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Corporate Corner

Using COTS to Streamline Operations

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As FAA prepares to move forward on a shoestring budget thanks to a Continuing Resolution that will likely freeze spending for the rest of Fiscal Year 2007, we in the aviation community will be forced to do more with less. As a result, industry and the FAA will have to work more closely than ever before to deploy cost-effective, commercial off the shelf technology (COTS) to streamline operations.

A prime example where COTS technologies can meet current and future needs, at low cost, is the deployment of the Integrated Control and Monitoring System (ICMS). ICMS is a monitoring and control system that accepts status information from navigational landing aid equipment and visual aid equipment at an airport and displays the status information onto a touch screen display system.

ICMS allows controllers and maintenance personnel to identify and resolve problems more quickly and focus on their primary mission of landing planes safely. ICMS also consolidates

the array of switches and panels in the tower into a common touch screen display providing a standardized architecture within the NAS, freeing up valuable tower real estate. ICMS is currently installed and operational at eight major U.S. airports: Minneapolis, Phoenix, Salt Lake City, Denver, Newark, Seattle, Atlanta and Indianapolis and is soon to be installed at Dulles, Chicago O'Hare, Houston, and LAX.

The key to applications such as ICMS is that they can integrate current technologies and standardize the process of monitoring and controlling airfield systems. ICMS also provides a bridge between aged and new equipment, including wide area augmentation system (WAAS), local area augmentation system (LAAS) and multi-lateration. These types of technology provide significant value to the FAA as they are "turn-key" systems that can be deployed and installed very quickly. Perhaps most importantly, ICMS is also completely scalable and as such it can

evolve with new technologies that are brought online at airports of any size or configuration.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy announced before a special joint session of Congress the ambitious goal of sending an American safely to the moon before the end of the decade. Though not as exotic or sensational, the stakes are equally high for reshaping the NAS for the 21st century. To achieve this important and attainable goal, industry and the FAA must again join closely together to look beyond the existing horizon and make the changes, large and small, that are needed to safely and successfully perform the mission.