

Unisys Seeking to Up the Ante With NSA

By *Debbi Mack*,
STAFF WRITER

For Unisys Corp., moving its Hanover office to Columbia was more than just a way to get bigger office space. It was a way to get closer and enhance the level of services to that office's primary customer, the National Security Agency (NSA).

"Unisys made a corporate decision and investment in putting this facility in Howard County," said Tom Giroir, Unisys's managing director of advanced programs, who heads the office. "That commitment and investment are based on our desire to increase the level of technical services that we provide to NSA."

The new space in Columbia Gateway Corporate Park "allowed us to expand our old office spaces and to build a SCIF," Giroir said. SCIF stands for "sensitive compartmented information facility" - which is the kind of facility secure enough to house the classified work done for NSA.

The Public Sector Industry

NSA is one of the agencies that make up Unisys's federal government clientele, the largest industry the company serves, according to Greg Baroni, president of the federal systems business unit, as well as Unisys's corporate senior vice president and corporate senior representative. The federal government represents one-sixth of the compa-

ny's overall revenue. That and work for other governmental entities comprises 35% to 40% of Unisys's business.

The bulk of federal government work is for the Department of Homeland Security. Baroni said Unisys helped provide a variety of technical goods and services in creating the Transportation Security Administration. He said Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) has had "some effect" on Unisys's work for the Department of Defense, in that it's forcing more personnel to telecommute, creating needs that Unisys helps support. However, it's the work for NSA that Baroni anticipates will grow rapidly.

Unisys provides NSA with biometric technologies (e.g., iris or facial recognition); data mining, the process of extracting information from large databases and turning it into "actionable information" for agency decision makers; and database development and maintenance that supports many areas of the extended NSA enterprise; as well as manages its communications networks, including network engineering, development, administration and help-desk functions.

Baroni says Unisys's services to NSA will likely expand over time to include "a broader array of work."

"A lot of people still think of Unisys as a big mainframe computer manufacturer," Giroir said. And it was when the company started in 1986 when

Sperry and Burroughs merged to form Unisys. However, in the mid '90s, the company's business model began to shift. Now, 85% of its work is technology solutions and services, including integrating, managing and securing computer systems and networks.

Secure Facilities, Good Location

Unisys's Columbia facility is in a warehouse-like building, remodeled inside to provide 10,000 square feet of SCIF space and 8,000 square feet of regular office space. Creating the SCIF space involved lengthy coordination with NSA, which made sure it was built to specified standards. As a result, the move took about 18 to 24 months to complete.

The Columbia office is closer to that client, Giroir said, and "other companies we team up with to provide work for NSA. All the companies we team with [are] ... in this area. You can't throw a rock and not hit one."

The office is also near technical job fairs, which take place at least once a month around the area.

Giroir observed that in order to bid on larger contracts, a company must first have the facilities and capacity. The Columbia location "gives us increased capacity in terms of office space and SCIF space, which allows us to compete for bigger opportunities."

Baroni called it a "build it and they will come" strategy - being willing to put the

"people and portfolio" needed to work for NSA in place so as to attract more of its business.

"The NSA are very discriminating in terms of the vendors/partners they work with," Baroni said. Among other things, "I'm sure they're looking at what partners are willing to make investments."

Triple-Digit Growth?

While the Columbia offices have about 60 employees, the new space allows room for 75 to 80 more. "We're always recruiting, always looking for talented people," Giroir said.

Baroni expects the Columbia office's hiring and business to expand rapidly. "I'm looking for triple-digit growth in the near term," he said.

Giroir, who did classified work for 27 years with the Air Force before joining the company, said he's worked with some of the brightest people he's met at Unisys - people with a variety of high-end technical skills, including engineers, computer system architects, mathematicians, computer scientists and network engineers.

In addition to Ph.Ds and others with advanced degrees, Giroir says Unisys has top-certified technical workers. "It's a unique community."

Giroir enjoys his work, because it involves "contributing to a mission that's bigger than yourself. Contributing to national security is incredibly rewarding."