



Defense Standardization Program Office

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

Participation in  
the Development  
of Materiel  
International  
Standardization  
Agreements

2021 POCKET GUIDE

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# Foreword

With the emphasis on interoperability between the United States (U.S.) and its allies, effective U.S. participation in multinational organizations' working groups (committees) that develop international standardization agreements (ISAs) is essential. Not only must such participation produce the optimum level of interoperability, it must do so consistent with good business practices and defense acquisition objectives.

This guide offers basic information about the ISA process and the responsibilities of participants on standardization committees so that participants can best represent U.S. interests. Please keep this guide handy as a ready reference.

For further information, visit the Defense Standardization Program Office website at <https://www.dsp.dla.mil>.

## Introduction

Standardization is essential to ensuring multinational forces operate together effectively. The use of common equipment, procedures, tactics, and doctrine between U.S. forces and coalition partners, to the maximum extent practicable, is defense policy. Within the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), each Military Department and Defense Agency has established its own direction for implementing this policy. This guide describes the following fundamentals:

- Purpose of materiel ISAs
- Bodies that develop ISAs
- Standardization process and principles
- Responsibilities of participants
- Guidance for participants
- Accessing ISAs
- Contact information.

## Purpose of Materiel ISAs

A materiel ISA records an agreement among several or all member nations of a multinational organization to use compatible, interoperable, interchangeable, or common systems, subsystems, equipment, software, components, parts, and consumables (including consultation, command, and control [C3]; ammunition; fuel; supplies; and stores).

## Importance of ISAs

ISAs ensure interoperability and operational readiness within alliances and partnerships. ISAs enable multinational forces to operate effectively together, achieve information technology superiority, improve logistics support, and enhance defense capabilities. It is important to ensure that operational requirements critical to coalition operations are identified, documented, and easily available for implementation.

## Governing Directives and Guidance

Many DoD directives and instructions deal with ISAs, but three key policy documents relate to materiel ISAs:

- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 2700.01, "Rationalization, Standardization, and Interoperability (RSI) Activities." This document and other CJCSIs are located at <https://www.jcs.mil/Library/Instructions>.
- DoD Instruction 2010.06, "Materiel Interoperability with Allies and Coalition Partners." This instruction is located at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodi>.
- DoD Manual 4120.24, "Defense Standardization Program Procedures," provides guidance and procedures for participating in the development, ratification or approval, and implementation of materiel ISAs. This instruction is located at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/Directives/issuances/dodm>.

## Bodies that Develop ISAs

Many multinational organizations develop ISAs, but most ISA activities take place within five major organizations. Further information can be found at the website address for each body.



### North Atlantic Treaty Organization

As of 2021, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is an alliance of 30 nations from North America and Europe and 20 Partnership for Peace countries. NATO's fundamental role is to safeguard the freedom and

security of its member countries by political and military means. U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 2457 states that it is U.S. policy that equipment procured for U.S. forces employed in Europe under the terms of the North Atlantic Treaty be standardized to the level or degree required for interoperability with equipment used by other NATO members for similar purposes. Also, DoD seeks greater doctrine and tactics compatibility to provide a better basis to arrive at common NATO requirements.

Since its inception in 1949, NATO has taken on additional roles outside of its original purview. These include crisis management and humanitarian relief efforts when there is consensus among the member countries to do so. This has led to the fundamental premise that standardization is not a means within itself, but rather a tool to enhance interoperability among multinational force operations.

Within NATO, there are Tasking Authorities and Delegated Tasking Authorities that validate standardization requirements and assign standardization tasks to subordinate bodies. The following are some of the major elements of the NATO standardization framework:

- **Committee for Standardization (CS)**—the senior policy committee for standardization policy and management within the alliance. It is chaired by the Secretary General, normally represented by the Assistant Secretary General-Defense Investment and the Director General of the International Military Staff.
- **NATO Standardization Office (NSO)**—an independent office that initiates, coordinates, supports, and administers NATO standardization activities under the authority of the CS. The Director of NSO oversees the initiation, coordination, and administration of standardization activities under the authority of the CS, and ensures that, through the Military Committee (MC), the NSO acts as the lead agent for the development, coordination, and assessment of operational standardization.
- **Conference of National Armaments Directors (CNAD)**—responsible for NATO armaments cooperation between NATO member nations and the acquisition of equipment for NATO forces.
- **MC**—develops military operational standards. Its standardization initiatives are coordinated by the Air, Joint, Land, Maritime, and Medical Standardization boards.
- **C3 Board**—a senior multinational body for all matters relating to C3 throughout NATO.
- **Logistics Committee (LC)**—the senior body for assessing alliance logistics requirements and ensuring adequate logistics support of NATO forces.

