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Next Generation Navy Mobility Access-As-a-Service to Classified Data

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Abstract:

Government agencies have experienced a sharp increase in the requirements for employees to work from home, or in disparate facilities. While remote work might be a newer concern, securely extending network access to contractors has been a long-standing battle. As the Navy is mobilizing remote access to its network there are some key challenges:

- 1) Limited availability of government-issued devices
- 2) Difficult contractor compliance and audit
- 3) Building classified work areas is time & cost prohibitive
- 4) Lower productivity due to personnel having to commute to approved classified workspaces.

To solve these challenges, a compelling use case emerges from various Federal Agency's pursuing Commercial Solutions for Classified (CSfC) systems. This opens a door of opportunity for a future government shared data environment operating on an Access-as-a-Service (A3S) model to government end users. A3S, as a use case, benefits the Navy by maximizing capital investment while reducing time to delivery for organizations needing flexible, affordable, secure access to classified networks in locations where no such access exists. Backdoor virtual private network (VPN) tunneling through firewalls for the purpose of remote access can all but be eliminated. CSfC distribution can provide direct domain-controlled access to applications and data delivered in a way that is easier to manage and more secure than tunneling.

The Internet affords global connectivity but is highly untrusted and serves as an adversarial data supply route to take advantage and disrupt Naval interests using cyber toolkits. However, the costs advantages available by using the global Internet resources cannot be ignored and must continue to be used in creative ways for the Navy to maintain its information dominance.

The Navy's network infrastructure has been built-up/out over the years with significant investment to enable secure information transfer. The capabilities these networks bring to bear are tremendous. Still, this network infrastructure is not without gaps and needs for improvement. For example, the need for mobility was never greater than when COVID presented a huge risk to society and the missions of the entire Department of Defense (DoD). What information inhibiting event will be next?

While the Navy has made tremendous strides to improve its ability to operate more autonomously across land and sea, there is still much work to be done to fill gaps. Consider the fact that a sizable portion of sailors, marines, and DoD civilians must move between facilities to perform their duties and access classified information. Most buildings are simply not prepared to meet classified security standards. The impact to the Navy is waste of valuable personnel time and energy that could otherwise be spent focusing on Navy mission requirements.

What if a minimal investment in a CSfC distribution back-bone, compared to the significant costs and manhours spent to maintain current stove-piped networks, was applied across a small community of interest (COI)? Such a pursuit could facilitate and enable classified data communications to almost any need in the Navy or DoD as a whole. During this technical presentation we will explore the concept of a next generation Access-As-a-Service (A3S) to Classified Data to fill communications gaps in the future.