

U.S. ARMY COUNTS ON WHATSUP® GOLD TO “REBOOT” IRAQ

Organization:

United States Army Central Command (CENTCOM)/Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA)

Industry:

Defense

Business Challenge:

CENTCOM needed a network monitoring application that could be installed quickly, immediately pinpoint the cause of network and power outages, and handle a complex, dynamic network topology.

Outcome:

ORHA, under the direction of CENTCOM, chose WhatsUp® Gold for around-the-clock monitoring of applications, servers, devices, and network resources.

During the U.S. invasion of Iraq in April 2003, 169 civilians embedded with CENTCOM were sent in under the protection of the Department of Defense to form the basis of the interim government that was to be set up after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The civilians were hand picked for their unique systems and networking expertise and soon occupied Hussein’s Ramadan palace (now the U.S. Embassy) on the banks of the Euphrates River. Approximately twenty satellite, tele-communications and network systems senior engineers entered Iraq to support them.

“The ceaseless damage control provided by WhatsUp Gold never failed in monitoring the only working civilian network of an entire nation. We couldn’t have done our job in Iraq without WhatsUp Gold doing its job.”

– Dana Beausoleil

Defense Information Systems
Agency (contractor) Computer
Interoperability Systems Inspector

As the battle for Iraq raged around them, the civilian network engineers set up their satellites, network servers and power supplies to run the country. Once power was established via U.S. Army mobile generators, the network sprung to life – but it wasn’t pretty. Fiber optic wires and Ethernet cables were duct-taped to the floors and routed inside and outside of the palace through bombed-out windows so that the palace courtyard took on the look of a spaghetti factory after an explosion. “Network cables hung from walls, windows, and from crystal chandeliers,” says Dana Beausoleil, a former contractor who acted as a senior network engineer and IT first responder during the rewiring of Baghdad. “Relay boxes, switches, and

routers sat in the middle of huge corridors branching out in every direction, down circular marble staircases and eventually terminating in a network control room that connected to the satellite that was the connection to the outside world.”

Inside the palace, the staff walked on top of cable bundles taped to the floors with signs reading, “You’re walking on your internet connection.” Inside the server room, the air conditioning failed and servers ran at 125 degrees with every over-temperature alarm lit. There was a clear need for around-the-clock monitoring of applications, servers, devices, and network resources. “WhatsUp Gold was proven technology,” recalls Beausoleil. “We required something that was widely accepted by a variety of engineers, could be set up quickly, handle rapidly-changing network configurations effortlessly, and combined ease of use with maximum information needs reporting.”

The fact that WhatsUp Gold can be implemented in any environment in under one hour and enables administrators to discover their network in minutes was key to the engineers’ work in Iraq, where a network built for 200 users was pressed into service for over 2,000 users, with all of the associated overload and reliability issues. “We would sometimes experience 20 or more power outages a day,” says Beausoleil. “We installed WhatsUp Gold and hung a 42-inch plasma television monitor on a marble wall whose sole purpose was to display the network status.” WhatsUp Gold’s visual mapping allowed the staff to see the network through multiple onscreen icons and gave them the ability to reconfigure the map design on the fly with drag-and-drop functionality as the network expanded. When everyone from ambassadors and generals from multiple nations to U.S. Army and coalition force commanders are counting on the network being available to direct critical joint operations in the command center, each outage presented the possibility for far-reaching consequences. **“A dozen times a day, whether it was a satellite link in Germany going down or a mail server overheating, WhatsUp Gold was successful in triggering immediate response from some of the most exhausted IT staff on the planet,”** Beausoleil declares with pride.

Installing WhatsUp Gold was a critical command decision. Prior to implementing it, one failed core switch effectively shut down the government of Iraq for three days as the staff manually diagnosed the single source of failure. “The only way to find the failed network component was to shut the entire network down and restart and retest each component one by one,” explains Beausoleil. “It was brutally slow work.” WhatsUp Gold’s configurable device dependency feature eliminated dependent alerts and enabled administrators to more easily diagnose problems without the distraction of numerous alarms. “The ceaseless damage control provided by WhatsUp Gold never failed in monitoring the only working civilian network of an entire nation,” says Beausoleil. “We couldn’t have done our job in Iraq without WhatsUp Gold doing its job.”

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