

# DISA's FY 2014-2019 Strategic Plan: Observations & Implications

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Basing business decisions on an agency strategic plan can be tricky. All too often the goals and objectives stated by an agency in the plans are either never met or they take years to manifest as business opportunities. Those observations are probably valid in regard to the Defense Information Systems Agency's latest Strategic Plan for the next five fiscal years. However, given the increasingly central role that DISA is playing in Defense IT, I feel compelled to point out some of the plan's implications for IT vendors in case they translate into acquisitio

## It's All About the JIE

Not surprisingly, DISA's strategic plan focuses heavily on development of the Joint Information Environment. For the uninitiated (believe it or not there are still a few of them kicking around!), the JIE is a multi-year effort directed at creating a common operating environment across the Department of Defense. The effort centers on engineering a secure transport environment that leverages Internet Protocol technology for the delivery of capabilities and services. This environment also unifies identity management and network monitoring capabilities into Joint Regional Security Stacks, providing a Single Security Architecture that the DoD argues is more defensible than the multiple, stovepiped network environment that currently exists. The final piece of the puzzle is enterprise services, which DISA will deliver on a cloud-basis via both government and industry hosted clouds. The industry part of that latter JIE element has been slow to develop, but DISA promises this will change in coming years.

In summary, there are three major areas of investment related to the JIE – transport infrastructure, cyber security, and cloud services. Today's post focuses on the first of these - modernization of the DoD's transport infrastructure.

## Transport Infrastructure

The Plan – “Normalize Networks with common standards ... to eliminate excess redundancy and legacy non-IP services; Standardize and consolidate computing infrastructure to maximize utilization of fiscal resources.”

My Take – “Common standards” and “maximize utilization of fiscal resources” is best interpreted as commoditization of IT hardware purchased through contract vehicles already in place at the lowest possible cost. By necessity this strategy limits competitively available opportunities to vendors already doing the work. At DISA this would include those holding contracts for O&M of the Defense Information System Network (DISN), as well as Global Information Grid Services Management Engineering, Transition, and Implementation (GSM-ETI) and GSM-Operations contracts. In the Army, the main beneficiaries are those providing network engineering support in the areas of European Command/Africa Command and at Camp Humphreys in South Korea. Included among these would also be those holding Infrastructure Modernization (IMOD) contracts.

DISA, along with other federal agencies, has realized that IT transport hardware has become so inexpensive that by utilizing a targeted strategy which installs the new hardware at critical points in the network, it is able to boost bandwidth and “normalize” networks at relatively low cost. This is a trend I would expect to see spread to more federal agencies.

The Plan – “Establish an Airborne – Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (A-ISR) Transport Service.”

The Plan – “Ensure DoD's access to [electromagnetic] spectrum [that will] lead the development of ... an architecture to transform Spectrum Management (SM) to support future cloud based operations and warfare. Implement, integrate, and improve cloud-based SM services/capabilities and influence/facilitate the implementation of emerging spectrum technologies.”

My Take – Demands for more spectrum bandwidth to deliver enterprise services have increased exponentially in recent years despite the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan. In line with the Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) tenets of the Air Sea Battle operational concept, a rising percentage of this demand has centered on satellite communications and, recently, on aerial platforms. These objectives in DISA's strategic plan suggest the agency will be investing in aerial ISR platforms and in cloud-based capabilities to better manage electromagnetic spectrum. If DISA also requires architecture to enable these cloud-based capabilities, it also suggests commercial engineering support will also be procured.

In short, these few lines from DISA's strategic plan indicate that opportunity at the agency will be available for vendors across the range of IT goods and services. Transport hardware investments will move to Air Force and Navy providers as the next regional phase of the JIE shifts into gear in the Pacific. Transport hardware will also be required for the A-ISR investment and, presumably, for cloud-based spectrum management as well. Software vendors providing cloud-based spectrum management capabilities (this is a rapidly evolving technology area!) will also find interest at DISA and those experienced in engineering services for the cloud will also find opportunities to compete.

