November 2020

One Network, One Team

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Many of us miss people we meet in person at conferences. These interactions are a big reason why we go to these events. COVID-19 has forced these events go virtual.

Countless events have made the switch this year from an "in-person" format to a virtual experience – a trend that continued unfortunately into the autumn/fall season.

Rather than put our attendees at risk, we made the difficult decision to present this year’s IDLS as a virtual experience, rather than as a live gathering in Herning (Denmark). This was a painful decision to be sure, especially since we know so many of our cherished attendees were looking forward to finally “getting out” and attending IDLS2020.

The International Data Links Society hosted its first virtual event in October 2020. The event was a trial run at using technology to host a virtual event that could go some way to fulfilling the aims of our annual in-person symposium, in terms of knowledge sharing, collaboration and influencing opportunities.

Virtual conferences are a new experience for most of us – attendees, sponsors, and organisers. You cannot follow the same old conference playbook; you must design a virtual event experience that provides lasting education and networking value beyond the event itself. This was a big challenge for those in charge.

Do not think this task easy! A virtual event is more work than an in-person event. Unlike a physical space where you can control the entire environment, controlling the complete technical setup, and improvising on the fly, and a virtual conference is not so forgiving. If you make a misstep or lose connection, you can lose the audience completely and technology glitches are more obvious. There are more dependencies and potential failure points, so it requires crisp co-ordination and being on-point with everything.

The reality is virtual meetings can truly mimic an in-person event when planned and executed correctly. While virtual meeting platforms and other technologies have come a long way in allowing online events to feel personal, and to include the networking and collaboration that everyone looks forward to at a conference or symposium, it is still the planning and execution that makes the difference.

You cannot expect to have an exceptional in-person meeting simply because you chose a great venue. It is how you design the programme with speaker slots, plan for networking opportunities, create the social atmosphere, arrange the exhibition hall, foster relationships between sponsors and attendees and focus on the attendee experience as you build the entire event. It is no different for virtual events. They need to be strategically planned for and thought through from a virtual environment perspective.

Whether you are building a virtual event experience from the ground up, or you need to transform a planned IDLS to an IDLSoc Virtual Event, a highly motivated and well-experienced staff can make sure you are successful.

A big thank you to all the people involved for making our first virtual event a reality and a success.

I appreciated meeting many of you online this year. Nevertheless, I look forward to seeing many of you in-person again during next year’s IDLS in Halifax (Canada).

Best Regards

Volker Schaaf

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**IDLSoc Virtual Event**

**Top TDL Experts...Streamed directly to worldwide offices!**

*IDLSoc Chairman, LtCol Volker Schaaf, looks back at the recent IDLSoc Virtual Event.*

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**IDLSoc Presentations**

Even though the event is over, many of the recorded sessions are still available through the [online portal](#), with more presentations continuing to become available.

To access a session, log onto the system with your IDLSoc credentials, navigate to the Event Programme, then select the day and session you wish to watch.
After every event, we ask all delegates to participate in a survey. We did the same for this year’s Virtual Event and these are the results.

**Do you think holding a Virtual Event in place of IDLS2020 was a good idea?**

- **Yes:** 97.06%
- **No:** 2.94%

**Comments included...**

- “Even though the event was held virtually, it was still very informative and the demonstrations helped showcase the capabilities that the TDL companies have been working on over the year”.
- “It was a virtual event or no event at all. Of course it was a good idea.”
- “Kept the flame alive and provided an opportunity to try a different format.”
- “I think the virtual event should become part of future IDLS, even when we go back to the regular format.”
How well organised was the IDLSoc Virtual Event?

61.76% Very well organised
26.47% Poorly organised
8.82% Satisfactorily organised
2.94% Well organised

Will you be accessing the site now the live event has finished and as we upload more of the recorded content?

100% Yes

Did IDLSoc 2020 Virtual Event meet your expectations?

93.94% Yes
6.6% No
Are there any other comments/suggestions that you would like to make about the IDLSoc 2020 Virtual Event?

“I know this was a lot of work to pull off in a short period of time. Grateful that the sessions were held to time as close as possible so that you could join when able and see the presentation expected.”

“I think it is a good idea to do virtual events more often. Why not hold a virtual event once in two year? I recognize that it's more difficult to have a discussion when you have not met others face to face. I still think there is advantages in meeting people face to face. But maybe we don't need to travel around the world every time. Save money and environment. People will be more used to virtual events and meeting.”

Do you have any comments, suggestions or views on the future format of the Symposium?

“Due to the current pandemic situation worldwide, it was the only solution possible to perform this important event, nevertheless, i still consider that a in-person live event is always much more adequate and productive. Hope that we all can return to "normality" and attend the next ones personally.”

