



CSSI, INC.

HORIZONS

Moving Research to Reality

Summer 2007

CSSI, FAA Support China ATC Initiative

By Curt Zimmerman
CSSI Air Traffic Control Specialist

In late June 2007, I had the opportunity to travel to China on behalf of CSSI in support of the Federal Aviation Administration.

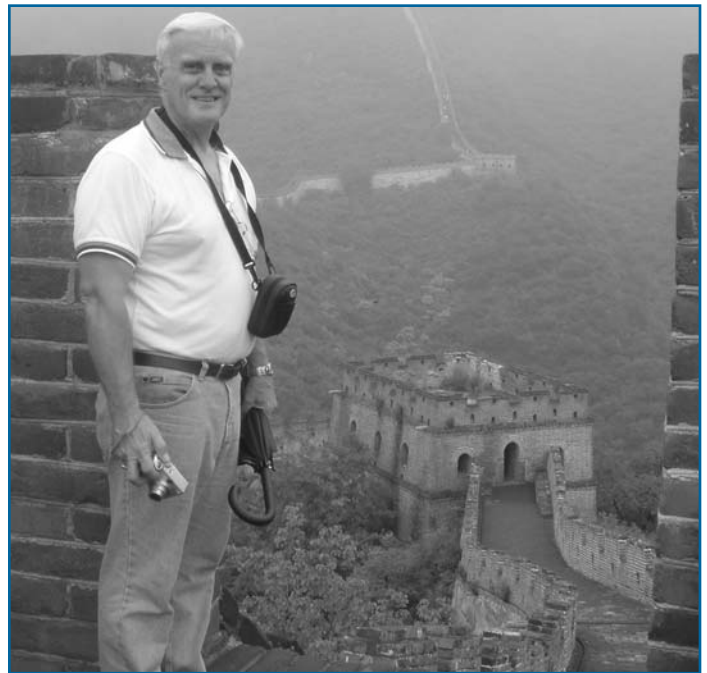
CSSI has been involved with the Chinese in several different areas of the Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum (RVSM) program. RVSM has been spreading around the globe since about 1997 (it was under development for years before that). The main change is reducing the vertical separation required between 29,000 feet and 41,000 feet from 2,000 feet to 1,000.

RVSM is a truly “win-win” change for the aviation industry. Pilots are more often able to fly at the most fuel-efficient altitude because there are more altitudes to choose from, and air traffic control has more options for achieving separation.

But RVSM doesn’t come without a cost. Upgrading an aircraft to RVSM standards can cost from as little as a few thousand dollars to, in some extreme cases of old aircraft, a quarter of a million dollars. For some aircraft operators to absorb that cost can be difficult when they may only own one or two aircraft, and take years to recoup in fuel cost savings. This has had an impact on where and at what rate RVSM has spread around the globe.

Much of the world has gone to RVSM, including both Atlantic and Pacific oceanic airspace, but there are still a few pockets where the old separation standard (2,000 vertical feet) remains. China is one of these pockets [a very large pocket - ed.]. Ultimately, however, the entire world will use the RVSM standard.

China is scheduled to make the transition to RVSM on November 22, 2007. They have a number of challenges in front of them and have asked the FAA for help. Fortunately for several of us at CSSI, that means we get to help as well. Some of the chal-



Curt Zimmerman at The Great Wall

lenges facing the Chinese that we in the U.S. were able to avoid are: they use meters instead of feet in defining altitudes; they are surrounded by a number of countries that use feet instead of meters and some who use meters instead of feet, consequently there is not a consistent application of altitudes to be assigned to aircraft transiting these areas; and, some of those countries have not yet gone to the RVSM standard.

There are many other differences, a story for another time. Suffice it to say, the Chinese have asked for help in several areas as they march toward this major change in their air traffic system.

In April of this year, Steve Creamer, currently with the International Civil Aviation Organization but formerly the program manager of RVSM implementation in the U.S., and three of us who worked on the air traffic portion of RVSM implementation with him, traveled to Shanghai and Beijing to observe the Chinese air traffic system.

