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Office of Public Affairs
United States Transportation Command
Scott Air Force Base, IL 62225-5357
(618) 229-4828
ustcpa@hq.transcom.mil

RELEASE NUMBER: 031215-3
December 15, 2003

TransViz enables real time decision-making

By Dave Patterson, USTRANSCOM Public Affairs

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, Ill., (USTCNS) --- These are exciting times for USTRANSCOM's Joint Mobility Operations Center where they are on the verge of implementing leading-edge commercial software that will allow operations personnel to view and analyze passenger and equipment movement requirements under a state-of-the-art collaborative environment. The software is Transportation Visibility - or simply TransViz - and is being fielded as a part of USTRANSCOM's Agile Transportation for the 21st Century (AT21) Advanced Concept Technology Demonstration.

"About five years ago we saw this deep collaboration technology coming out of a company called MAYAViz," said Mr. Keith Seaman, Chief, Operations Integration Division, USTRANSCOM J3. MAYAViz is a spin off from MAYA Design, a company started by three Carnegie Mellon University professors (a computer scientist, a cognitive psychologist, and an industrial designer) who observed growing numbers of people struggling to adapt to technology products. MAYAViz was later formed as a vehicle to turn MAYA Design's innovative concepts into hardened commercial products focusing on three key elements of data presentation: visualization (changing data into a graphical form so it can be seen); interactivity (creating a unique way to interact with data so you can search, reorganize, and drill down into it); and collaboration (enabling people at distant locations to see, analyze, and manipulate each other's data).

MAYAViz calls its innovative collaboration software CoMotion™ and designed the application so users can reach across the network into someone else's display and drag relevant data across the desktop and onto one's own display. "TransViz, based on the CoMotion™ engine, gets us to the point where, not only are we sharing information voice-wise, but we are now sharing information collaboratively using pictures and information over the computer" Seaman said. "We've been working the TransViz technology not only in AT21," he continued, "but we've also teamed with the Marine Corps and they see a big capability in CoMotion™ technology. This technology is exciting because it allows you to see the battle space of another command as well as

your battle space. When you can see that, uncertainties are no longer there, trust is established, and cooperation gets the job done."

"TransViz allows us to build the trust and confidence of our customer," added Maj. Deo Lachman, Chief, AT21 Collaboration, "it allows us to see what the customer sees. For example, as the warfighter looks at combat capability - ten tanks, two trucks, four helicopters - we view the same data at the same time only in short tons and square feet. This capability allows us to determine assets needed to provide transport. So we can tailor the view to each operator's point of view in the collaborative environment."

"What this technology allows us to do is to move away from a linear or sequential way of doing business. TransViz allows us to work in a parallel, three dimensional battle space where we are all working together on the same problem at the same time" stated Seaman. "TransViz provides the capability to illustrate other options where a force could be moved in 15 days rather than 17, or even 10 days instead of 17, depending upon what force is available at the time of need. The key capability TransViz brings to the table," Seaman said "is that it builds trust and confidence with the combatant commander as well as Joint Forces Command and whoever else is involved in the execution. It allows users to visualize data real time and drill down into the data further, not just in our systems, but other people's systems. I can actually write on the customer's computer desktop so there is no confusion whatsoever on what we are focusing on. It's really exciting to perform 'what if analysis' right away rather than having to default to an air centric decision."

"The difference between TransViz and other collaborative tools is that most tools just have a white board or file presentation capability" Lachman said. "Other parties can't drill down, change, or manipulate the data. With TransViz you can do all of those. I can share a chart with you that you can manipulate or change, and I see the changes as you are making them."

"The technology is right here to be put into the real world," Seaman said. "OSD and the Joint Staff said they need to get this technology right now into the Global Command and Control System and Joint Operation Planning and Execution System environment. We're really excited about that because we will be able to link TransViz technology with Information Work Space or the Defense Collaborative Tool Suite, whichever is decided to be the DoD standard. We've already done the initial engineering studies to make that happen, and are planning to have it completed by March of 2004."

"TransViz is a real good commercial off the shelf technology," said Lachman. "We did not develop a stovepipe for the government. The backbone of this technology is used by Shell Exploration and Production Company, military organizations, and others." TransViz is also in the process of being beta tested by USTRANSCOM's component commands, the Tanker Airlift Control Center in AMC, Joint Forces Command, Pacific Command, and is projected to go into Central Command and European Command.

The future looks bright! Merging USTRANSCOM best practices and systems with

commercial best practices and software applications will improve the way we do business. MAYAViz is an industry leader and TransViz promises to become an integral part of the way USTRANSCOM partners in providing Defense Transportation System customers with the best of the best support.

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