“It would be good if we could have more detailed technical content to those with suitable clearances - like MIRB can talk more about MIDS/JTRS. As per the early events we had. Could a national military exercise be planned to run over the event and streamed into the session?”
After a successful Virtual Event we received some positive feedback. We spoke to three attendees and asked for their thoughts on how the event went.

Dr Pete Camana
Viasat

The IDLSoc annual event has two very important roles in the lives of members of the Tactical Data Links user, developers, maintainers and integrators community. First it is a chance to receive updates on progress on many of the latest efforts, products, requirements, projects and trends across the worldwide effort to improve the Tactical Data Link contribution to a better more effective networking for our militaries. Second, it is a place where all can meet and exchange the latest progress on successes, failures, technical and operational issues and work through those issues in real time among worldwide experts. The Virtual IDLSoc Event this year did well at the presenting the updates through the presentations, training and products in the virtual presentations. This TDL update role was fulfilled in real time, plus through replay, to reach regular attendees as well as people who haven’t been able to travel in the past. On the second mission, no technology can replace the face-to-face ability to discuss a TDL problem and walk over and grab another expert from another company or part of the world and solve the need in real time. I think future IDLSoc Events should make sure to add the virtual capability to update more people over the web, but we still need the face-to-face to solve the issues real time.

Mr Francisco Gonzalez
Airbus

Most recent design paradigms in the TDL world are bringing substantial enhancements to the Theatre of Operation. Aspects like increased bandwidth, LP/LPD... but on top of that, there is a feature that we should pay attention to: RESILIENCE. Being able to recover from adversities and adapt to a changing environment is of paramount importance, not only talking about TDLs, but in every aspect of life.

This has been a tough year for many of us, at all levels. Social distancing imposed all over the world has led to shutting down offices, taking paperwork back home and of course, all sort of events have been cancelled for obvious reasons. Nobody would have blamed the IDLSoc for postponing the event to 2021, but they decided to be resilient and hold a virtual event this time. In the end, tactical networks are not just conceived to work in ideal conditions only, neither are the Armed Forces nor Industry.

I had the chance to become part of this one-off symposium this year and even managed to run a live session from home, so it was a great opportunity to check out the outstanding job the staff has done backstage. They made everyone understand the event was not over (not a minor point considering that networks without participants are useless), they organised rehearsal sessions to polish all those details that may ruin an online presentation when people do not know, for instance, how to unmute the mic (it may look hilarious, but networks with many participants pictured in radio silence/EMCON are of little more use than empty spaces) and in case anyone didn’t notice, everyone had the chance to connect to live sessions, regardless of their time zones.

Of course, this is not the ultimate solution but we have to adapt to the current circumstances and concentrate in getting the best from the available resources. On the other hand, in my honest opinion (IHMO), there is still room for improvement for the upcoming on-line event. For instance:

- Keep organising multilink demos involving several vendors and covering all sort of operational vignettes. Perhaps pre-recorded sessions may work better on these kind of events, in which keeping attention at all times could be a challenge itself for visitors.

- Embrace the tools that the web may provide and allow visitors to become part of the demo by making them make certain decisions, which would lead to specific vignettes. This is nothing new though, I already had "choose your own adventure"-like books and interactive-movie games when I was a kid.

- Leave polls for the breaks (it may be hard to follow sessions when you have a countdown on the screen requesting an answer) and implement "virtual coffee areas" to avoid leaving the social interaction during those breaks aside.

- Encourage presenters to upload and share their content, both in video and pdf. There is no point in not sharing it with the community, when the slides have already been exposed to potential recording devices through the live sessions.

Hopefully, we will meet again in 2021 in Halifax; anyhow, I’m confident the IDLSoc will come back with new ideas to keep this network up and running. In the meantime, stay SAFE and stay RESILIENT.
It’s been many years by now, since I last had the pleasure of addressing you in the IDLSoc Newsletter. Unfortunately, the security situation in the world has not improved in the last eight to ten years, and by that the importance of TDLs and interoperability to keep pace with the continuing development of technology. The continuing IDLSoc efforts to share knowledge, build partnerships and trust will become more urgent than ever.

By the way, my sincere congratulations and a big WELL DONE for this first virtual IDLS. I cannot imagine how much effort the Chair, Secretariat, Tech committee, Events Committee and all involved have put into this year's virtual event. And my hat off for all sponsors who kept on supporting the Society and who contributed to this high-quality event.

In this year’s event the programme touched on some highly relevant and interesting subjects, in addition to the still particularly important and informative training and traditional TDL sessions and updates. Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning, Man Machine Teaming, Unmanned Vehicles, how to counter by an adversary degraded and denied environments such as for frequency spectrum. All these emerging technologies, opportunities as well as threats, are subjects to which we are becoming more and more aware and dependent on.

