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Profile of Marilyn Quagliotti

Mary Frost

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Marilyn Quagliotti served over 31 years in the Army and retired as a Major General in 2007. I have a long history of working on space issues in the Department of Defense.

I first got started as an advocate for space when I was a Battalion Commander in the 1st Cavalry Division, in 1991. At that time the Army was trying to communicate over large distances between headquarters. There was no line of sight equipment which could provide this connectivity. We used both single channel tacsat and multichannel tacsat, using the military satellites and military terminal, only.

Because of limited military terminal purchases provided by the Army's requirements and procurement system, it didn't take long for military commanders to start buying commercial terminals to meet their needs outside the typical acquisition process. Over the years most innovations occurred because of a pressing military need. For example, blue force tracking evolved out of an experiment conducted in Kosovo. This capability became a "must have" for troops deploying to Iraq.

In a very short span of time, the military went from using only military satellites and military terminals to a large reliance on both commercial satellite bandwidth and commercial terminals, for everything from blue force tracking to controlling predator drones.

The greatest event related to space during my career was to understand how small the world becomes when you are connected to the battlefield from anywhere. We have intel analyst in the western part of the US supporting the Iraq conflict. We have predator drones taking off in Kuwait but actually flown from the US. We have targeting happening in the US to support operations in Afghanistan. There is one global fight because of the connectivity that exists and both military and commercial satellite is a big part of that change.

In my experience, the greatest obstacle to any evolving change is the people, processes and organizations who have to adapt to new technology and new ways of doing business. The military has adapted well because they had no other choice, but, even within the military there is always room for improvement.

Seamless communications are an absolute necessity and the integration of satellite systems into enterprise networks must be accomplished in order for warfighting forces to achieve the greatest benefits from space assets.

In the next 5 years the industry should concentrate on how to support ubiquitous communication on the move for tactical forces, these are the most disadvantaged users, today. The question the industry needs to ask is what they can do for the soldier on the ground. Can they provide a lightweight PDA type device to thousands of soldiers who patrol the streets in foreign lands every day?

My advice for those coming into the industry is to understand the people your support, their point of view, their needs and maybe even what they have not identified yet as a need. The satellite industry is a great industry, it takes special technical skills to be the best and a constant refresh of those technical skills. It is one industry that will always be changing. It will, certainly, never be dull.