

Background

International Data Links Symposium has been held annually since 2001. It originated as a Tactical Data Link User's group sponsored by the US Navy and US Air Force Link 16 program offices in cooperation with the UK Ministry of Defense. As Link 16 proliferated, the symposium rapidly grew beyond scope of a program office sponsored conference and in 2004 the International Data Link Society (IDLS) was chartered as a non-profit organization to provide a forum for the Tactical Data Link (TDL) community and to facilitate the annual event. The annual symposium is held in various cities throughout the world to facilitate participation by the international community. The society's charter is:

- To provide a Government-Industry forum to inform each other of accomplishments, trends and developments in military and civil data link technology
- To further interoperability
- To further the effectiveness of digital information exchange
- To create a framework of co-operation across nations
- To share lessons learned and best practices
- The identification and promotion of key issues relating to the successful application of data links worldwide

Discussion

Tactical Data Links have established themselves as a significant war fighting advantage by facilitating interoperability between joint and combined forces in operations throughout the world. They provide a force multiplier for existing forces throughout the spectrum of warfare. Proficiency in TDL operations increases unit effectiveness in all aspects of mission accomplishment from mission and deployment planning, to training and combat operations. The IDLS exists to facilitate exchange of the latest developments in the TDL community. These include lessons learned from recent operations, TDL training advancements, developments in tactics, techniques and procedures, presentations on current issues and trends in application of TDL networks. Operators are an essential part of the TDL community and all other members of the community are there to support them. Operator attendance provides tangible benefits for the community and for the organizations that send them. These benefits include a better understanding of TDL capabilities and provides knowledge on latest developments, evolving systems, best practices, new measures of support as well as the latest trends in training and TDL proficiency. Operator participation also provides essential feedback to acquisition and requirements organizations as well as system developers on how systems are currently being used in theater and how they could be improved. This is the user community's opportunity to provide that feedback to improve current systems to and influence the next generation of interoperable systems.

There is also an opportunity for training and earning of continuous learning credits. The first day of the symposium is a dedicated Training Day and five one day courses are offered on basic to advanced subjects. These courses, along with the presentations in the symposium sessions are often eligible for training credit depending on your individual service policies and requirements. Additionally, participation in the symposium may be eligible for use of training funds.

Recommendation

Approve participation in the IDLS Symposium. The 2019 symposium is being held from 28th to 31st October 2019 in Edinburgh, Scotland.