

FOCUS ON:

Financial Management Information Technology

by Mr Patrick Kavanaugh

What do the acronym's ABSS, FMMP, WAWF, MSG, GAFS, DJMS, DIMHRS, SSG, AFFSMO, IAPS, FIRST, AFTOC, FMEA, AFEA, CIOMB, DJMS, CRIS, RTS, DTS, JOCAS all have in common? If you haven't guessed, this alphabet soup represents just some of the financial management information technology (IT) initiatives we work with every day.

Behind each of these acronyms is a long and colorful history, much hard work done by many great people and lots of complicated processes and technology. And from all of these bits and pieces we have woven the mosaic that is the IT infrastructure we rely upon every day to do FMs important work. So how does our mosaic look? Can it be better? Will it support Mr Montelongo's vision to be strategic partners to our Commanders through better decision support and less transaction processing? Is it as sophisticated and leading edge as our most advanced weapons systems?

An FM Transformation initiative was launched earlier this year to answer these very questions. The team studied all facets of FMs systems world including people, processes, and technology. The team also reviewed the many technology organizations and initiatives that impact FM including DFAS, the Air Force CIO, and the various OSD initiatives. The study confirmed what most FMers already knew. Most importantly, it was clear we have extremely capable people working on our FM systems. These folks operate on a shoe-string and do their very best to keep our aging systems up and running. It also became clear the challenges of geographic separation, functional stovepipes, and simple lack of available time have conspired to limit coordination and communication among our various systems efforts. Another important observation was that a tsunami of new systems related initiatives are either just getting started or brewing on the horizon for which we need to be prepared. These include OSD's Financial Management Modernization Program, DIMHRS, and the Air Force Enterprise Architecture effort. Only the optimal utilization of our FM resources will allow us to successfully execute our part of these important programs.

The necessary course of action became clear...those SAF/FM personnel who work directly with systems must be combined into a new organization with the objective of working SAF/FMs systems efforts holistically and efficiently. This new organization would become a single point of responsibility for FM systems and a single point of contact with DFAS, SSG, MSG, OSD, the MAJCOMs, and others on matters pertaining to FM systems. The plan was documented, endorsed by our SAF/FM three-letters and MAJCOM FMs, and approved by Mr Montelongo. In November 2002 the paperwork was completed by SAF/AAA and the new Directorate (SAF/FMPT) became official. FMPT exists within our Financial Operations Directorate, SAF/FMP, and will be led by the Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary, Financial Operations.

So when do we start work on the financial systems version of the Predator? Yesterday! However, nothing is easy and our efforts must be conducted within the context of the initiatives discussed above as well as a scarce resource environment. Some of the things we can achieve immediately include improving communication on technology matters within FM (including the Pentagon, MAJCOMs, AFAFO, AFFMSO, and our budget systems shop at Gunter), improving our coordination with outside initiatives, and better integrating our FM technology personnel throughout the Air Force.

As of this writing the vacancy announcement for the position that will lead FMPT is being worked by AFSLMO. FMs senior management is anxious to get this vacancy filled so FMPT can begin moving at full speed. Stand-by for more information in upcoming magazines.

About the Author



Mr Kavanaugh currently serves as a consultant to SAF/FM on IT matters and is a full time member of the SAF/FM Transformation Team (FMT). Specializing in the implementation of COTS Financial and HR/Payroll solutions for the public sector, he has successfully completed projects with the State of New Jersey, State of New York, State of Texas, Government of Puerto Rico, Canadian Federal Government, Virginia DOT, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Georgia Board of Regents, and others. Prior to serving in his current capacity, Mr Kavanaugh was the founder and managing partner of Empower Solutions, a firm specializing in public sector solutions, and a manager with Andersen Consulting's government practice. Mr Kavanaugh holds a bachelors degree from the University of Pennsylvania.

