

Australia's Military to Track Supplies

The Australian Defence Force will deploy an active RFID system that will interoperate with systems used by the United States and other allies.

By Mary Catherine O'Connor

Aug. 26, 2005—Australia's Department of Defence will deploy an RFID supply chain tracking system to help it forecast when shipments of supplies will arrive at their destinations, and to ensure that materiel is accurately and efficiently ordered. The RFID system will be provided by Sunnyvale, Calif.-based Savi Technology, with an initial U.S. \$10.1-million contract, according to Savi. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has been evaluating the company's technology for the past year, Savi spokesperson Mark Nelson reports.

The ADF will deploy Savi's SmartChain Consignment Management Solution (CMS), a suite of hardware and software components that uses bar code and RFID automatic identification technology. By deploying the Savi system and middleware, the ADF will be able to make its logistics network, the In-Transit Visibility System (ITV), interoperable with ITV networks operated by the U.S. Department of Defense, NATO and NATO member nations, including the United Kingdom and Denmark.

"This will increase global interoperability [between members of the coalition forces]", says Lieutenant Colonel Beth C. Rowley, a spokesperson for the U.S. Army's Product Manager Joint-Automatic Identification Technology (PMJ-AIT), regarding the ADF announcement. She adds that the deployment will be a "win-win" situation for the Australian and U.S. forces. Once the communication and RFID infrastructure is in place, she says, logistics and supply chain information sharing will become seamless. "Australian tags going by an interrogator will be seen by U.S. forces, and U.S. tags going by an interrogator will be seen by the Australian forces," Rowley says.

By linking their ITV networks, the joint forces can share information regarding the contents and expected arrival of supply orders for collaborative operations in the field.

The use of the Savi system marks the ADF's first deployment of RFID technology in its supply chain operations. ADF Director-General for Materiel Systems, Brigadier David McGahey, said in a statement that the ADF currently has "poor visibility of hundreds of millions of items," and that it needs "greater collaborative visibility" with its allies. He expects the Savi system to reduce significantly the ADF's overall supply costs and make its logistics more efficient and effective.

In addition to the SmartChain Consignment Management Solution, ADF will purchase Savi's active ST-654 tags, SR-650 fixed readers and SMR-650 handheld computers. Savi will initially install its solution at about 30 key ADF checkpoint nodes, such as transport, distribution and inventory facilities. Fixed readers in those locations will capture data from RFID-tagged consignments, and Savi's Site Manager middleware will filter and aggregate the tag data before sending it to ADF's network.

Nelson says ADF hopes to begin linking its ITV network with those of other coalition forces early next year.

In November 2004, Denmark's Ministry of Defense contracted Savi's supply chain tracking service (see [Danish Defense Contracts With Savi](#)). In April 2004, Savi announced that NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT), which directs changes to military structures, capabilities and doctrines in order to improve NATO's military effectiveness, had contracted with Savi Technology to run an RFID-driven pilot project using Savi's active tags, fixed and mobile readers, middleware and SmartChain platform to manage and track multinational shipments between Europe and Afghanistan (see [Savi Adds EPC Support](#)).

Copyright ©2005 RFID Journal, Inc. All Rights Reserved