

# Meeting demand for mobile comms



Bob Roe, President of Stratos Government Services Inc

Increasingly powerful mobile satellite systems are having a profound impact on the communications capabilities of the world's armed forces, as well as state and federal governments and major NGOs such as the Red Cross and United Nations. Helen Jameson talks with Bob Roe, President of Stratos Government Services Inc., about how Stratos is meeting the increasing demand for these systems worldwide.

**Question: Many thanks for taking the time to speak with us. Would you kindly introduce yourself and SGSI to our readers?**

**Bob Roe:** My name is Bob Roe and I am President of Stratos Government Services Inc. (SGSI). I've worked in the commercial and government satellite sectors for 30 years, including 22 years in the US Navy where my specialty was communications for maritime, land mobile, aviation and intelligence commands.

Stratos is well known as the leading provider of mobile and fixed satellite systems to the world's largest militaries, maritime and energy companies. SGSI was established as a Stratos subsidiary last year to focus on the US government market. We serve as an integrator of commercial satellite solutions for the US Department of Defense, federal and state government agencies. SGSI meets government-agency demand for an experienced integrator with end-to-end solutions that are technology agnostic.

The US military, US Department of Homeland Security and state-government emergency responders have similar communications requirements.

At SGSI, we supply these organizations with the most advanced, lightweight mobile satellite systems – such as Inmarsat BGAN (Broadband Global Area Network) from Stratos – for integrated voice and high-speed data connectivity. We differentiate our BGAN solutions by including a wide range of value-added services that provide users with cost control, firewall management, full traffic information, pre-paid facilities, high security options, easy VPN access, messaging services and full IP range, including SKYPIPE TCP/IP accelerator for faster Internet connections and file transfer.

**Question: SGSI provides military solutions for land, sea and air. Can you describe solutions you provide for each and which services are most in demand?**

**Bob Roe:** Today, the strongest demand is for new land mobile satellite systems. These keep field commanders connected at all times, enabling them to access command-and-control (C2) systems and maximize the effectiveness of their forces. BGAN systems provide small, lightweight (3 kg), ruggedized terminals for voice, high-speed data (up to 492 kbps) and video communications. BGAN also features Mobile Packet Data Service (MPDS) that enables users to pay only for data packets transmitted and received.

BGAN systems provide advanced voice services including STU-III/STE, Brent and FNBDT compatibility for secure calls. Stratos goes the extra mile by installing a SecureComms gateway with NET shout technology into the BGAN network, for multiple secure voice calls. The service supports up to 10 seconds of satellite delay – which is critical to ensure secure-call reliability. BGAN systems also provide broadcast-quality transmissions for e-mail, file transfer, Internet access and video teleconferencing. These capabilities enable battlefield commanders to maintain true, mobile-office connectivity wherever they travel. This helps maximize the utility of key officials by enabling extended travel and mobility without decreasing their day-to-day effectiveness or readiness status.

In the maritime sector, the most exciting new development is Inmarsat FleetBroadband from Stratos. FleetBroadband provides cost-effective, high-speed data and voice communications – for both primary and backup connectivity – at speeds up to 432 kbps, regardless of

## About Stratos Government Services

Founded in January 2006, Stratos Government Services, Inc. (SGSI) is wholly owned by Stratos Global Corporation. Dedicated to serving US Government customers, SGSI is a single-source integrator of multiple commercial satellite technologies, providing airtime, hardware, installation, network engineering and management, customer support and value-added services globally for the US Department of Defense (DoD), federal and state government agencies.

For more than 20 years, Stratos has provided reliable, cost-effective satellite communications solutions to numerous US military and civil agencies, including the Department of Defense, Military Sealift Command, Army National Guard, US Coast Guard, White House Communications Agency and the US State Department. SGSI was formed as a separate company to offer expanded integration services and provide “one stop,” turn-key solutions across multiple satellite technologies to meet the critical requirements of government agencies.



*SGSI provides a wide range of mobile satellite services to all branches of the US armed forces. Photo courtesy of US Department of Defense.*



the vessel's location. All FleetBroadband products will use stabilized, compact directional antennas, which will vary in size and weight. The above-deck antennas will be smaller than existing Fleet products used today, which is important given the limited top-side real estate available for antennas on many ships.

