

File 20100421.0729: Notes from meeting with Dr Martin this morning:

I reported on the status of Radiant Mercury 5.0 certification testing. Beta 1 continues to proceed normally; IV&V will wrap up this week on Friday and submit their final report on 30th April, so no change there. Rumour has it that there are no major findings. The developer is only working on 6–8 CRs (Change Requests) right now, none of them large; things look good for version 5.0zc to become the build candidate that goes into Beta 2 regression testing to complete 18th June factory) and 8th July (government).

As I predicted, they finally decided to slip the date for Beta 2 by six weeks and test at STRATCOM instead of JFCOM. The project manager noted in yesterday's meeting that the artificial sense of urgency when they were still trying to make the JFCOM deadline is probably the only reason why they'll actually get the IV&V report by 30th April; without that pressure, IV&V probably wouldn't have worked as hard. The slippage of 6–8 weeks off the original date is actually not bad, although funding is very tight—as usual—and the developer is at risk through 30th April. They will get it worked out with NMSO, not to worry. But funding is very tight and the project manager specifically asked everyone to look out for any unnecessary effort in the plan that can and should be eliminated. There could be nuclear missiles incoming to Washington, D.C. and NMSO would never move any faster (that's a quote from the project manager). They have been incrementally funding this to death.

In other words, the certification is proceeding normally. It is extremely interesting to watch the process unfold, seeing how it really works as opposed to how it is supposed to work. All the meetings and all the artefacts I collect are useful data for my dissertation.

Next I reported on the UCDMO conference abstract I submitted last Friday. I almost missed it, having found out about the deadline only two days before submissions were due, but I didn't miss the deadline. I am very excited about this paper on information asymmetry. It didn't really gel until I started writing it, but this is exactly the formalism I was searching for and is the key to making the accreditor information tool work. I am working on the full paper and will have more to say about it after I get it written. I now have two solid ideas that are completely different but both relating to the same idea. I am feeling good about progress right now.

I described a failed experiment that I was trying to do in R, relating to the information asymmetry idea. I tried to model the aggregate risks for each data owner's accreditor by a normal distribution with a random mean and std. deviation, shifting them left or right randomly so they didn't line up, then trying to get the residual risk by a moving average of all the curves. It totally did not work. It seemed like a great idea but it didn't work. I can express it clearly in set theory but I am still having trouble coming up with a way of visualising it. I will have more to say about this later.

Survey progress was delayed because of emergency work on the UCDMO conference paper. I will work on the survey questions today.

I gave another talk at Lockheed on Tuesday to an audience of engineers on new technical capabilities in Radiant Mercury 5.0 and the UCDMO process. Following Dr Martin's advice, I made sure the talk was on a new subject and also that it related directly to a section or chapter in my dissertation. The subject of this talk will become two sections in Chapter two or three later on. I received good feedback again, and the participants in the multicast suggested at least one completely new use for the system that has never been considered before. It could lead to enormous cost savings throughout the government. I passed on the idea to the programme manager.

Lockheed introduced a new automated process for reviewing papers and presentations for public release. Dr Martin suggested an interesting new thing that Probabilistic Redaction could be used for. I am going to use that idea in next week's meeting with the project sponsor.

Next meeting Thursday, 6th May 2010 at 1400 Oxford time. Dr Martin is at the Info Security Europe conference next week.

Call ended 0724.

References