File 20100928.1221: Notes from Systems Engineering meeting this morning, 1100:

There was no stop-work today, as feared last week; NMSO is playing their usual games with funding, and came through at 1705 local time yesterday. TISS starts a new contract on Friday; use the new charge numbers from Craig through Thursday.

Dan Girffin is out all week on bereavement. So is Olav.

This is the second option year of the recompete. The more direct charges everyone has, the better. You want to have direct charges.

CDTAB met last Tuesday. At first they invited LM, but then uninvited the developer at the last minute. RM 5.0 received a technical risk rating of 'high' but that is not bad; there are five levels of technical risk, and 'high' is in the middle of the range. RM 4.0.5 received a 'high' and that slowed them down not at all. RM 4.5 received a 'medium' technical risk rating. The developer believes that the deck was stacked against them during this CT&E. NSA I173 contracts out regression testing to Fort Huachuca and SPAWAR in Charleston, and this time it was Charleston's turn. It was the first time Charleston had ever seen Solaris, so they were unfamiliar with it, and wrote a lot of findings that show their poor understanding of the OS. The developer expressed frustration again, this time with certifiers who won't read what the developer writes. Many findings have been duplicates; the developer responded in writing with a clear explanation of the error but the certifiers apparently did not read the responses and continued to report the same nonsensical results and conclusions. The latest information is that the developer requested in the strongest terms a reevaluation of the CDTAB's technical risk rating. The response from UCDMO was 'you can send it to us'. That is not encouraging in the developer's view.

[Editorial comment: based on what I heard directly from participants and attendees who were at the CDTAB meeting, I think the developer ought not to request a re-review. The chances of getting a different result seem to me to be close to zero. The developer should instead work on their argument to be used with prospective customers that a 'high' technical risk rating means the products has a lot of powerful capabilities (which is true) and hence comes with a 'high' risk rating the same way a sharp knife does.]

TMAN, as a point of contrast, side-stepped the issue a while ago by abandoning the entire SABI process and settling for TSABI accreditations only. They no longer have to put up with CDTAB. Other CDS developers have taken the same low road, by purposely limiting the capability of their products and avoiding the difficult certifications.

The UCDMO Baseline List of Approved Cross Domain Solutions comes out on 1st October, and the developer expects RM 5.0 to be on it. There is a classified telecon this week at which I expect we will hear the news. The developer expressed some more frustration at the lack of a leader throughout the CT&E process; there is no one in charge, only a committee. There are no mandatory attendance requirements at meetings; important participants sometimes do not show up for weeks on end. Because the participants represent different agencies, there is no coherent chain of command.

The developer talked the Programme Office out of spending time on the minimal post-5.0 patch that had been planned until last week's classified telecon uncovered the 'high' technical risk rating and illuminated the reasons for several CT&E findings. The developer now feels that the first post-5.0 patch must be larger to include certain specific functionality. Last week, the government Programme Office was extremely hesitant to stop testing on the originaly planned post-5.0 patch, as they were afraid that UCDMO might make listing on the Baseline contingent on patching that one (comparatively minor) finding. The developer argued for a much more comprehensive post-5.0 patch that might not be issued until six months after the first systems were fielded.

Kevin reiterated that there is now a roadmap for RM development, viewable by everyone on the programme.

References