



NATO signs Technical Cooperation Agreements with ANSI, ASTM International, and SAE International

In March of 2004 NATO adopted a framework for use of civil standards in lieu of NATO STANAGS. Such a policy is not unfamiliar to the Department of Defense – we have been adopting and using nongovernment standards for many years – the policy to do so has been in DoD Directives since 1962, in an OMB Circular since 1982, and in Statute since 1995.

NATO adopted this framework for the same reasons that the US DoD has found this to be a smart policy:

- It helps us to be able to use commercial products;
- It relieves DoD personnel from drafting and maintaining military unique documents;
- It saves money in the procurement process;
- It leverages DoD expertise and knowledge

Upon adoption of the framework, the NATO Standardization Agency (NSA) began to explore appropriate ways to implement the framework. They first worked with partners at CEN (the European Committee for Standardization), CENELEC (the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization), and ETSI (the European Telecommunications Standards Institute). NSA signed Technical Cooperation Agreements with each of these bodies ensuring cooperation with European Union nations in development of technical standards to meet NATO requirements.

It was natural for NATO to next look across the Atlantic. The United States has over 600 civil standards developers, but only a relative few develop standards that are adopted for use in the Department of Defense. Of those, it made the most sense to review possibilities for similar kinds of Technical Cooperation Agreements where the US Defense Department has adopted significant numbers of documents. Today, the NATO Standardization Agency will sign Technical Cooperation Agreements with SAE International, ASTM International, and the American National Standards Institute. The agreements mean that;

- Programs of planned work will be shared in both directions
 - NATO will see what standards work is being planned and accomplished in ANSI, ASTM, and SAE;
 - NATO will share priorities and standardization needs with civil standards organizations;
- NATO partners will be welcomed to participate in technical committees to help shape standards that may become the basis for Standardization Agreements
- Civil standards organizations will facilitate the adoption of their standards through cooperative coordination agreements.

In short, the agreements signal the formal beginnings of technical cooperation that will enhance interoperability, lower costs, and improve efficiencies – this benefits US taxpayers, US industry, and our US warfighters, and brings similar benefits to the 26 NATO nations as well as to the NATO alliance.

