993. He is a former U.S. Navy surface warfare officer. He holds a Master of Science in Administration degree in information resource management from Central Michigan University and a Bachelor of Science degree from the U.S. Naval Academy.