We looked at the differences in their operation and systems compared to the U.S. system, and at processes, to prepare for an information exchange with the personnel

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CHINA (from Page 1)

from China who will lead their RVSM implementation.

While there we had numerous opportunities to talk with Chinese controllers, supervisors, managers, and directors (essentially all government employees) within their air traffic system. We also were privileged to visit air traffic facilities in both Shanghai and Beijing. I was very surprised to see these two showcase facilities. They were completely modern in terms of architecture, the virtually state-of-the-art equipment used by their controllers, and even the quality of their break room facilities (they had chaise lounge massaging recliners!).

Controllers Treated Well

I haven't seen all the ARTCCs (enroute air traffic control centers) here in the U.S., but the Chinese facilities were superior in appearance to the ones I *have* visited. I do understand if you go to some of the other Chinese facilities with less traffic and less exposure they are not of this quality.

In talking with controllers regarding benefits, working conditions, etc., it was pretty obvious that they are well compensated and treated very well in terms of working conditions. Their workweek is two days on, two days off; workday is two hours on position, a two-hour rest period, and then repeat the process.

After the week of orientation we returned to the States and had the next month to prepare an information exchange/training experience for 31 Chinese scheduled to come to Dallas in June 2007. Our goal was to expose them to the good, the bad, and the ugly, the successes and non-successes we experienced when RVSM was implemented here in the U.S. in January 2005. Many of the Chinese who came we had met and interacted with during our time with them in April in Shanghai and Beijing.

The activities/seminar included everything from how we trained, to what we taught, to what rules were developed, to how they were published, to lessons learned, to failures acknowledged. Fortunately, the RVSM implementation here in the U.S. was highly successful and we, in turn, felt we had a successful week with these Chinese representatives. They expressed a much higher level of confidence in their ability to orchestrate the Chinese RVSM implementation upon their return.

There were certainly some notable consistencies when reflecting on our Chinese counterparts. They were all well educated (to be a controller in China you must complete a university program in ATC), intelligent, some spoke very good English (many with a British accent), others didn't speak English as well. I found them to be humble, gracious, kind, calm, friendly, quick to smile, soft spoken,

and considerate. They also are very determined to succeed and will do whatever that takes, including putting in long hours.

By week's end, and with the exchange of email addresses, I felt I had made several new friends.

A second opportunity to travel back to China came in late June when three FAA representatives from the William J. Hughes Technical Center, and Stephanie Beritsky and I from CSSI, returned to Beijing. This time the goal was different and two-fold. We were to help the Chinese learn the functions and responsibilities of a Central Monitoring Agency to be established in their country and to teach them the process and the nuances associated with large height deviations (LHDs), which is an integral part of the safety assessment.

Implementation of a change like RVSM depends on a positive safety assessment, so an in-depth understanding of the many processes and the ability to use them is essential.

This time we worked with a company of non-government personnel (but the company is funded by and basically owned by the government). Stephanie and I were mostly involved with the LHD portion of instruction and orientation. Notable in the meetings with the Chinese personnel here was just how young they were. Many were still university students or had recently graduated.

Both trips proved the Chinese to be gracious hosts. They provided us with daily opportunities to experience their cuisine and hospitality. Personally, I didn't find the food particularly appealing. Most Chinese aren't very fond of sweets, so there isn't a large selection of desserts. You also don't find many overweight Chinese (other than Buddha images) so one has to admire this part of their lifestyle.

“The Great Wall of China was perhaps the highlight of the trip.”

Due to United Airlines canceling our return flight we had an extra day to spend in China. Stephanie and I used the time well by visiting the Great Wall and The Forbidden City. Earlier we had gone to Tiananmen Square. The Great Wall is a truly a wonderful experience that Stephanie and I agreed was perhaps the highlight of the trip (other than the opportunity to contribute to the FAA/China program, of course) and we were so glad we were able to work it in. It is an awesome spectacle and knowing it's one of the “seven wonders of the world” (either the old list or the new, I'm not sure) adds to the thrill of being there.