Each NATO member nation is encouraged to send representation to engage in the standardization document development process. The types of ISAs that NATO develops are Standardization Agreements, Standardization Recommendations, and Allied Standards. They can be found at the NATO Standardization Document Database website and ASSIST. For more information on standardization within NATO, visit <https://nso.nato.int>.



## *American, British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Armies' Program*

The American, British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand Armies' Program (ABCANZ) is an international program that promotes interoperability and standardization among the armies of the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The focus of ABCANZ is on interoperability, defined as the ability of alliance forces and, when appropriate, forces of partner and other nations to train, exercise, and operate effectively together in the execution of assigned missions and tasks. The program office for ABCANZ is the United States Army.

ABCANZ products are the program's prime, tangible, formal outputs of data or documentation to enhance interoperability among the ABCANZ armies. The types of ABCANZ products are standards, publications, architectures, databases, and reports. With the assistance of the program office, these products are managed by Capability Groups and Support Groups, who are responsible for their products' accuracy, currency, quality, and relevance. For more information on ABCANZ activities, visit <https://www.apan.org>.



## *Five Eyes Air Force Interoperability Council*

Five Eyes Air Force Interoperability Council (AFIC), formally known as the Air and Space Interoperability Committee, is an international organization that includes the air forces of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Its mission is to enhance current and future air and space warfighting capabilities through joint and coalition interoperability. The AFIC mission and objectives are realized through standardization of doctrine, procedures, materiel, and equipment.

AFIC's tasks are carried out within the working group and project group structure, which comprises subject matter experts from each of the member nations. The type of ISAs that AFIC develops are Air Standards, Advisory Publications, and Information Publications. More information may be found at <https://discover.dtic.mil/>.



## *Combined Communications-Electronics Board*

The Combined Communications-Electronics Board (CCEB) is a five-nation joint military communications-electronics (C-E) organization. Its mission is the coordination of any military C-E matter that is referred to it by a member nation. The member nations are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The CCEB consists of a senior Command, Control, Communications, and Computer (C4) representative from each member nation. The purpose of the CCEB is to enhance C4 interoperability and capability for the defense forces of its member nations and to provide leadership and influence across the wider C4 community. The CCEB does not control national procurement initiatives or mandate the use of standards. For more information, see <https://www.apan.org>.



## *Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States Naval C4 Organization*

The Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom, and United States Naval C4 Organization consists of five nations. Its mission is to foster knowledge sharing that enables the warfighter to complete missions successfully across the spectrum of joint and combined operations. Its vision states: "To deliver battle winning Maritime Information Warfare Interoperability." A series of documents under the Network Working Group addresses concept of operations, standard operating procedures, and technical operating instructions. More information can be found at <https://www.apan.org>.

# Standardization Process and Principles

Depending on the organization, the evolution of an ISA has several steps, such as generating standardization requirements and developing, staffing, ratifying, implementing, and periodically reviewing ISAs. Since U.S. ratification of an ISA is a statement of commitment, U.S. delegates must follow the coordination policies and procedures established by the DoD Component responsible for U.S. participation in a particular committee.

Generally, the U.S. will only ratify ISAs that meet identified needs of its military. U.S. delegates, representatives, and action officers should consider many factors when recommending the approval of standardization documents and ratification of ISAs. However, ISAs should do the following:

- Be substantive, technically correct, and adequate.
- Positively impact the performance, quality, cost, and reliability of U.S. materiel.
- Be consistent with U.S. law and policy, and DoD acquisition policies.
- Be accompanied by a viable implementation plan.

The underlying principle of participating in the development, ratification, and implementation of ISAs is to enable military forces of the U.S. and its allies to operate together effectively and economically. Establishing an ISA is not an end in itself. Interoperability is the primary aim of standardization, and ISAs should be developed in support of this objective.



