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IBM to Guide DOD RFID Rollout

The U.S. Department of Defense has awarded a three-year contract to IBM Business Consulting Services to help manage and support the DOD's planned deployment of RFID technology in 2005. IBM's main role will be to determine the business case, provide advice and determine the success of the rollout as it moves forward.



Bill
Phillips

“We’re going to help them define this program and exactly what passive RFID means for the DOD,” says Bill Phillips, a partner and defense-industry leader at IBM Business Consulting Services, an IBM division based in White Plains, N.Y. “The first priority is to help them build the business case, which is important for getting a budget approved for the RFID program, and we will help them develop the criteria used to judge the success of the program.”

The success criteria will be used to develop pilots over the next six months. The aim is to prove that RFID can deliver substantial improvements in efficiency and reduce the number of soldiers involved with tracking goods in the supply chain, so that personnel can be redeployed.

The DOD has been running a number of RFID pilots. In one, the Natick Soldier Center DOD Combat Feeding Program simulated the tracking of food rations through 10 nodes in the DOD supply chain (see [Completes Successful Pilot](#)). In another, the DOD has been tracking chemical suits.

IBM plans to take the insights gleaned from the earlier pilots, combine them with information gathered during the new pilots and help the DOD draft a deployment plan. The DOD hopes to have a plan ready by July. At that time, it will provide information to its 43,000 suppliers about how and where RFID tags should be applied. Suppliers are expected to put passive RFID tags on pallets and cases delivered to the DOD beginning Jan. 1, 2005.

IBM will assist the DOD by identifying RFID best practices used in private industry, educating and informing suppliers, and developing and executing a strategy for managing changes in the way the DOD handles supply chain tasks. And finally, IBM will monitor the progress of the rollout in years two and three of the contract to ensure that the RFID program meets the success criteria that the DOD developed with IBM's help.

As part of the DOD's efforts to educate its suppliers, the department will conduct the 2004 RFID Summit for Industry on April 6 to 8, in Washington, D.C., to discuss the proposed new RFID policy. Suppliers can get more information by visiting the DOD Logistics AIT Office.

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