Our guide was David Yang, who is probably in his 70s. He was an excellent guide and I think Stephanie and I

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CSSI to Embark on Accreditation Process

By Don Smith
Web Developer

Throughout CSSI's history, our company has bid against larger competitors and won contracts with the focus, detail and excellence we bring to each project. Now, more than ever, we are challenged to prove ourselves through projects delivered on time and under budget in a world where we must deliver higher quality services, and faster.

Competition from bigger players in our markets is encroaching on the type of contracts we have won in the past, so we must rally our intelligence and expertise to maintain our competitive advantage.

A key component of CSSI's five-year growth plan is to invest in and develop key corporate capabilities. One of these is in improving our processes and integrating this improvement throughout the company. That's where Capability Maturity Model Integration® ("CMMI") comes in. CMMI helps integrate traditionally separate organizational functions, set process improvement goals and priorities, provide guidance for quality processes, and provide a point of reference for appraising processes.

Being appraised at a certain CMMI Level shows the marketplace and potential teammates and business partners that CSSI has developed, institutionalized, and follows repeatable business and technical practices to achieve certain goals in selected process areas.

CMMI practices enable organizations to:

- ✦ More explicitly link management and engineering activities to their business objectives;
- ✦ Expand the scope of, and visibility into, the development lifecycle and engineering activities, to ensure that the product or service meets customer expectations;
- ✦ Incorporate lessons learned from additional areas of best practice (e.g., measurement, risk management, and supplier management);
- ✦ Implement better high-maturity practices;
- ✦ Address additional organizational functions critical to their service offerings; and
- ✦ More fully comply with relevant ISO standards.

The various CMMI Levels reflect the depth and breadth to which a company has organized its business processes. There are five CMMI Levels, but only three that CSSI will be concerned with:

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CEO's Message



Photo by: Ben Goulat / Washington Times

Cindy Castillo
Chief Executive Officer

2007 is proving to be a year filled with positive and exciting change for CSSI! Not only did we officially welcome Al Tiedman as our new President in January, we have also acquired the rest of a very dynamic, seasoned and expert team of executive leadership. Walt Munnikhuysen joined us in April as Senior Vice President of Operations, Bob Bozza joined us as a full-fledged employee (from a consultant) in May as Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and Dawn Hatterer joined us in June as our Vice President of Human Resources.

I am so thrilled that all of them have joined the CSSI family and I am looking forward to them making significant, positive impacts in the way we manage our business and our people.

Aside from building out our executive team, we have also been making great strides in acquiring new and exciting business opportunities, all of which you will read about in this issue. Once again, the CSSI team – and that is each and every one of our staff – has proven why CSSI is not only a great place to work, but that great place to work culture translates into viable business and organizational capability that is unmatched in the industry.

I hope you enjoy and take great pride in reading all the great news in this issue – I know I will! Have a great end of the summer and I'm looking forward to all the new successes for CSSI and I look forward to reading about all of them right here in *Horizons* and celebrating them with you.

New CSSI Markets—High Hopes in Huntsville

By Al Tiedman
CSSI President

Our top priority remains serving and expanding our current markets with the FAA and Navy SPAWAR. But, on numerous occasions I have outlined our need and excitement about expanding CSSI into other government markets (the last being the State of the Company briefings to all employees).

I also told you at the time that it will not be easy to penetrate new markets and that it would take time. Knowing that entering new markets is hard, we are following a careful strategy to build on our existing product lines and customer base in a way that will not only bring in new revenue but reinforce our capabilities for current customers.

You may recall that our target new markets are the Army, Navy, NASA, Homeland Security, and Missile Defense Agency. In pursuing those markets our strategy has been to concentrate on cities where, like Washington, many of those potential customers are co-located.

We've chosen Huntsville as a critical marketing arena precisely because it is home to a concentration of agencies that combine our current customer specialties and product lines to attack some of the nation's most challenging technical problems. For example, currently in the Huntsville area on the Redstone Arsenal site are:

- ✦ US Army Aviation and Missile Life Cycle Management Command (AMCOM);
- ✦ Army Research and Development and Engineering Command's (RDECOM) Army Aviation and Missile Research and Engineering Center (AMRDEC);
- ✦ Army Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command (SMDC/ARSTRAT);
- ✦ NASA Marshall Space Flight Center;
- ✦ And, now relocating to Huntsville, the Missile Defense Agency.

