Laying the Governance Groundwork Key to Interoperability, Collaboration

Establishing a governance plan is the first step in creating an interoperable IT environment where users from different organizations and countries can securely share and trust information. That was the focus of "Art of the Possible," a demonstration on December 16, 2016 sponsored by the Network Centric Operations Industry Consortium for more than 100 leaders from the military, government and industry.

The NCOIC Cloud Computing team provided a look into the future of interoperability and highlighted the Consortium's work over the past 13 years in helping its members and customers develop secure and trusted unclassified environments for collaboration. Speakers offered specific actions on how to implement a secure cloud environment using governance processes; identity; and access management, interoperability verification, and plug-and-play applications.

The speakers represented a number of NCOIC member-companies, including Boeing, Compusult Ltd., Enterprise Sentinel, Inc., Intelligent Social Media, Private Digital Network Services, Telos Corp., and The Aerospace Corp. They stressed that good governance is the way a diverse group can work together effectively from day one.

Differences in technologies and policies present barriers to integration. The speakers said it is essential for a governing body to get agreement up front from participants for frameworks, security models, rules, and policies. Cultural, psychological, financial, business, and other issues also need to be considered and can take longer to address than the underlying technology, they said.

Several presenters referenced the NCOIC Secure Interoperability Governance Process, which was released in August 2016 on the NCOIC website. This open process presents a straightforward method for developing and documenting a governance process for an interoperable network and is applicable to any domain that requires interoperability and information exchange with diverse participants, such as disaster response and command and control.

"Interoperability is more important than ever, globally, within nations and in the different sectors that we live and work in every day," said Harry Raduege, NCOIC chief executive officer. "Social media and bring-your-own technology are the way of the future. We have to get over legacy systems and legacy thinking to move forward."

After the demonstration, leaders offered their thoughts and ideas on interoperable environments for further consideration by the Consortium. Topics included procuring new technology, training and authenticating users, information assurance and filtering, ease of use, and cyberterrorism.

Among those taking part in the discussion were Steve Cooper of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Koen Gijsbers of the NATO

Leading the discussion at NCOIC's Art of the Possible interoperability demonstration were Harald Kujat (left) and Harry D. Raduege.

Communication and Information Agency, John Gilligan of the Center for Internet Security, Lt. Gen. Jeffrey Lofgren of NATO Allied Command Transformation, David Mihelcic of the Defense Information Systems Agency, and Bob Shea of AFCEA International.

"Interoperability has become a major element of NATO operations and is absolutely necessary to the success of our missions," said Gen. (Ret) Harald Kujat, chairman of the NCOIC Advisory Council and former chairman of the NATO Military Committee. "NCOIC is at the center of interoperability."

The interoperability demonstration and discussion were part of the fourth-quarter NCOIC Board of Directors and Advisory Council meeting. To view photos from the demo, go to the NCOIC Facebook page.

NCOIC's next interoperability demonstration is set for April 28 in Arlington, Virginia and will focus on security and capabilities. Virtual participation will again be offered. For more information, check the NCOIC website or contact events@NCOIC.org.

NCOIC regularly brings together leaders from the public and private sectors to share insights and challenges in creating interoperable IT environments.

December 2016