Remembering WWMCCS - WorldWide Military Command and Control System

Recently I came across a web site describing the history and development of the WorldWide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS) inter-computer network. This was our nation's first integrated military command and control system. And, back in the early 1970's, it was one of the largest contracts ever awarded by the federal government.

A review of the web site inspired me to recount a brief history about how I came to play a small role in this gigantic computer project.

The World-Wide Military Command and Control System (WWMCCS) was a centrally managed information processing and exchange network consisting of large-scale Honeywell 6000 Series computer systems installed worldwide at geographically separate locations and interconnected by a dedicated wide-band, packet-switched communications subsystem.

Back in 1971 Honeywell was awarded a $51.3 million (approximately $260 million in 2005 dollars) contract to supply The Department of Defense 27 Honeywell Model 6000 Series large-scale computer systems, all with common programs providing a rapid exchange of information among command centers. The first computer system was installed at the Strategic Air Command's headquarters at Offutt AFB, Omaha, Nebraska. The dual Model 6070 computer system was shipped in three moving vans with a total weight of 62,898 pounds.

My role in this gigantic project began after 1971 when General Electric sold their Computer Information Systems Division to Honeywell. As former GE computer division employee, I now found myself working for the Honeywell Federal Information Systems Division.

One of the biggest reasons for the Honeywell's acquisition of General Electric was to acquire their large scale GE-600 line of computers, as well as General Electric Computer Information Systems Division employees like myself with the knowledge and training to market, install, and support the GE-600 Computer Series. After the acquisition, Honeywell renamed the GE-600 Series the Honeywell 6000 Series.

As a former General Electric employee, I possessed a top secret federal government security clearance. This paved the way for Honeywell to assign me to Scott Air Force Base as the Account Manager responsible for the installation a WMMCCS computer system. My first assignment was to go immediately to Scott AFB and make a full-scale, detailed presentation describing the Honeywell 6000 Series hardware and operating system software.

When I arrived at Scott AFB, I found over a hundred Air Force and civilian computer people eagerly awaiting my presentation. I was somewhat surprised at the size of this crowd and it was soon evident that they were all starved for information about their

Honeywell 6000 super computer scheduled for installation later in the year. This was their first opportunity to get some meaningful details about this fascinating multiprocessing, multitasking marvel.

As I began my presentation, I recall that I was a little nervous, but I soon warmed up to my task, patiently explaining many important details about the Honeywell 6000. And, following my presentation, I answered numerous questions about the system. Later, I was invited to brief the Scott Air Force Commanding General who was equally eager to learn about the Honeywell 6000.

Surprisingly, even today, after the passage of so many years, everything related here comes back to my mind, just like it happened yesterday, perhaps because of the enormity and scope of the gigantic WWMCCS project. It was the first time the US Defense Department developed a truly integrated worldwide command and control system.

And, to this day, I am proud to have been a small part of this massive, history making project that provided a much needed defensive shield for our country.

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