

11 August 1997

MEMORANDUM FOR DEFENSE ACQUISITION COMMUNITY

SUBJECT: System Safety and MilSpec Reform

Department of Defense policy is to rely on performance based requirements whenever practicable and to not require standard management approaches or manufacturing processes in solicitations and contracts. By establishing performance requirements and then relying on contractors to meet those requirements, we dramatically reduce contractual call-out of specific specifications and standards and enable innovation. Most importantly, this allows contractors to meet our full needs --- including safety considerations --- at the lowest cost.

Discontinuing the practice of including documents in the contract which mandated standard approaches does not mean that we no longer care about the issues addressed by those documents. In fact, Defense program managers and contract oversight personnel must now have even greater understanding of the underlying management or engineering processes at work, and the results required, so that they can evaluate and monitor contractor processes designed to achieve the same ends under this more flexible approach.

Some individuals have construed our new acquisition philosophy to indicate that the Department has slacked off on system safety. Quite the contrary, DoD 5000.2-R, "Mandatory Procedures for Major Defense Acquisition Programs and Major Automated Information Systems," requires program managers to have an aggressive system safety program, and to continually work with their contractors to identify and mitigate design-induced safety risks. Many of the old specifications and standards that were used to constrain design in an attempt to ensure safety are being rewritten into handbooks providing guidance for designers, along with rationale and lessons learned. The end result is a more effective library of design information and guidance leading to safer designs at lower cost, and with greater flexibility given to the contractor to meet all of the performance requirements.

The safety of our people and systems is a fundamental component of mission readiness. For the first time ever, the FY99-03 Defense Planning Guidance includes aggressive accident reduction goals. To meet these goals, Defense acquisition managers must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that weapon system design addresses safety risks at every level of design detail. We will not compromise the safety of our warfighters in weapon design or acquisition of any materiel used to support the warfighters.

**/signed/**

R. Noel Longuemare