This is a huge government procurement market with yearly government spending for these agencies expected to top \$30 billion by the end of this year and up to \$35 billion by the end of 2010.

I am happy to report that we are making significant progress in our marketing efforts in Huntsville. Cindy Castillo, Rob Snyder, Linda Bunton and I recently participated in three days of high energy meetings with representatives of these various agencies and their leading support contractors. These meetings showed the professionalism and unique capabilities we possess as a company to contribute solutions to new government customers.

One of our major goals has been to get on a critical Army acquisition vehicle called AMCOM EXPRESS. It is imperative to doing business in Huntsville to be on one or more of the AMCOM EXPRESS teams since most of the government agencies in Huntsville use AMCOM task orders to solicit support work.

I am pleased to announce that we are now on six different teams that cover all four support domains: Business and Analytical, Logistics, Programmatic and Technical. Once the paperwork is completed, CSSI will have a contract vehicle in which to perform work with government agencies in Huntsville. So we are on our way to opening the doors to new markets.

I might add that we are also making progress outside of Huntsville in other agencies and will report on those opportunities at a later time.

“The sky is not the limit”

Meanwhile back in Huntsville, I have been asked on numerous occasions the following question: “If we win work in Huntsville will I have to relocate and change jobs?” The answer is *no*. But for those of you who might want to consider a change of location (still with CSSI, of course!) here are some things you might want to know.

Huntsville is a thriving community and has a higher percentage of people with advanced degrees than any other area in the East. The community fosters an atmosphere of new ideas dating back to the days of Von Braun and the start of the space race.

This metropolitan area of 340,000 people also is quite attractive to those used to the high cost of living in D.C., Northern Virginia and Maryland. Housing costs are one third as much as the Metro D.C. area. For example, a quick look at Huntsville real estate shows a new 4000 sq ft, 5 bedroom, 4 bath home for \$350,000! Can you imagine what that home would cost in Northern Virginia?

And the property taxes are also very low. In all, the cost of living is two thirds of Metro DC.

Needless to say, with all the government money and a highly educated workforce, the quality of life in terms of education, health care, recreation, shopping, etc. is outstanding.

If you are interested in what Huntsville might have in store for you, there will be ample time during the next few years to explore new CSSI career opportunities.

Huntsville's slogan is “The sky is *not* the limit!” With our marketing success at Huntsville I am confident that the same message applies to CSSI's future. More to follow...

Employee Profile: Roy Grimes

By **Cara Kurtz**

CSSI Employee Support Specialist

Roy Grimes is a Maryland native who now lives in Shady Side, Maryland. He was born and raised in Riva, a small town south of Annapolis, where his family has been for many generations.

He is the proud father of three adult children: Ivan, Katy, and Robyn. In addition to his work for CSSI, Roy enjoys snow skiing on his four-seat Waverunner [a Yamaha “watercraft,” for you landlubbers - ed.]. In his most recent Waverunner exploit, Roy and a friend crossed the bay from Shady Side, Maryland, over to Poplar Island and back around the West River, a distance of some 40 miles.

Roy began his career in the U.S. Air Force. After graduating from the University of Maryland in 1965 with a degree in history, Roy entered the Air Force from the ROTC as a second lieutenant.

He was a navigator for C-130 and C-141 airlift squadrons, operating in Southeast Asia. While stationed in Taiwan, Roy had duty assignments in Vietnam from September 1970 to November 1971.

Roy’s squadron supplied Army, Marines, and Air Force units in Vietnam with cargo. One night while on an approach to an airfield, Roy was given incorrect information for descent. Once he realized that these instructions were erroneous, Roy vectored the aircraft away, saving his life and the lives of his five crew members. For this display of airmanship Roy was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After completing six years of active duty, Roy was in the Air Force Reserve for another sixteen years.

