

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

- [1. What is a NATO Stock Number \(NSN\)?](#)
- [2. How do I get my items codified?](#)
- [3. Who is the point of contact for National NCBs?](#)
- [4. What do I do if I need an NATO Stock Number \(NSN\) as a matter of urgency?](#)
- [5. How long will it take to get a NATO Stock Number?](#)
- [6. Where can we get information on the NATO MCRL?](#)
- [7. Who uses an Item of Supply?](#)
- [8. Can you provide the technical information of an Item of Supply?](#)
- [9. How can I find out the NSNs registered against my Company?](#)
- [10. How can you tell who manufactures the Item of Supply from a reference listed on the NSN?](#)
- [11. Whom should I contact if the information on file is incorrect?](#)
- [12. How do I add the United Kingdom, for example, as a user to a foreign NSN \(to a United States NSN, for example\)?](#)
- [13. How do I add the reference number of a new supplier I have discovered, to an existing NSN?](#)
- [14. Why would or should I go to the trouble of doing either of the last 2 actions above?](#)
- [15. Why do you need all the technical source data for the item?](#)
- [16. Who's in charge of the NCS?](#)
- [17. Can non-NATO countries use the NCS?](#)
- [18. What is the role of contractors in codification?](#)

1. What is a NATO Stock Number (NSN)?

When it is established that an Item of Supply is unique, its identity is fixed through the assignment of its own NATO Stock Number (NSN). NSNs are issued by National Codification Bureaus (NCBs).

The NSN is a 13 digit number and is divided into 3 parts:

- The first 4 digits are the NATO Supply Classification Code and relate the item to the group and class of similar items.
- The next 2 digits indicate the NCB assigning the NSN.
- The final 7 digits of an NSN do not have inherent significance. However, the number is assigned to one and to only one Item of Supply within the codifying country.

An example of a NSN and related terms is shown below:

1005	13	123-4567
NATO Supply Classification Code (NSC)	NATO Code for National Codification Bureau (NCB)	Non-Significant Number
	13-123-4567	
	NATO Item Identification Number (NIIN)	
1005-13-123-4567		
NATO Stock Number (NSN)		

The NIIN is the invariable part of the NSN, and it remains associated with the item of supply concept throughout its life cycle. However, the NSC may change if there is a change to the classification structure. NSNs are usually assigned to items that are needed on a recurring basis. NSNs are assigned by the country of manufacture, not the country that requires an NSN assignment. That principle helps prevent NSN duplication.

[TOP](#)

2. How do I get my items codified?

In each country, the National Codification Bureau is the central point of contact for getting items codified. You will find information in the next question about how to find the point of contact for the NCB in your country.

[TOP](#)

3. Who is the point of contact for National NCBs?

This Web site contains the points of contact for each of the NATO National Codification Bureaus and for the NCBs of sponsored nations, which have a special relationship with the NATO countries in matters of codification. You will find these points of contact by clicking on the following link:

<http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/main/links/contacts.htm>

[TOP](#)

4. What do I do if I need an NATO Stock Number (NSN) as a matter of urgency?

Contact the NCB of your country (see the Web link in the previous question for a list of them). A special procedure for assignment of NSNs on an emergency basis allows NSNs to be assigned in as little as 24 hours.

[TOP](#)

5. How long will it take to get a NATO Stock Number?

The standard time frame for requests for codification of items is 90 days. However, AC/135 has developed accelerated and emergency procedures for customers that need faster NSN assignments. Contact your NCB for details (see question 3 above). Normally, NSNs are assigned early enough in the logistics process so that codification does not hamper logistics operations in any way.

[TOP](#)

6. Where can we get information on the NATO MCRL?

The NATO Master Catalogue of References for Logistics (NMCRL) online and on DVD contains information about all of the NSNs used by the NATO countries and sponsored countries. You will find extensive information about it, including pricing and ordering information, at

http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/nmcrl/nmcrl_e/index.htm on the Web.

[TOP](#)

7. Who uses an Item of Supply?

The forces of all of the NATO countries and the non-NATO countries that participate in the NATO Codification System (NCS). Some items of supply are used by only one country, while others are used by many countries. Some items of supply are used by 15 or more countries. NSNs are used through the life cycle of items of supply, from procurement through disposal and by all levels of the armed forces. In many countries, NSNs are also used by the civilian sector of government.

[TOP](#)

8. Can you provide the technical information of an Item of Supply?

The amount of technical information available to you depends on what information you are authorized to have. Anyone can obtain basic information about items of supply from the NATO MCRL (see question 6 above). If you require more detailed technical information, contact your National Codification Bureau (see question 3 above). Access to some item of supply information is restricted because it is proprietary or for national security reasons.