Naval communications officers will find that FleetBroadband can be rapidly deployed across an entire fleet and, as a standard IP service, seamlessly integrated with HQ networks. Terminals will operate globally and the user interface is expected to be standard across all products. FleetBroadband will support the latest IP services, as well as traditional circuit-switched voice and data for legacy applications. Terminal costs are expected to be relatively low and the network will support all the latest security protocols.

In the aviation segment, the most impressive new mobile satellite service is Inmarsat SwiftBroadband from Stratos, which will also be commercially available in the fourth quarter of this year. It is the first network delivering high-speed mobile data services to aeronautical customers. With global coverage delivered via fully integrated aeronautical systems, SwiftBroadband services will provide access to e-mail, Internet and corpo-

rate networks. Stratos also will offer users terminal management, traffic control and security services, bringing a new level of communications to the cockpit and cabin.

**Question: Since SGSI was founded last year, what trends and developments have emerged in the MilSatCom industry?**

**Bob Roe:** The US Government continues to rely heavily on commercial satellites to augment government satellite capacity, where demand exceeds military capacity. In some cases, commercial satellite is their primary means of communications. That trend is expected to continue despite the planned launch of new MilSat constellations.

What has changed is SGSI's ability to rise to the challenge of being a one-stop provider of end-to-end solutions – regardless of the communication requirement. In the past, government customers were forced to contract with different companies for hardware, integration and air-

time for different solutions. Today, SGSI is able to respond with the appropriate turnkey solution, instead of forcing the customer to select a particular product or technology. We also take responsibility and ownership of the



total solution. The customer need only make one phone call to solve a problem, change configurations to meet evolving operational requirements, or expand the network. We can even manage the entire network for them, if required.

**Question: The buzzwords ‘connected battlefield’ and ‘network centrality’ have become common in the MilSatCom industry. What, in your opinion will be the future developments in the next 12-24 months?**

**Bob Roe:** Situational awareness is critical to every commander or decision maker in the field, and a key enabler to ensure military dominance and/or disaster responsiveness. Historically, commercial satellites have played a significant role in satisfying some of the requirements.

Today there is an opportunity for commercial satellites to play an even greater role by expediting the deployment of dynamic modulation schemes such as DAMA and DVB-RCS. These schemes play a critical role as the military looks to replace stovepipe systems and implement risk-mitigation strategies caused by delays and capacity constraints in MilSat programmes. The challenge

for industry integrators is to provide bundled solutions that provide global coverage, security and flexibility – such as space-segment portability – to meet the changing operational needs of the military.

**Question: You opened a new headquarters in Washington, DC in May. Do you envision substantial growth and expansion?**

**Bob Roe:** The potential for growth in the US Government market is quite extensive. Government buyers and integrators have an insatiable need for one-stop, turnkey satellite solutions that include satellite airtime, applications, hardware, installation, network engineering and management, customer support and value-added services. With a wide range of professional expertise and a new technology demonstration centre, we believe our new Washington, DC headquarters is ideally suited to meet the needs of this market.

**Question: What are SGSI’s business objectives for the next 12 months?**

**Bob Roe:** In addition to meeting the global needs of the US military and federal agencies, we see strong demand from NGOs such as the American Red Cross and the state

government sector – especially as it pertains to serving emergency responders. One excellent example is the State of Louisiana, which recently completed deployment of BGAN from Stratos to support statewide emergency-response applications.

Stratos’ comprehensive mobile satellite communications solution for the State of Louisiana includes installation of roof-mounted satellite antennas and portable BGAN units for continuity of operations and field-personnel deployment.

First responders require immediate communications upon arrival on a scene. Voice, video and high-speed data are critical, to allow for reliable communications and coordination with command centres and for direct access to Incident Management Systems. The BGAN terminals are battery operated and smaller than a laptop, providing simultaneous voice and data capability.

When you consider that minimal user training is required for this set-up and operation, BGAN is the perfect solution for all government agencies. We consider it a privilege to work with state governments to provide a complete satellite-based communications solution to fit the entire emergency-response life cycle. ■



*The latest maritime satellite services can be rapidly deployed across an entire naval fleet and seamlessly integrated with HQ networks.*