Another subject that I see as highly interesting, and important for IDLSoc to keep track of, is the development of, and ongoing initiatives for, Multi Domain Operations. How will the development of US concepts and projects for Join All Domain C2 (JADC2), the Advanced Battle Management System (ABMS), Naval Tactical Grid, affect other national programmes, and how will it affect NATO operations and Allied Future Surveillance and Control? TDLs will not lose their importance, on the contrary, but how can we make best use of our legacy TDLs at the same time we introduce new TDLs to meet an ever-increasing demand of data exchange within a Multi Domain context? Here I see the IDLSoc as a vital link between industry and governmental agencies in sharing experiences and information. After all, IDLS started as a bi-lateral event to share information and support interoperability, not least within the Link 16 implementation projects. Since IDLS proved its success, it very soon became an International Society and many nations, Sweden included, used IDLS as one of the major sources for information gathering and knowledge sharing.

For the IDLSoc to have executed its first virtual event, means for me that the Society has taken a step towards a new era of combining Live events complimented by a virtual stream, where doable and relevant. However, as a colleague of mine expressed; ”You can share information, but you cannot build friendship and trust over a virtual meeting forum”! Look forward to attending the next Live IDLS where we can walk and talk, meet and greet, build that vital friendship and trust within our community.

Until further notice, keep your DISTANCE and stay SAFE.

SAVE THE DATE

The International Data Links Society is pleased to confirm the dates for 2021’s Symposium and training day:

- IDLSoc Masterclass: 28-29 Oct, 1 Nov
- IDLSoc Training Day: 1 Nov
- IDLS2021: 2 - 4 Nov
Sponsors of the IDLSoc Virtual Event

We would like to thank the following companies for sponsoring the IDLSoc Virtual Event.

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NCS
LtGen Smith joined Vice Admiral (VAdm) James W. Kilby, US Navy, deputy chief of Naval Operations for Warfighting Requirements and Capabilities, for a discussion on The Movement Toward Greater Integration in Naval Warfare, hosted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the US Naval Institute (USNI) on 29 October, 2020.

"Our contribution could be sensing and reporting back to the naval and joint forces. We will inflict lethal effects, but our greatest contribution may be in the ability to sense and detect and cause effects through those capabilities," stated LtGen Smith.

Addressing the challenge of getting networks right between commands, VAdm Kilby said that Project Overmatch was a look at the naval tactical grid and analysing whether it was still compatible with the joint force and with the army, or whether new decisions could drive a better integration. He said the project was considering latency and whether the ‘demand signals’ were aligned in its development.

"There will always be some slight difference between services as we go towards joint all domain control - any sensor, any shooter. The army has modified that to any sensor, best shooter," said LtGen Smith. Qualifying that he added, “what is the data required to produce target qualified information - the form factor will change whether its on a ship or the back of a soldier." The goal was to minimise the differences and look into why data transfer cannot be the same across the joint enterprise.

On the question of securing industry buy-in to what would be required, VAdm Kilby pointed to a series of Advanced Naval Tactical Exercises ANTAC), which invited industry to solve particular problems defined by the Navy.

"With the USMC, we produced a definition for the attributes of a naval tactical grid, including looking at the resiliency and how it would be open to other services and build into the future," explained VAdm Kilby. So collecting multiple programme requirements together, such as Navy Integrated Fire Control - Counter Air (NIFC-CA) is a great capability, "but there are four independent programmes from the sea pillar that align to create that." He added that industry was needed to help bring programmes of record together but added that "the normal ebb and flow of the Pentagon is that the programme of record views all new starts as competitors."

Giving a ‘heads-up’ on the kind of wider technology that USMA-USN integration was looking to acquire, LtGen Smith pointed to areas including "low probability of intercept and detection, low signature management, long duration, and range." But he warned, when you come to the industry exercise if you bring stuff that we asked for you go into the VIP Tent 1, if you don’t you go into Tent 2 which is somewhere down the road near the port-a-johns. We need you to bring what we are asking for."

Curtiss-Wright Adds VMF Support to the TCG BOSS® TDL Network Simulator and Exerciser System

Curtiss-Wright, a trusted leading supplier of TDL software and hardware solutions, has enhanced its industry leading TCG BOSS (Battlefield Operations Support System) TDL testing, simulation, and platform integration solution with support for VMF messages and various Combat Net Radios. Government and military test agency engineers can now use TCG BOSS to verify VMF implementations and ensure that all VMF elements and assets are communicating with each other correctly during every phase of operation.

