

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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