

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: DoD Policy on Standardization of Host-to-Host
Protocols for Data Communications Networks

- Reference:
- (a) USDR&E Memo, "Host-to-Host Protocols for Data Communications Networks," 23 Dec 78 (IEN-152).
 - (b) DoD Standard Transmission Control Protocol Specification, Jan 80 (IEN-129, RFC-761).
 - (c) DoD Standard Internet Protocol Specification, Jan 80 (IEN-128, RFC760).
 - (d) DoD Directive 4120.3, "Department of Defense Standardization Program," 6 June 73
 - (e) DoDI 4120.20, "Development and use of Non-Government Specifications and Standards," 28 Dec 76

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify DoD policy concerning standardization of host-to-host protocols for data communications networks.

2. The policy cited in reference (a) is reaffirmed, namely: (1) the use of DoD standard host-to-host protocols (Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) and Internet Protocol (IP), references (b) and (c)) is mandatory for all DoD packet-oriented data networks which have a potential for host-to-host connectivity across network or subnetwork boundaries; (2) the Director, Defense Communications Agency, is designated as the Executive Agent for computer communications protocols; and (3) case-by-case exceptions will be granted by the Executive Agent only for networks shown to have no future requirements for interoperability.

3. Reference (a) is not intended to replace the normal DoD standardization procedures established by DoDD 4120.3 (reference (d)). Rather, the Executive Agent Function is intended to place increased emphasis and initiative on the important and currently volatile technology of data communications protocol standardization. New standards and modifications to existing standards will be submitted by the Executive Agent to the Defense Department components for

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ratification and dissemination in accordance with the provisions of reference (d).

4. DoDI 4120.20 (reference (e)) also continues to apply to protocol standards. Thus, it is desired that nongovernment protocol standards be

adopted and used in lieu of the development and promulgation of new documents. Military requirements for interoperability, security, reliability and survivability are sufficiently pressing to have justified the development and adoption of TCP and IP in the absence of satisfactory nongovernment protocol standards. In the future, the Executive Agent will determine whenever unique military requirements justify the development and adoption of unique DoD protocol standards after making every effort to use prevailing nongovernment standards. Moreover, the Executive Agent will make every effort to inject DoD requirements into the nongovernment standard development process through participation in voluntary standards forums and through coordination with other U.S. Government members of such forums. This influence should be exerted with the objectives of both avoiding the need to develop and adopt unique DoD standards and enabling eventual replacement of unique DoD standards with functionally equivalent nongovernment standards.

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