[TOP](#)

9. How can I find out the NSNs registered against my Company?

By subscribing to the NATO MCRL (see question 6 above) or by contacting the NCB in your country (see question 3 above).

[TOP](#)

10. How can you tell who manufacturers the Item of Supply from a reference listed on the NSN?

Every part number listed on NSNs in the NCS is accompanied by a NATO Commercial and Governmental Entity (NCAGE) code. These five character codes identify exactly who the manufacturer or other organization is. With one mouse click, users of the NATO MCRL can easily obtain the name and address and other details associated with NCAGE codes. NCAGE code information is also available from national databases.

[TOP](#)

11. Whom should I contact if the information on file is incorrect?

Contact the NCB of your country. For a list of NCB points of contact, see question 3 above.

[TOP](#)

12. How do I add the United Kingdom, for example, as a user to a foreign NSN (to a United States NSN, for example)?

In this case you would contact the UK NCB and they would handle it using a simple electronic transaction. The NCB of each country is responsible for handling all codification matters. See question 3 for information about how to contact NATO NCBs.

[TOP](#)

13. How do I add the reference number of a new supplier I have discovered, to an existing NSN?

As mentioned in the answer to question 12, you would contact the NCB in your country, and they would handle it. See question 3 for information about how to contact NATO NCBs.

[TOP](#)

14. Why would or should I go to the trouble of doing either of the last 2 actions above?

Both adding users and adding part numbers to NSNs adds value to NCS data. Adding users helps promote interoperability between countries. Adding reference numbers helps ensure readiness by maximizing the number of available suppliers and lowers costs by promoting competition among suppliers.

[TOP](#)

15. Why do you need all the technical source data for the item?

Technical data helps codifiers write full item descriptions. These descriptions in turn help users of the NCS determine if items of supply meet their requirements. Full descriptions also help promote efficiency by providing the information needed for item reduction studies and other rationalization projects.

[TOP](#)

16. Who's in charge of the NCS?

The NCS is governed by the NATO Allies collectively through NATO Allied Committee 135, known as AC/135. AC/135 is officially recognized by NATO headquarters as the governing authority for all codification matters within NATO. AC/135 has regular meetings to manage the NCS and to ensure that the NCS changes to meet the changing needs of its customers. AC/135's business is managed administratively by the NATO Support Agency (NSPA), located in Capellen, Luxembourg.


[TOP](#)

17. Can non-NATO countries use the NCS?

Yes, and a large number of countries around the world do use it. In fact, there are now more non-NATO countries using the NCS than there are NATO countries. AC/135 has a sponsorship program through which non-NATO countries can establish an official relationship within the NCS and participate in some AC/135 meetings. For more information about sponsorship, go to http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/ncs_brochure/ncs_brochure_e/chapters/10_non_nato_e.htm and http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/ncs_bridge/chapters/5.htm.

For a list of NATO and non-NATO sponsored members of the NCS, go to <http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/main/links/contacts.htm>

Non-NATO countries that may wish to become sponsored members of AC/135 should contact NSPA as follows:

	<p>NATO Support Agency (NSPA) Codification Support Section (LB-SC) L-8302 CAPELLEN Luxembourg</p>	<p>Tel: +(352) 3063 6020 or 6896 or 6004 Fax: +(352) 3063 4020 E-mail: ac135secretary@namsa.nato.int</p>
---	---	---

[TOP](#)

18. What is the role of contractors in codification?

NATO codification is a government to government function. Normally, the only role contractors play is to provide technical documentation or part number verification to the NCB of the country assigning the NSNs. An example of how the process can work is as follows: Let's say a U.S. company has a contract to sell a system to the Italian Air Force. The Italian Air Force should work with the Italian National Codification Bureau to ensure that codification of the spare parts for the system takes place. That process may include the Italian Air Force providing tech data to the Italian NCB that it has obtained from the U.S. company. The Italian NCB will take care of contacting the U.S. NCB for assignment of NSNs and will forward any tech data it has obtained from the Italian Air Force to the U.S. NCB to assist item identification and NSN assignment. In any case, though, NATO NCBs assign NSNs, not the contractors who sell systems and spare parts.

[TOP](#)

We hope these questions have provided the information you need about the NATO Codification System. If you have any other questions or believe that it would be useful to add other questions to this site, contact the Secretary AC/135 at ac135secretary@nspa.nato.int

For more extensive information about the NCS, go to http://www.nato.int/structur/AC/135/ncs_guide/e_guide.htm.

You will also find a list of articles about the NCS at the AC/135 Home Page at <http://www.nato.int/codification>

[TOP](#)