Why is AKO being transitioned to next generation enterprise services?

As part of IT management reform, Secretary of the Army John McHugh signed a memo transitioning Army Knowledge Online, or AKO, to next-generation enterprise services. AKO is part of an aging IT infrastructure the Army is upgrading, and with this evolution, certain services will change. Through the transition to next generation enterprise services, the Army is leveraging existing and emerging commercial technologies to provide cutting edge capabilities to the Soldier and civilian to meet today's mission and tomorrow's challenge.

The next generation enterprise services implementation is part of a larger network modernization effort currently underway. As local files and services are moved from posts, camps, and stations to the Enterprise, increased bandwidth and network demands will result. With the immediate focus on network modernization, this is the right time to fully utilize these improvements with new enterprise services that wouldn't have been possible in years past. Next generation enterprise services will replace stove-pipe systems that historically were implemented by commands and organizations to make up for shortfalls in the current AKO solution set.

The transition to next generation enterprise services follows the Army's successful migration of 1.4 million email accounts to DOD Enterprise Email in July. This effort helps the Army build a leaner and flatter Force, with less redundancies, and more economical efficiencies for information systems.

What are the benefits of transitioning to next generation enterprise services?

As Secretary McHugh detailed in his April 2013 memo, the Army anticipates significant financial economies, efficiencies, and security improvements with the transition to next generation enterprise services. To achieve this, the Army must modernize current AKO infrastructure and services to become more interoperable across the Department of Defense and comply with emerging joint information environment architectures. The transition will implement current best practices for cloud-based managed services.

Next generation enterprise services will use more agile, proven technologies that are scalable, adaptable and flexible, reducing unnecessary expenses on excess applications, capacity, and processing power. The Army is moving towards enterprise services for collaboration, content management, and unified capabilities - including chat, presence, voice and video over IP. The new services are built around the authentication services provided by the Defense Information Services Agency (DISA), and first used for Enterprise Email. These services provide a single identity for all users, regardless of organization or location, which requires the use of a Common Access Card (CAC) to improve security of the system and data contained within it. In this time of constrained resources, continued IT support is critical to missions and functions for business users.

Is there a replacement site with similar functionality?

When AKO was conceived, online email and social media services were in their infancy. Now, sites like Gmail and Facebook boast millions of users. There are a variety of free online providers that offer similar services previously provided by AKO, like email and chat. Currently, military retirees and family members have access to DOD online services through secure DOD Self-Service Logon (DS Logon), which is already deployed and allows access to military self-service sites such as Tricare Online, and the Defense Manpower Data Center.

What is DSLogon?

DSLogon, which is operated by DOD, allows access to multiple DOD and VA websites using a single username and password; it complies with federal security guidelines and provides a secure user experience. A user can sign in once to access multiple sites and accounts. See page 2 for websites accessible via DS Logon. ***You must be enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) to obtain a DSLogon account.***

Who is eligible for a DSLogon account?

Soldiers (Active Duty, Guard/Reserve, Retirees, Veterans) and eligible family members.

How do I register for a DSLogon account?

Retirees can register using their DFAS MyPay account, or by contacting the VA. More information is at: https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/help.do?execution=e1s1

Family members have several options: (1) Your military sponsor can request an account for you; (2) when getting a military ID card, ask for a DSLogon account; or (3) request an account at a TRICARE Service Center. More information is at:https://myaccess.dmdc.osd.mil/identitymanagement/help.do?execution=e1s1

How do I access DOD websites not connected to DSLogon?

For sites not currently using DSLogon, such as MyPay, you must establish an individual username and password.

What is the timeline for implementing these changes?

Changes will be progressive over the next several years, but it is important to note that inactive military retirees and family member accounts will be deactivated in the near future. AKO and many official Army sites will only be accessible via a government-issued CAC. Because retirees and family members are not eligible for CACs, they will no longer have access to AKO. Through the DOD DSLogon, retirees and family members will still have access to critical personal information and IT services on other DOD, Army, and commercial sites through December 2014. In the meantime, Army retirees and family members who use AKO email are encouraged

to sign up for a commercial email account soon, when their AKO email accounts will be deactivated.

What if AKO is my only email account?

Sign up for a commercial email account soon. There are many options, most of which are free. Visit AKO Transition Information at http://www.eis.army.mil/ako for links and more information on signing up for commercial email. Notify family, friends, and businesses of your new email address. Update business and billing accounts that use the AKO email.

After my AKO account is deactivated, what happens if someone emails me at my @us.army.mil address?

Army retiree and family AKO email accounts will become inactive in early 2014. After your AKO account is deactivated, emails sent to your army.mil address will be sent back to the sender with an error message. Prior to account deactivation, it is imperative to change your settings for services that use your AKO address and to notify friends and family that send message to your AKO account.

How do I stay connected with other retirees?

Retirees and family members will continue to have access important resources through DOD Self-Service Logon. Additionally, there will be a number of resources through the Army G-1, as well as veterans' organizations, providing online forums and networking tools to keep veterans and retirees connected. Please see the guides on commercial email services and keeping connected resources featured on this page.
How do I stay connected with the Army?
The Army remains committed to virtually connect with all retirees and family members. The Army Home Page public website, www.army.mil, is the source of official Army news and information. It also provides links to Army Social Media (e.g., Army Facebook, Twitter, YouTube); Army organizations; and Army programs such as "Ready and Resilient."