From the FAA to CSSI

So how did Roy Grimes get from the Air Force to CSSI? He went to work for FAA Flight Standards, where he was awarded the Laurel Lifetime Achievement Award in 2002 for accomplishments supporting the International Civil Aviation Organization’s Air Navigation Commission.

After retiring from the FAA in November 2002, Roy wanted to continue his work with the Reduced Vertical Separation Minimum program (RVSM). And what is RVSM? Minimum vertical separation between aircraft below 29,000 feet was 1,000 ft. But above 29,000 ft. (FL 290) the minimum vertical separation was 2,000 ft. RVSM reduced that to 1,000 feet, adding six flight levels, allowing flights to operate more flexibly.

RVSM was implemented in the Domestic U.S. in January 2005 and Roy continues to work on RVSM issues as they arise.



Roy Grimes at work

In May 2006 Roy began work on the West Atlantic Route System (WATRS). He’s the project coordinator supporting the Air Traffic Organization’s “Oceanic and Offshore Operations” and the Flight Standard’s “Flight Technologies and Procedures Division.”

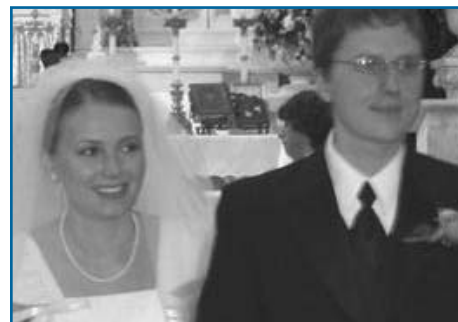
WATRS reduces the minimum lateral separation requirement over certain parts of the Atlantic Ocean from 90 nautical miles to 50 miles between aircraft that are authorized Required Navigation Performance 10 (RNP 10) or RNP 4. Whereas RVSM requires altitude maintenance standards in the vertical dimension, WATRS and the corresponding authorized aircraft require performance in the horizontal.

The new route structure will introduce 40% more routes, allowing more cost efficient and timely flights. According to both CSSI and FAA sources, it is scheduled to premier in June 2008. In early March 2008 a final implementation decision will be made.

Roy works at CSSI headquarters in Washington, when he’s not riding waves, of course.



Cara Kurtz works at the New Jersey office of CSSI. She was married to Jesse Kurtz on June 9, 2007.



Four CSSI Papers Heard at International Seminar

By James D. Cain
Editor

Seven CSSI staffers joined forces and collaborated on four scientific papers presented at the seventh joint USA/Europe seminar on air traffic management research and development.

The ATM seminar, held July 2 to 5, 2007, in Barcelona, Spain, and sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration and EUROCONTROL (a consortium of European countries dedicated to air traffic management), drew more than 200 participants from around the globe and as far away as Japan, Australia, and Brazil.

“CSSI REALab was well represented,” said CSSI Director Ted Thrasher, a seminar participant himself. Thrasher said that while 146 papers were submitted for consideration, just 66 were accepted.

“Only government and academic institutions had greater representation at the conference than CSSI,” he said.

The seminar, formally known as “the USA/Europe Air Traffic Management Research and Development Seminar, was established in 1997 to “foster the realization of a harmonized global Air Traffic Management system. Thrasher called the seminar the “premiere event for showcasing innovative ATM research from both sides of The Pond.

Topics addressed at the seminar were wide-ranging. EUROCONTROL, in a press release, said “66 papers [covered] diverse issues including human factors, safety, innovative ATM concepts, traffic flow optimization, decision support, airspace management, environmental impact and mitigation, metrics and performance management, air-ground cooperation, and airport management.”

CSSI has had papers accepted to every seminar since 1998, but four this year is a record. To represent CSSI, the lead authors of the papers were sponsored by their FAA customers to attend and present. The presentations were made by Alma Williams, Melissa Ohsfeldt, Stéphane Mondoloni, and Thrasher.

Other CSSIers named as co-authors of the papers (but not at the seminar) were Alex Nguyen, Clifford Hall, and Mark Rodgers. Three of the papers involved collaboration with others outside CSSI; Chief Scientist Stéphane Mondoloni was sole author of his paper.

