

Military Edict: Use RFID by 2005

BREAKING NEWS: The U.S. military has spelled out a comprehensive plan to require *all* suppliers to use active and passive RFID technology by January 2005.

Oct. 3, 2003 - The U.S. Acting Under Secretary of Defense, Michael W. Wynne, yesterday sent a memo to senior military officials spelling out an ambitious plan to require suppliers to use active and passive RFID tags on shipments to the military by January 2005. *RFID Journal* initially reported the U.S military's plan on Sept. 15 (see [U.S. Military to Issue RFID Mandate](#)).

"This effort is critical to logistics transformation, and my plan is to make RFID application at the lowest possible piece part/case/pallet level a mandatory requirement for all suppliers no later than January 2005," Wynne writes.

The policy statement directs the military to track all shipments with active (battery-powered) tags. The military has been requiring all freight containers shipped to Afghanistan and the Gulf to have active tags (for an in-depth explanation of how the military uses RFID and other technologies to track goods, see [Military Orders RFID Tracking](#)). The new policy expands active RFID tracking to all sustainment cargo, unit movement equipment and cargo, ammunition shipments and pre-positioned materiel and supplies.

The memo says: "The DOD will be an early adopter of innovative RFID technology that leverages the Electronic Product Code (EPC) and compatible tags. Our policy will require suppliers to put passive RFID tags on lowest possible piece part/case/pallet packaging by January 2005. We also plan to require RFID tags on key high-value items."

The military wants to use RFID to improve data quality, item management, asset visibility and maintenance of materiel. Alan Estevez, the assistant deputy under secretary of defense for supply chain integration, will lead an RFID Implementation Integrated Product Team (IPT) and be supported by the DOD Logistics AIT Office (AIT stands for automatic identification technologies).

"Employment of RFID allows us to re-apportion critical manpower resources to warfighting functions and to streamline our business processes, in partnership with industry, that will benefit both of our enterprises," the memo says.

The memo also spells out a timetable for working with suppliers to implement the policy. Education will begin this month. Pilots will be launched in January 2004 to show how RFID can be applied to business processes. The DOD will hold an RFID "summit for industry" by January 2004 to "solicit comments from suppliers on the proposed policy." It will complete its analysis of the initial RFID projects by May 2004 and provide a final RFID policy and implementation strategy by June 2004.

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