

Signal battalion major proponent in \$400 million Italian project

By Jim Rogenski

The 509th Signal Battalion is a major proponent in one of the largest design-build projects ever performed in Italy.

To support the U.S. Army Africa, 173rd Airborne Combat Team and the transition to two combat brigades in Europe, the 509th Signal Battalion is charged with information technology planning and installation for the \$400 million military construction project at Dal Molin. The scope of this project provides great challenges for the battalion since it includes construction of 34 buildings and

modernization of nine existing structures.

Not only has the size of the project offered challenges, but some unusual conditions added to the complexity of the project. Dal Molin was a former Italian air base. Issues such as unexploded WWII ordinance and Roman era ruins slowed project implementation. Additionally, the location provided little communications potential and required rebuilding from the ground up.

The group guiding this complex IT project is the battalion's Business and Plans Division. The division's project

team is comprised of government service and Italian host nation employees. Each is trained in IT project management and worked as contracting officer representatives. The integration of the two cultures mitigates translation and quality issues while working with Italian contractors. This diverse mixture of employees expedites contract agreements and promotes teamwork between external organizations.

The project's team began the initiative by building relationships with community stakeholders. This included the garrison's department of public



Aerial view of the Dal Molin complex in Italy where the 509th Signal Battalion is tasked with the planning and installation of the information technology infrastructure for the \$400 million military construction project.



The 509th Signal Battalion is facing the challenge of configuring and installing the IT infrastructure in 34 new buildings and nine existing structures in one of the largest such projects at a site that was formerly an Italian air base.

works and the Navy's Facilities Engineering Command. The team participated in weekly planning meetings providing input as IT subject matter experts. Their work included design of inside/outside plant wiring, protected distribution systems and network closets. The team's superior work was verified by 5th Signal Command during quarterly design reviews. The work center is now the most experienced Army IT planning group in Italy. Nevertheless, this level of effort required external support to accomplish project goals.

Leaders from the 5th Signal Command and the Installation Information Infrastructure Modernization Program were fully integrated into the strategic planning process. They provided network backbone design, contract support and procurement of the most current technology. Dal Molin will be the first Voice over IP campus in the European Theater. The new service is transported by Multiprotocol Label Switching equipment utilizing 182 network devices. The I3MP personnel are responsible for equipment procurement to help ensure standardized enterprise management of European Theater resources.

The equipment contract is scheduled for award in July 2012. Once on-site network managers will test, accept and install

devices over a two-year phased period. This process begins in the Fall of 2012 to meet the June 2013 opening target. However, the project's phased completion date is scheduled for January 2015.

The 509th Signal Battalion is a key stakeholder in the successful completion of Dal Molin. Supporting the \$400 million dollar project requires talking with external organizations to direct services. It requires employee engagement to coordinate actions up and across the chain of command. Direct conversation with customers is a critical factor in uncovering needs that may not be articulated. Many times informal interchanges lead to expanding networks or adding functions customers have overlooked. Finding issues ahead of an IT project saves millions of dollars on large IT ventures.

One Dal Molin cost savings included collapsing an environmental control management system into the planned network. The garrison developed a separate transport system to gather facility environmental data. However, it became clear the Army's network could handle the workload at no additional cost. This and other cost avoidance measures saved the government approximately \$2 million. The battalion's project team continues to look for ways

to save time, effort and money during the project process. Members of the Business and Plans Division demonstrate outstanding stewardship in IT project management. Representatives from the division's project team demonstrate an understanding of needs, streamline costs and provide new technology solutions. Their diversity, IT expertise and project knowledge make them a top NETCOM performer.

James P. Rogenski began his career as an electronics technician and has reinvented myself many times in order to meet the requirements of changing technology. His work experience includes eight years active duty, 11 years commercial sector and 12 years as a NETCOM employee. His past duty assignments include: NEC Business and Plans Division chief, deputy, operations officer Italy/Balkans NOSC chief IT Plans and Projects Data Network analyst Telecommunications Specialist supervisor, Global Information Grid Facility NCOIC, Wideband (Microwave/HF/ Satellite) Maintenance. He attended the Army Management Staff College, NEC Leadership Course, National Defense University - Advanced Management Program, and earned an MBA from Norwich University.