Two of the papers addressed environmental issues, namely air pollution and noise, related to aviation, and were written for the FAA Office of Environment and Energy. A “key performance indicator” study and an air traffic con-



CSSIers (l-r) Ted Thrasher, Melissa Ohsfeldt, and Stephane Mondoloni, and Eric Dinges (of ATAC Corp.) Taken near a beach. That’s a “fish” sculpture, not a radio telescope.

rol paper were done for the Operations Planning Office of the FAA Air Traffic Organization.

The full papers are available at www.atmseminar.org

The Papers

Improving ATC Efficiency through an Implementation of a Multi-Sector Planner Position (Williams, Rodgers, Mondoloni) looked at more efficient use of the finite number of air traffic controllers at air route traffic control centers in the U.S. The study was done for the FAA.

The study’s lead author, CSSI’s Alma Williams, said “with increasing traffic demand and complexity, more and more controllers will be needed to provide air traffic services.

“This study looked not at adding more controllers in the traditional roles, but rather at the effects of introducing an entirely new kind of controller, a ‘Multi Sector Planner’” (MSP).

Quantifying the Relationship Between Air Traffic Management Inefficiency, Fuel Burn and Air Pollutant Emissions (Ohsfeldt, Thrasher, and others) was propitiously timed. Its topic was, in a nutshell, air pollution, and the presentation was made just days before the *Live Earth* concerts on July 7, 2007.

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CMMI (from Page 3)

CMMI Level 1: Initial project successes are ad hoc and success is won by the efforts of talented staff, hardworking staff, or both.

CMMI Level 2: Software development successes are repeatable without heroics for at least one team in an organization.

CMMI Level 3: Software development processes are defined throughout the entire organization.

Successful working teams are generally assessed at CMMI Level 1, to show that they have a team assembled that is capable of delivering a product. CSSI has a history of many years of this. Therefore, every CSSI software team is at CMMI Level 1 or better. CMMI Level 1 is the base level for which process improvement can start.

CSSI has challenged itself to achieve CMMI Level 2 within the next 18 months. We all will need to contribute to this in some way. It will require meeting CMMI process requirements that affect teams differently, and it will require task organization that was previously ad hoc. At the end of the 18 month process, CSSI will be more competitive in many areas of our operation. Specifically, we will be better positioned to win more business and our existing contracts will run smoother and more efficiently.

At CMMI Level 2, process discipline will help ensure that we adhere to certain practices during times of resource stress. Given stressors or other issues, teams operating at Level 2 will continue to deliver quality services and our success will be repeatable. For example, at CMMI Level 2 we may have repeatable processes for requirements

management; project planning; project monitoring and control; supplier management (subcontractors and partners); measurement and analysis; process and product quality assurance, and configuration management.

Once CSSI has achieved and is recognized to be at CMMI Level 2, our next step will be to address CMMI Level 3 key process areas. The core theme in CMMI Level 2 is repeatability, but at CMMI Level 3, the ability to consistently meet the customer's high expectations, given project stressors, is key. CMMI Level 3 will come as a natural followup to our CMMI Level 2 effort.

Benefits of Process Improvement

Some of the benefits and business reasons for implementing process improvement are:

- ✦ The quality of a system is highly influenced by the quality of the process used to acquire, develop, and maintain it
- ✦ Process improvement increases product and service quality as organizations apply it to achieve their business objectives
- ✦ Process improvement objectives are aligned with business objectives.

Helping to reach these goals

Phase I will introduce a web-based application on the CSSI website later this year. At first, this will simply communicate the CMMI requirements, but in future we will add new materials, articles and document templates showing how our teams can use better project communication to meet CMMI goals.

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PAPERS (From Page 6)

Melissa Ohsfeldt said “using an FAA tool, the Emissions and Dispersion Modeling System (EDMS), Ted Thrasher and I created a pollutant emissions inventory for aircraft operations at 325 U. S. airports, accounting for landing, taxiing and takeoff.”

The EDMS tool was developed at CSSI by Alex Nguyen, Cliff Hall, Philip Soucacos, Richard Western and Kojoe Yirenkyi.

