



IT Program Assessment

TSA- Federal Air Marshal Service (FAMS)

Mission Scheduling and Notification System (MSNS) (2010)

Review

The DHS CIO conducted a comprehensive program review of the TSA FAMS Mission Scheduling and Notification System (MSNS) on March 9, 2010 with representatives from DHS OCIO, TSA CIO, and the TSA Office of Law Enforcement / Federal Air Marshal Service. MSNS is the technology interface between FAMS and the airline industry and provides a variety of scheduling tools to help the FAMS execute their mission. MSNS is in O&M and receives ongoing technical refresh and product improvements in response to operational requirements.

Major findings include the following:

- MSNS supports a high volume of transactions and has a broad group of stakeholders that extend from the general public to foreign security and airport authorities.
- MSNS requires (and delivers) a very high degree of system availability (.999 threshold, .99999 objective) to accommodate the dynamic mission of FAMS.
- MSNS failover procedures between various sites are practiced regularly and can rapidly take place in response to an outage situation. MSNS employs the use of full, real-time data replication between their production sites.
- MSNS system performance is not optimal. They have not been able to diagnose or resolve all performance problems causing periodic sub-optimal response times. MSNS lacks sufficient tools or metrics for capturing performance issues.
- While there is no short term risk, long-term risks to the system and mission exist due to technology obsolescence and reliance on legacy COTS products.
- There is a strong partnership between the business and IT as evidenced by bi-weekly meetings of a board that considers the impacts of both operational and non-functional requirements on the system.
- If requested funds for modernization are granted, the Program Office may require additional staffing to oversee the modernization effort.
- MSNS has a substantial hardware footprint with high utilization of existing processing and CPU power.

Mitigation Strategy

In order to mitigate certain technology obsolescence risks, FAMS is preparing an RFI to consider alternates to some of the systems supplying information to MSNS. If modernization funding is awarded, FAMS MSNS will meet with the DHS OCIO to ensure proper staffing levels and confirm an approach to modernization efforts. MSNS will also begin developing a migration plan for hardware and physical move to DC2. A performance assessment will be conducted to bring tools, processes and analysis in an attempt to optimize performance across the entire MSNS system.

Assessment

FAMS MSNS is key to the continued execution of the FAMS mission. It is a well-run program that operates efficiently and delivers considerable functionality to its stakeholders. While the program faces some staffing shortfalls, technology obsolescence issues, and the inevitable inherent risks in modernizing their enterprise, FAMS MSNS has competent leadership that will continue to execute and elevate any additional risks to their system and mission so they can be addressed in a timely manner.

Score: 4