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and XP all have good security starting with requiring a user log on. There are other operating systems available that offer security and a GUI-based interface such as IBM OS/2, Linux and Unix. There are many flavors of Unix from AIX (IBM's version of Unix) to Santa Cruz Operations (SCO), Solaris, Sun, etc. Unix is designed for the expert user and suited for people who know how to program in the C language or write script files. Unix, just like Linux, is very flexible making detailed configurations possible.

Linux is a Unix flavor that is open source or freeware. If you want support there is a fee. There are numerous variations of Linux but providers such as Debian, Caldera, Mandrake, Redhat, SuSee, etc., all offer different interfaces. I will discuss the Redhat version because it is what I am most familiar with after working with the client and server versions 7.x through 9.x.

Redhat lets the user choose between the Gnome or KDE GUI when it is installed. I found that you can easily select either interface or you can select the command mode. Linux still lacks driver support and this is where Microsoft seems to excel. However, Redhat does provide an open packaging system, RPM Package Manager files that assist in the installation of devices with some devices being recognized automatically. Redhat hardware requirements are: 200MHz Pentium or faster, 4.5GB of available disk space, 192MB of RAM for the graphical mode and separate partitions for its file system. If you purchase Redhat, it will include Basic Support.

OS/2 Warp is IBM's client/server system that will typically run on a RS6000 or Intel compatible PC. IBM is still working to make the OS/2 interface easier to use. OS/2 Warp 4 requires a minimum of a 486DX, 16MB of RAM and 10GB of available space, however, I suggest a system that is a 300MHz Pentium or faster with 128MB of RAM with 20GB of available space.

Macintosh's operating system is now Unix based with release X designed to run on the iMac™, eMac, Power Mac™ G4, Power Mac G4 Cube and PowerBook G3/G4 systems. It requires a minimum of 128MB of RAM, 4GB of available disk space, and it will only run on Apple and Macintosh systems. Macintosh systems can run Window applications with use of third party software products such as Virtual PC from Connectix.

Today's market includes a buffet of operating systems. If you are a novice user, then MS Windows or Macintosh would be the better choice. If you are an average user and desire greater flexibility with your O/S, then you could use an open source system such as Linux with a GUI interface or if you are running IBM equipment, you could use OS/2. If you are an expert user you could consider one of the many flavors of Linux and Unix. MS Windows 2000 and XP Pro both offer a wide assortment of features to delight an expert's appetite as well.

When you select your operating system know what you need according to hardware, cost, knowledge level and your project tasking. *Does your day-to-day work include only word processing tasks or are you testing C programs? Do you work with graphics? What are your future plans? Do you have to follow certain corporate or command policy standards for an operating system?*

Use the links below for more information:

www.apple.com	www.ibm.com
www.linux.com	www.microsoft.com
www.redhat.com	www.unix.com

If you have questions on the operating systems offered under our IT Umbrella Contracts, please go to our Web site at: www.it-umbrella.navy.mil.

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By JO1 Jd Walter, USN, NPDC Public Affairs Office

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