

# News Release

## DEFENSE LOGISTICS INFORMATION SERVICE

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*The NATO Codification System provides the “dictionary”*

## System Offers Unity Of Effort To Logisticians

By Lynn Schmoll  
Defense Logistics Information Service

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. – Unity of effort in multinational tactical operations is often easier to achieve than in multinational logistics. Why? A main reason is the variation of logistics information between countries.

“All U.S. military logistics systems -- and many of the systems of our allies and friends-- require the discipline of standard, high quality data to inter-operate. How else could a hard-charging U.S. supply soldier in Afghanistan effectively communicate requisitions one-third the way around the world to Defense Supply Center Philadelphia,” said Marine Col Joseph Cassel Jr., commander of the Defense Logistics Information Service (DLIS). “The power and promise of better IT and increased bandwidth would be diminished without the exchange of accurate, timely, complete logistics data. Both the military buyer and the Defense Logistics Agency, or contracted supplier, demand the best logistics data to jointly achieve military readiness, sustainability, and efficiency.”

According to Cassel, the same tenet holds true for international logistics cooperation between countries. “Standard logistics information provides the capacity for military allies to find and share supplies, as well as to leverage manufacturing economies to meet common defense needs. This force multiplier can save precious strategic lift, help win battles, and preserve the peace,” Cassel said.

### Logistics’ Quiet Corner

The most powerful tool for standardization and interoperability actually comes from logistics’ quietest corner--cataloging. The NATO Codification System (NCS) is effectively the world standard for classifying, describing and numbering items of supply. It provides a broad range of information about each item used in participating countries’ supply systems.

In countries with advanced logistics systems, cataloging is most often taken for granted. It is assumed that critical items of supply will have assigned National Stock Numbers (NSNs, also referred to as NATO Stock Numbers). It is assumed that tools like the FED LOG will have the needed information.

In over twenty other countries, however, implementation of the NCS is a priority concern. Thailand, for example, is actively working to integrate this system into their logistics operations. Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and the Republic of Korea have long utilized this system.

Only one NSN is assigned for an item in NATO (and participating countries); therefore, the NSN 1005-00-26--7102 indicates the same cartridge magazine in every participating country and is currently actively used in Denmark, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Republic of Korea, Spain and Turkey. If a U.S. supply sergeant asked a Greek supply sergeant for a 6510-00-597-7468, each will know that an adhesive bandage is being requested.

## **How Standard Data Supports Interoperability**

Joint Procurements: U.S. and NATO policy (and the cost of weapon systems) drive joint development and procurement. The NCS is the foundation for identifying items to support initial supply and re-supply functions. Examples include:

- Australia and New Zealand routinely form combined efforts in joint procurement of equipment. The parts are subsequently cataloged and allow further joint procurement as needed.
- The Joint Strike Fighter continues to attract countries at various levels of involvement. This includes Australia, Canada, Singapore and the U.S. as well as European partners. The spares will be cataloged by the country of origin and published for NCS participants. This will allow interoperability of maintenance and supply down the road.
- The NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) has long been a central procurer of parts for NATO countries, obtaining cost benefits by economy of scale, an accomplishment impossible without common supply data.

In the field, supplies are exchanged. If one unit is out of a critical item, it is common to ask another unit if they have some, even if this involves different nationalities. The NCS provides the basis for this cooperation. The respective supply sergeants may not know each other's language, but they both know the international language of supply: the NCS and its NSNs.

Maintenance relies on supply and cataloging. For example the NAMSA-owned PATRIOT Maintenance Facility (PMF) performs maintenance on the US, German and Netherlands missile system in Europe.

Asset Visibility of supplies would be nearly futile without a standard catalog system. The Coalition Theater Logistics effort by USPACOM and Australia is a view into the future. Working with Thailand and others the purpose is to share visibility of critical assets and improve logistics interoperability.

Foreign Military Sales: The U.S. program for support to allied and friendly nations reached \$8.8 billion in 2001. The majority of the transactions (less major end items and some commercial items) were processed on the basis of NSNs. Recipient countries know that the best way to identify their needs is with an NSN. Without this standard, one can only imagine the communication problems that would occur.

### **Support is available**

The Pacific Area Cataloging System (PACS) is a PASOLS initiative that seeks to improve logistics interoperability in the Pacific. The primary means is to encourage the use of the NCS by participating countries.

Country representatives work together to exchange training, ideas and data. As a result slow but steady progress is being made as more countries adopt the standard into their logistics systems.

Catalog data to support interoperability is routinely published. For example:

- The PACS Master Cross Reference List provides access to supply data for Pacific countries.
- The NATO Master Cross Reference List (NMCRL) provides a complete listing of all items cataloged in the NATO community and certain non-NATO countries (Australia, New Zealand and Singapore). This will expand in the future to include items cataloged by many more participating countries such as NATO Partnership for Peace countries, as well as Brazil, Malaysia, etc. (See <http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/nmcrl/start.htm>.)
- FED LOG provides the most complete catalog of items used in the U.S. government while LOGRUN and WEBFLIS provide similar data on line (see <http://www.dlis.dla.mil/>).
- Many countries produce their own national catalogs.

### The E-Future

E-Business and E-Logistics: Electronic media demand standards. The NCS provides the discipline for naming and describing items of supply. Recently the Electronic Commerce Code Management Association (ECCMA) adopted portions of the system as the international commercial standard for describing items. In addition, the NCS is actively working with the International Standards Organization standards such as Parts Library (PLIB) and STEP (Standard for the Exchange of Product model data).

“Without a common supply language, we can’t identify our own requirements, and we can’t satisfy others’ requirements,” said Australian Air Commodore Paul Ekin-Smyth, co-chair of the last Pacific Area Senior Officers Logistics Seminar (PASOLS). The NCS has been, is now and will increasingly be just that—the common language for supply logisticians.

Thus we cannot have unity of effort in logistics without unity of information. For more information about the NCS see <http://www.dlis.dla.mil/NATO> and [http://www.dlis.dla.mil/NATO/links\\_nato.asp](http://www.dlis.dla.mil/NATO/links_nato.asp) for related links. Please send comments and questions to Schmoll at [lschmoll@dlis.dla.mil](mailto:lschmoll@dlis.dla.mil) or call the Battle Creek Customer Contact Center at (888) 352-9333.

