U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Information Systems Agency

Department of Defense deploys Adobe® Acrobat® Connect™ Pro solution to facilitate collaboration and peer engagement across global operations

U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Information Systems Agency
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Industry
Government/Military

Challenges
- Enable secure global enterprise collaboration
- Operate reliably in low-bandwidth environments

Solution
- eLearning
- Web conferencing

United States military personnel on land, sea, and in the air can collaborate and communicate around the clock using Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro through a single, secure portal.

Results
- Hosted largest live meeting in history of the DoD
- Supported 5.3 million users
- Standardized on unified platform for voice and web communication
- Enabled global collaboration in field situations
- Complied with security standards

Systems At A Glance
- Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro

Worldwide engagement

The Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA) is a combat support agency that plans, engineers, and maintains global net-centric solutions serving a diverse group of autonomously managed United States Department of Defense (DoD) enterprises. These include the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Combatant Commands, and the nation's military branches. As a result, DISA identifies and deploys interoperable systems that meet the highest standards for security, availability, and quality.

In June 2007, DISA awarded Defense Connect Online (DCO), a two-part Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro solution for collaboration and engagement across DoD global operations. Two different systems comprise the Acrobat Connect Pro implementation, one for the unclassified network, and one for the classified network. A pre-release version of DCO was tested over a five-month period and went live in April 2008, enabling deployed troops, supporting personnel, and military leaders to collaborate effortlessly across locations worldwide.

"With the Adobe solution, DoD enterprises can overcome traditional barriers to collaboration arising from personnel working in different computing environments and interacting via a wide range of T-1, satellite, and limited-bandwidth channels," says Lieutenant Colonel Karl Kurz of DISA.

The scope of this project is enormous, supporting 5.3 million users 24 hours a day, 7 days a week around the globe, including airborne pilots and ship personnel. Since full implementation of DCO, more than 90,000 unclassified and 25,000 classified users in 40 countries have registered. The number of registered users continues to grow, with approximately 1,200 new users registering every week.

Encourage, not hinder collaboration

In addition to deploying Acrobat Connect Pro for web conferencing, DCO implemented chat with presence and awareness technology to provide DoD staff with an XMPP-based, always-on IM client to engage immediately with authorized personnel around the globe. The Adobe solution is integrated via a web interface that combines common tasks for web conferencing and IM, as well as for fulfilling registration, authentication, and PKI requirements.

DISA uses the VoIP feature in Acrobat Connect Pro to conduct communications among more than two parties. DCO also is used for small meetings among workgroups of 5 to 50 DoD personnel, as well as larger meetings with hundreds of simultaneous connections.

Notably, Acrobat Connect Pro holds the record for the largest live web meeting ever held in the DoD. "The meeting was scheduled to run on IBM® Sametime®, but last minute issues with the IBM solution convinced DISA to move to Acrobat Connect Pro," says Lieutenant Colonel Kurz. "We peaked out at 1,325 participants."

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro
www.adobe.com/government/

The wide range of activities that DCO supports includes operations worldwide, from tactical war fighting to day-to-day office use. Users engage with the system for briefings, mission rehearsals, one-to-one and group on-the-spot collaboration, training, eLearning, and dozens of other functions. "Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro enables us to accomplish more work in less time. Smaller groups, featuring subject matter experts, can more quickly analyze a problem, arrive at a solution, and recommend a plan of action to the larger group," says Kurz.

On-demand eLearning modules are available via Acrobat Connect Pro for users to learn the system and to participate in ongoing training. "Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro now enables us to reach more people with consistent, targeted training content," says Kurz.

Competitive, secure solution

When the DoD tasked DISA to provide an enterprise collaboration service, DISA purchased two competing web-based collaboration solutions, each with a one-year contract with two option years. This short contract strategy is designed to keep pressure on the vendor community to compete.

Prior to implementing DCO, the DoD had no wide-scale, secure, reliable collaboration capabilities and was relying on an insufficient IBM solution and other local-only products. Now, the DCO enterprise service is hosted out of the Defense Enterprise Computing Center (DECC) in San Antonio, Texas with several enclave DCO versions (Acrobat Connect Pro licensed) in Florida, Kuwait, and Hawaii. The service, which is comprised of the DCO portal, Acrobat Connect Pro for web conferencing, and XMPP technology for instant messaging and presence, is securely available on both the NIPRnet and SIPRnet.

What sets the DCO Acrobat Connect Pro web-conferencing solution apart is that it is based on Adobe Flash® technology and it only requires a single port through the network to operate. This means that users can instantly collaborate with anybody, anywhere, without any complicated set-up or downloads. From initial log-in to a DCO meeting in Acrobat Connect Pro, users can participate in application and screen sharing; whiteboarding; and persistent and non-persistent meeting rooms while easily customizing layouts, switching presenters, polling, using VoIP, and more. Kurz notes that the streamlined administration features in Acrobat Connect Pro enable faster delegation of administrative tasks, such as the ability to easily invite others and efficiently manage access to different Acrobat Connect Pro rooms.

DCO enables front-line units in less than optimal field conditions anywhere in the world to collaborate in extremely low bandwidth environments that may experience intermittent connectivity. According to Lieutenant Colonel Kurz, "Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro shows that Adobe is listening to its user base and is evolving its solution to better meet the requirements of all groups that need to collaborate to accomplish goals."