

CASE STUDY

Keeping UK Air Traffic Control Flying

A decade of mission-critical hardware support for NATS, delivered through Leidos

NATS

Overview

Customer: NATS

Industry: Aviation – Air Traffic Control

Challenge: Sustain long-established but mission-critical hardware while NATS transitions to a new air traffic control system, with no tolerance for operational disruption.

Solution: A dedicated onsite CDW team providing multi-platform hardware repair across seven machine rooms on two sites, from mainframes to bespoke ATC equipment.

Impact: 1,700+ hardware calls resolved each year since 2014, no hardware-caused operational incident to date, and a five-year extension secured to 2030 and beyond.

Introduction

NATS is the UK's leading provider of air traffic control services, handling around 2.5 million flights and some 300 million passengers a year over the UK and the North Atlantic. It manages all UK upper airspace from two control centres — Swanwick in Hampshire and Prestwick in Ayrshire — and provides air traffic services at 15 UK airports, with around 4,900 employees including 1,800 controllers and 1,000 engineers. Its stated purpose is “advancing aviation, keeping the skies safe”. (Source: nats.aero)

The challenge

UK airspace is divided into three Flight Information Regions — London, Scottish and Shanwick Oceanic, the last covering some 700,000 square miles of the North East Atlantic — and system availability across them is non-negotiable. Much of the supporting hardware is long-established and must remain fully serviceable while NATS transitions to its next-generation air traffic control system. CDW became NATS' preferred hardware support supplier in 2014, taking over from IBM, the decades-long incumbent and the original manufacturer of much of the installed equipment. CDW delivers this support on behalf of Leidos, which now holds the contract following its acquisition of the Lockheed Martin business that previously held it.

They were very complimentary about the service and appreciate the value-add exercises carried out by the team, which are helping NATS to build a more resilient service.

Gary Rickman
Leidos

”



Credit: NATS



Delivering the Service

Eleven years of onsite hardware support, in the green throughout

1,700+

Hardware calls resolved each year

1,800+

asset numbers in the bill of materials

7

machine rooms across two local sites

0

hardware-caused operational incidents

The CDW Solution

CDW provides hardware repair across many platforms — from mainframes to PCs, plus hardware that is bespoke to air traffic control. The onsite team covers seven machine rooms across two local sites. Equipment is also received into the onsite workshop, where it is repaired locally, sometimes to component level, or sent to specialist repairers. Every call is opened, managed and closed on ServiceHub, giving NATS a fully auditable trail, and all parts are sourced by the team through specialist suppliers and brokers.

Service overview

The onsite team consists of five engineers: four primarily on hardware and one dedicated to obsolescence management. Between them, they support IBM mainframes; EMC and STK DASD; IBM VTS and tape subsystems; IBM AIX, HP, Sun and Dell servers; and Sun, IBM and Lenovo PCs — plus a wide range of hardware bespoke to air traffic control. The bill of materials covers over 1,800 asset numbers, all of which the team is expected to repair and manage.

Results & outcomes

CDW has provided hardware support to NATS since December 2014, averaging upwards of 1,700 hardware calls per year. In that time, CDW has never had a hardware issue that caused an operational problem, and the onsite team has consistently scored very highly for customer satisfaction since the contract began.

Why it matters

NATS handles around 7,000 aircraft on a typical day in UK skies, covering leisure, commercial, cargo and military traffic. Safety is its core value, and there is no maintenance window in which the service can stop — so hardware availability is a direct contributor to the safe operation of UK airspace. (Source: nats.aero)

Eleven years in the green

The onsite engineers — Ken McManus, Paul Robertson, Alan Huxford and Christopher Quantrill — have ensured this contract has never dipped below green in the eleven years it has run. That daily dedication and excellence also secured a further five-year extension.

It is beyond evident how much NATS value your support — probably more than any other supplier. Your dedication, attention to detail, flexibility and professionalism certainly do not go unnoticed.

Thanos Kopitsas
Programme Manager, Leidos

”



Credit: NATS



Through the transition

As NATS progresses towards its replacement air traffic control systems, CDW's role is to keep the current hardware fully supported, maintain it through the transition and, as the incumbent provider, continue that support to 2030 and beyond.

There is a clear opportunity to extend into hardware support on the replacement air traffic control systems as they come online.

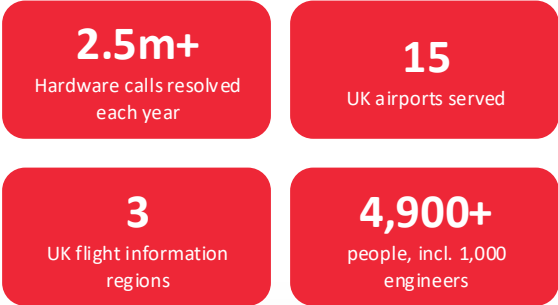
A modernising industry

NATS is investing in airspace modernisation, digital towers and data-driven operational tools, and provides services to customers in over 30 countries alongside its UK operation. Legacy and next-generation systems will run side by side through that programme, which is exactly where dependable hardware support earns its value. (Source: nats.aero)

Where we work

- **NATS Swanwick, Hampshire**
Operational — London area control
- **NATS Whiteley, Hampshire**
R&D and technical centre
- **Prestwick, Ayrshire**
Operational — Scottish and oceanic control
- **Bath**
R&D

NATS at a glance



What's next? Supporting NATS through a major system transition

Secured to 2030 and beyond

A further five-year extension keeps CDW as NATS' hardware support partner into the next phase of the programme. That continuity protects a live, safety-critical service through a major system transition, and positions CDW to support the replacement systems too.

The fact that we are able to have some influence in design decisions, and that NATS are implementing those ideas, shows how much trust they have in the team.

Gary Rickman
Leidos

”

