What F-35 Can Teach Us about Global Software Delivery for Impact

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Date: Thursday 16 May 2024, 18:00
Location: HSU/UniBw H, Holstenhofweg 85, 22043 Hamburg

Systems Engineering is a diverse field both in terms of approaches but also in impact and exploitation. Working across 12 political systems, with over 700 aircraft operational worldwide, the F-35 is a 5th Generation military aircraft which delivers impact through data. Keeping all the software intensive systems flying, through obsolescence, repair, new technology and upgrade is a configuration and logistical challenge. In late 2019, the US F-35 Joint Project Office embraced agile software delivery to reduce software cycle times from 18 months to 6 weeks. This is the story of that time.

Kate Gill has 20 years international experience of Systems and Software Engineering, Management and Consultancy in both the Defence and Civilian markets. From 2016 – 2022, she was seconded from the Ministry of Defence to be the US lead Air Systems Integrator, based in Washington DC, for all UK software engagement on the military aircraft F-35. She has led and championed digital transformation within the Department of Defense (DoD) F-35 Agile DevSecOps (DSOP) ecosystem. Kate has been the driving force for the stand-up of the US F35 Joint Project Office (JPO) Managed Cloud which enables software on the +625 F-35 aircraft worldwide. Kate was awarded the Royal Aeronautical Society Silver Medal in 2021 and was Women in Defence Most Collaborative Award Finalist in 2020 and 2022. She has stayed in the Civil Service and has now moved out of Defence into a digital role supporting biodiversity research at Kew Gardens as Digital Revolution Lead.

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F-35B. National Museum of the U.S. Navy