# Responsibilities of Participants

U.S. personnel who participate in committees to develop materiel ISAs must become familiar with Enclosure 8 of DoD Manual 4120.24, "Defense Standardization Program Procedures." It establishes criteria for the development, ratification, and implementation of materiel and materiel-related ISAs. Several important participant responsibilities are described below:

- Only participate in the development and ratification of ISAs that will improve the effectiveness of multinational forces when operating together or that will ensure compatibility, interoperability, interchangeability, or commonality for U.S.-supplied materiel and will not conflict with acquisition policy.
- Ensure the appropriate level of support and coordination for the proposed ISA by following applicable Military Department and Defense Agency policies and procedures to ensure that it is technically correct and adequate, meeting identified needs of the U.S. military.
- Consult the cognizant Standardization Executive on issues, such as whether the U.S. should participate on specific ISA committees, ratify specific ISAs, or express reservations about specific ISAs.
- Periodically review the ISA and take the appropriate actions resulting from the review. These actions could include updating the ISA, withdrawing ratification, or maintaining the ISA in its present form.
- Ensure that U.S. ratification details are documented and reflected in official repositories of the originating multinational organizations.

## Guidance for Participants

Representing the position and interests of your Military Department or Defense Agency requires knowledge, skill, and attention. The following advice, based on lessons learned, can help make your efforts more effective and worthwhile.

### *Planning for Participation*

You must plan well in advance of your actual participation in standardization meetings, including considering the following long before you attend a meeting to develop a materiel ISA:

- Coordinate the visit with the DoD Component responsible for the U.S. representation at the multinational organization committee or working group; engage with the appropriate office of primary responsibility and other interested organizations within your Military Department or Defense Agency.

- Prepare your visit notification for the U.S. Mission to NATO or U.S. Military Delegation and applicable multinational treaty organization.
- Make air travel reservations early, particularly during peak travel periods.
- Review any guidelines for successful participation issued by your Military Department or Defense Agency.
- Attend your Military Department or Defense Agency's training and security briefing.
- Obtain or update your passport and military identification.

## *Preparing for Meetings*

It takes a lot of groundwork and coordination to represent the interests of your Military Department or Defense Agency effectively. Therefore, you need to prepare statements and positions carefully before attending the meeting. This does not mean you aren't allowed any flexibility—in fact, it's a good idea to establish not only your primary goal but also a few alternatives. Yet these, too, may require thorough consideration and coordination in advance of the meeting.

Also, coordinate and obtain approval for U.S. positions with the appropriate staff, Head of Delegation, and office of primary responsibility. Review and become familiar with the applicable U.S. laws, directives, and policies as well as the policies and procedures of the multinational organization with which you'll be participating.

## *Being Professional and Productive*

The time you spend in meetings should be the culmination of your previous groundwork. Your focus and diligence during these meetings will dictate how well your efforts pay off. Dress appropriately for the meetings; know the dress code beforehand, and dress accordingly. When in doubt, arrive in business attire. Focus on being an effective listener. Stay engaged and attentive in the meeting room. Translation issues demand careful listening and speaking to understand and to be understood. Speak when you can make a positive contribution, not for the sake of appearing involved.

It's important to participate in social occasions; they can add a significant dimension to your effectiveness. That means you can't be a lone wolf. Issues often can be dealt with successfully over dinner or at other social events outside the formal meeting room. Offer to help your colleagues—within the boundaries of ethics and confidentiality—when they are trying to get information and you are able to assist them. This helps solidify your role,

and you may need their help later. Behave graciously when encountering hostility, unfounded accusations, or misinformation targeting you as a representative of the United States or its defense sector. Do not allow protracted discussions of good and evil or right and wrong to tie up group time or distract from the business at hand. Offer to continue the discussion elsewhere at another time and try to understand the source of the hostility.

## *Following Up*

As with so many other endeavors, the secret to success in standardization discussions is a good follow-through. When meetings are over, take care of action items and other loose ends to sustain the momentum toward results. Review the meeting minutes or decision sheets and follow up; complete your assigned tasks. Also remember to prepare trip reports in accordance with your Military Department or Defense Agency and distribute them to the appropriate interested parties.

## Accessing ISAs

ASSIST is the official source for specifications and standards developed and used by DoD. It contains defense and federal specifications and standards, non-government standards, and ISAs ratified by the United States. In addition to documents, ASSIST provides the national points of contact, implementing documents, and additional data and information about them. To access standardization documents, users must establish an account at <https://assist.dla.mil>.





## Contact Information

Need more information about the contents of this guide?

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