“We developed a detailed inventory,” Ohsfeldt said, “by fusing diverse data sources into specific operational profiles, using radar data and information from Bureau of Transportation Statistics.”

AEDT Global NOX Demonstration (Thrasher, Nguyen, Hall, others) another study on air pollution done for the FAA Office of Environment and Energy, specifically on oxides of nitrogen, and on the tradeoffs between noise and emissions.

Application of Key Performance Indicators for Trajectory Prediction Accuracy (Mondoloni).

In the aviation world, the line between two points in space is a “route.” When an aircraft flies that line, the route becomes a trajectory.

This paper describes a study that compares actual trajectories against a trajectory predictor algorithm, allowing the algorithm to be tweaked for better predictions.

Mondoloni wrote “Trajectory-based Operations (TBO) is one of several significant [changes proposed] in the FAA’s ‘NextGen’” plan.

“These changes are “expected to lead to the management of flights through the use of four-dimensional trajectories, specifying accurate current and future aircraft positions.”

CMMI (from Page 7)

Phase II of this project will commence after the analysis of the CMMI goals. It will consist of organized steps required of a new project – to ensure that communication at CMMI Level 2 standards translates into a step-by-step program that one can use to meet the CMMI requirements from the comfort of one’s computer.

CMMI is *not* a top-down process. It will *not* require our teams to follow rules that do not match contract requirements or ISO 9000. Our goal is to translate our established best practices into the CMMI guidelines. To create a plan based on CSSI processes, we will form two groups:

The Organizational Process Improvement Team will comprise managers and developers to review CMMI requirements and develop CSSI’s response to them. This response will be organic and built from the ground up, not top-down. This team will build the plan that the software developers will follow.

The Software Engineering Process Group (SEPG) will implement the goals of the plan in the real world execution of software projects. The SEPG will consist of software developers and business analysts who will create the documents that will be reviewed during our CMMI appraisal.

For more information about CMMI and accreditation requirements, visit the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute web site at:

<http://www.sei.cmu.edu/cmmi/general/>

Saving Trees Department

Check out the CSSI Intranet site under “Pictures” for hundreds of photos from the July outings in D.C. and A.C. Also take a look at the new “Gallery” section for more photos. And put up some photos of your own, too. Thanks!

Thanks to NJ’s Cara Kurtz for editorial assistance, and to NJ’s George Smith and Mike Bart for technical assistance. - ed.

CSSI, Inc. Mission Statement

CSSI is a dynamic engineering, IT, and applied research company providing innovative solutions to very tough and high-consequence problems facing our government customers. What sets us apart from other small businesses is our ongoing investment in technology and an uncommon commitment to truly understand our customers’ needs. With an in-house think tank and a high-level technical team that includes a Chief Scientist, CTO, and CIO, we are moving research to reality, making our tagline very real and part of our overall mission.

CEO.....Cynthia Castillo
President.....Allen J. Tiedman
Editor.....James D. Cain

For more information about the company visit our web site at www.cssiinc.com.

CHINA (from Page 2)

agreed he made the tour of The Forbidden City much more meaningful as he filled in the history behind what we were seeing. All that for 100 Yuan (about \$12.50)!

David pointed out to us one building that looks like many of the others and directed us to go in. It’s a Starbucks! No indication on the outside and, when you enter, you are not permitted to take photos! You just never know when a picture of a Double Mocha Latte will fall into the wrong hands! There are no shops within the walls of The Forbidden City except this Starbucks.

So, if you don’t mind 14-plus hours on an airplane to get there (or back), it’s a great experience, one I’m so appreciative that I’ve had.

Curt Zimmerman grew up in the Pennsylvania Dutch country and, with no money for college, he joined the U.S. Air Force. From 1967 to 1997 he was first a controller and then a manager at the Washington ARTCC in Leesburg, Virginia. Curt says that after he retired from the FAA he “went to Washington expecting to put in six months to a year to kind of put a cap on my career, and here I am 10 years later.”

Curt has two grown sons, one of whom is an air traffic controller at Washington Center.