For more on CW's TCG BOSS VMF support please visit www.curtisswrightds.com/tcg.
Corporate News

Viasat Releases Configuration of AN/PRC-161 BATS-D Handheld Link 16 Radio Certified by National Security Agency for Use by U.S. General Purpose Forces and Five Eyes Nations

Viasat has recently announced it has released a new, advanced configuration of its handheld Link 16 Battlefield Awareness and Targeting System – Dismounted (BATS-D) radio

This advanced version adds new security features to address emerging and expanded threats associated with the diverse operational use cases and new deployment scenarios where the radio will be utilized. Accordingly, this configuration has been certified by the National Security Agency (NSA) for immediate use by U.S. General Purpose Forces (GPF), Five Eyes (FVEY) partner nations and coalition forces.

BATS-D is the world’s first and only handheld Link 16 radio. It bridges a critical gap between air and ground forces by providing warfighters at the tactical edge secure, reliable access to integrated air and ground information for improved situational awareness and enhanced close air support communications.

“The initial success of the BATS-D radios in the field proves this capability to be a true game-changer in military communications,” said Andy Kessler, vice president and business area director, Next Generation Tactical Data Links business, Viasat. “We’ve seen tremendous interest to extend the use of the BATS-D radios to new applications and expanded concepts of operation that address specific needs and capability gaps of U.S. and international FVEY armed forces. The availability of BATS-D for GPF and FVEY partner nations will empower more warfighters with secure, interoperable, digitally-aided communications, which ultimately translates into significantly enhanced situational awareness and improved mission coordination across the multi-domain battlespace.”

The BATS-D handheld Link 16 radio is known to the United States Department of Defense as the AN/PRC-161.

SCYTALYS is awarded a major contract for the design and development of the Indonesian Armed Forces’ Interoperability, Command & Control System

Continuing its dynamic expansion of its advanced technologies in the international marketplace, SCYTALYS recently announced it has received a 49 Million contract award from the Indonesian Ministry of Defence, through an open competitive tender, for the provision of the Indonesian Armed Forces’ Interoperability Command and Control System.

The system, which SCYTALYS undertakes to implement and deliver within a 3-year time frame, includes the following elements:

- Design and development of the Indonesian National Data Link system
- Design and development of a centralized state-of-the-art C4ISR system and related new facilities, synthesizing the Common Operational Picture and increasing Situational Awareness
- Integration of Command Centers from all branches (Army, Navy and Air Force) to the C4ISR system
- Design and development of an integrated remote Surveillance and Monitoring system, further enhancing the Situational Awareness and Interoperability.

The program will establish the National Interoperability Framework for the Indonesian Armed Forces and will pave the way in realizing their Network Centric Operations requirements and objectives, so much needed in modern warfare. This will in turn prove to be a Force Multiplier for the Indonesian Armed Forces, reinforcing their capabilities and effectiveness.

“We greatly value this contract award, which we consider of strategic importance, as it will enable the Indonesian Armed Forces to acquire the necessary National Data Link, C4ISR systems, technologies and facilities in order to build their Interoperability Framework and conduct their inter and
SCYTALYS continued...

intra-service Network Centric Operations into the future. SCYTALYS is committed in delivering a turnkey solution that will fully satisfy the Indonesian MoD’s requirements”, said Dimitris Karantzavelos, CEO of SCYTALYS.

“This success has been preceded by other contracts awards for SCYTALYS in the Far East, not only in Indonesia, but also in S. Korea and Japan. The company is poised to take advantage of the global trend in multiplying the value added of different defense assets by linking them together” said Nick Papatsas, Member of the Board of SCYTALYS, representing EFA Group, the main owner of SCYTALYS. “We believe that SCYTALYS will repeat the success of THEON SENSORS, our other global leader company in night vision and thermal imaging systems”, Mr. Papatsas added.

IDLSoc Membership

There are many benefits to becoming a member of the International Data Links Society, and any data link user, customer, manager, policy maker, technical adviser, support agent or supplier are eligible for membership with the Society.

Benefits include:
- Access to the only dedicated network for Data Links professionals providing a great opportunity to connect with others across the wider Data Links community.
- Access to hundreds of Data Links related documents and files.
- The opportunity to attend Chapter events, and to get priority booking at IDLSoc events.
- Every year IDLSoc holds a Symposium, and as a member you get a special discounted fee for attendance.

The current individual one year subscription fee is US$75.00 and you can apply online.

Society staff will vet your application for eligibility and once approved, you will be sent at ID to login to the website and purchase an individual subscription using a pre-issued group code.

IDLSoc Newsletter - Content Request

We are looking at publishing more technical articles in the IDLSoc newsletter.

There is a rich seam of topics within the data links field that we have not yet covered and would make for interesting and enlightening articles.

We would be interested in articles of around 500 to 1500 words and based on current issues of interest, including relevant aspects of research, practice and application.

The IDLSoc newsletter readership includes industry, government, academia and individuals within the data links community, so please bear this in mind when submitting your proposal.

If you have a topic you would to submit, please email your proposal to editor@idlsocweb.org.