

Skyguide Swiss Air Navigation Services Ltd.

“Zero-footprint” RSA® Mobile authentication secures sensitive services.

About Skyguide

Skyguide Swiss Air Navigation Services Ltd. is headquartered in Geneva and is responsible for civil and military air traffic control in both Swiss and delegated portions of airspace from neighbor countries. Skyguide communicates all important information regarding security, timeliness and cost effectiveness of flights and also supports pilots in flight planning.

“When monitoring and managing air traffic, we work with highly sensitive data that needs to be protected from unauthorized access. For this reason, we wanted to implement a solution that is based on powerful authentication mechanisms and that supports secure connections via SSL 128-bit encryption as well as a special session ID. The RSA® Mobile solution met all of these criteria.”

Eric Stumpp
Network Security Officer
Skyguide

Cross-over points of the most important European air routes lie in Switzerland. More than 3,000 planes cross the country on a daily basis—that’s one million planes a year. Due to the topology of Swiss airspace which extends over its national boundaries to delegated airspace from France, Germany and Italy, the security of air traffic becomes a complex task. In order to ensure security, the Swiss-based company Skyguide focuses on the integration of state-of-the-art technologies. Air traffic control invests 40 to 50 million Swiss Francs (U.S. \$30-37 million) per year in modernization and extension of existing systems as well as in the implementation of new solutions. Novel products need to fulfill all security requirements the company imposes on technical components. Therefore, Skyguide decided to implement RSA Mobile two-factor authentication by RSA Security.

Approximately 1,500 employees at Skyguide ensure safe, efficient and customer-friendly air traffic control and service at 11 sites on a daily basis — a demanding task in the highly frequented and complex Swiss airspace. The mandate of Skyguide covers integrated surveillance of civil and military air traffic, telecommunications service, aviation information service and aeronautical weather service. The employed systems need to be able to gather, process and assess complex information. At the same time, all employees must be granted easy access to internal resources at any time, irrespective of their location. It is crucial that only authorized individuals gain access to sensitive information resources. Thus, each user needs to be uniquely authenticated.

High Technology Made Simple

RSA Mobile is a “zero deployment” solution that provides Skyguide employees secure access to online services without requiring the users to carry separate authentication devices. The software enables users to employ an existing tool — their mobile phone — as a secure method for accessing sensitive information. Thus, no new systems need to be purchased and end users readily accept the new system since they are dealing with familiar technologies. Also, users no longer need to remember several passwords thus reducing the number of help-desk calls due to password resets.

When a Skyguide employee wants to access their calendar, e-mail or retrieve data, the individual enters his or her User ID and PIN into their system. RSA Mobile software then generates a unique, one-time access code and immediately delivers it to the user's mobile phone via SMS or e-mail. To complete the login, the user simply enters the access code to verify his or her identity. Access to internal resources is granted only if the authentication process is successful.

Cost Effectiveness Ranks Among Top Priorities

"In addition to fulfilling our requirements in terms of security, economical aspects also played an important role in our decision-making process. Compared to other conventional systems available on the market, the RSA Mobile solution offered a great advantage: existing mobile phones could be used for authentication. Thus, we did not need to deploy any special hardware or software to end users. Compared to the cost savings thus achieved, fees for sending short messages or e-mails play a rather subordinate role," explains Stumpp.

Other convincing facts for decision makers at Skyguide were the attractive licensing model (costs depend on the number of users and duration of licensing) as well as the easy integration with existing infrastructures. RSA Security partner e-Xpert Solutions implemented the RSA Mobile system in four weeks using the central LDAP Active Directory of Skyguide. In this way, existing user data could directly be leveraged. Furthermore, a unified cross-company information basis could be created. Familiar systems require only little training, lower the cost of administration and ensure investment protection for existing hardware and software. Deployment time is much shorter compared to the installation of entirely new systems. All the positive effects are reinforced by the easy-to-use administrative functions of the RSA Mobile solution.

Securing the Future

Currently, Skyguide is using RSA Mobile software to grant access to internal resources for employees. However, there are plans to make available company data to pilots throughout the world to facilitate flight preparation, thus easing the burden of flight service employees. The scalability of the software, combined with streamlined administration, will enable Skyguide to cost-effectively maintain security as the number of remote users grows.

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