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## **DOD Reaffirms Its RFID Goals**

At the DOD RFID Summit, held in Washington this week, Alan Estevez, deputy undersecretary of defense for supply chain integration at the U.S. Department of Defense, affirmed the DOD's commitment to deploy radio frequency identification technology in its supply chain.

"The Department of Defense is committed to implementing RFID

as a transformational technology to enhance our logistics capabilities..." Estevez said. "In fact, our RFID program is so important to our transformation efforts that we have given the United States Transportation Command—one of nine combat commands—the lead in guiding our RFID implementation."

Estevez said the DOD is dedicated to using open standards developed by EPCglobal, working with its suppliers in a collaborative manner and employing competitive processes for choosing RFID hardware and software. He warned, however, that the implementation would not happen overnight.

"We are a nation at war, and our focus and our resources are geared toward supporting our engaged forces," he told an audience of about 500. "We will drive our implementation, but it will be done in a deliberative manner, based on our available resources, in such a way as to not impact our current operations."

The DOD has completed the basic installation of RFID reading capability at 17 distribution depots throughout the United States, and is starting to roll out the technology in seven overseas depots. "In the last six months," Estevez noted, "our U.S. depots are reading about 50,000 tags a month—and that number is growing."

The DOD supplier community now seems to believe the technology will benefit their businesses. When the moderator of a panel discussion asked how many attendees felt RFID was a burden for their company, only a few hands in the audience went up. When he asked how many thought RFID would benefit them, more than 90 percent raised their hands.

Suppliers and RFID vendors expressed some frustration with the pace of adoption, but Estevez stressed the need for patience, given the focus on the war in Iraq. Larger DOD suppliers said they are starting to see more contracts with tagging requirements, though some reported little consistency across

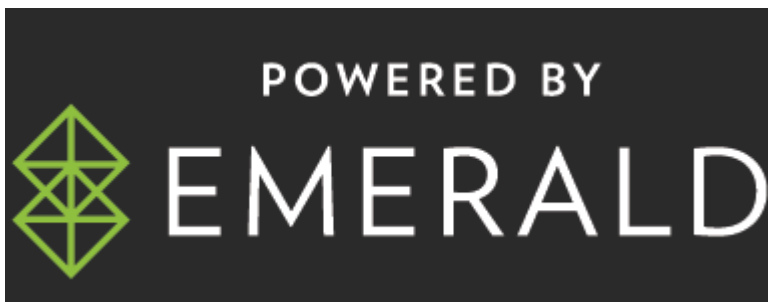
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