

DECREASING WORKLOAD

Aerial ports streamline cargo processing with wireless technology

By Mr. Martin McGibney

Air Mobility Command
Communications and Information
Directorate

SCOTT AIR FORCE BASE, ILL. —

Although the private sector was using wireless technology before the Department of Defense, Air Mobility Command's Global Air Transportation and Execution System, known as GATES, has come on board full-speed while surpassing expectations.

The first wireless equipment introduced by GATES was an Intermec Janus 2020 barcode scanner or Hand-held Terminal, referred to as HHT.

As with many technological pioneers, the original scanners were more cumbersome than useful, didn't always work correctly and were commonly referred to as boat anchors or paperweights. Despite some early problems, however, a few aerial port workers used the handheld because it reduced the trips between an ever-changing work area and a computer terminal.

The downfall of the old GATES HHTs came when the Air Force Information Warfare Center identified security risks from the radio frequency wireless local area network in April 2002. While the facts were being gathered, immediate preventative measures were implemented resulting in a cease-and-desist on all wireless devices. The good news is that as a result of the incident, more people became aware of wireless technology issues. The exposed vulnerability helped solidify wireless policy and made people

think about inclusion of wireless capability as part of the base infrastructure. As technology improved, senior leaders recognized the advantage this wireless technology offered them: streamlined cargo processing and greater accuracy of in-transit visibility. Literally tons of cargo could be captured and relayed within minutes of scanning.

Now, newer, more powerful HHTs are being fielded at the aerial ports thus replacing the old model. The new HHTs use the Microsoft Windows Operating System and have more memory and a faster processor. The GATES software was updated to provide the user with the same Graphical User Interface screens they were familiar with on the GATES client PC. In addition, the new HHTs provide real-time updates to the GATES database and timelier in-transit visibility information for senior leadership. Its Virtual Private Network software protects the wireless transmissions through federally-mandated encryption points to the wired VPN on the network. As a result, the new HHTs provide the required security and user functionality.

The users love it, and two separate papers have already sung its praises. A September, "Air Force Times" article states, "Testing with the new terminal cut processing time to three minutes a pallet or less — slicing 33 hours of work a day to 10." In addition, an article in Dover AFB's base newspaper, the "Airlifter," stated, "Based on what we're seeing, this has the potential to more than double our pallet production."



Intermec Janus 2020
barcode scanner



Now, newer, more powerful HHTs are being fielded at the aerial ports, cutting the workload dramatically.

