



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS SPACE AND MISSILE SYSTEMS CENTER (AFSPC)
LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE CALIFORNIA

JAN 14 2003

MEMORANDUM FOR SMC-ALL

FROM: SMC/CC

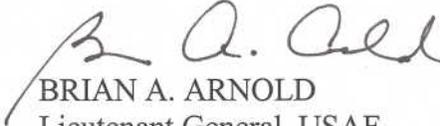
SUBJECT: Policy Letter on Specification and Standards Usage at SMC

1. Background: A key element of the Systems Engineering Revitalization effort is the use of specifications and standards as part of the technical baseline of the SMC acquisition process. Prior to acquisition reform, use of military specifications and standards in Request For Proposals (RFP), contracts and program management practices were one of the primary methods/approaches used to define technical requirements, manage contractor performance, and incorporate significant lessons learned. One key element of acquisition reform was to eliminate the government from contractually dictating prescriptive "how-to" instructions or processes used by contractors. For a decade we have limited and reduced our use of specifications and standards in RFPs, proposal evaluations, contractor performance assessments, and on contracts as compliance documents. The unintentional result was that technical baselines and processes were compromised. With the turnover, consolidations, and retirement of many industry and government personnel, we have hampered our ability to pass on lessons learned from generation to generation.

2. This directive outlines the framework for the use of specifications and standards as an integral element of SMC acquisition, contracting, and program management. There is no intent to return to the pre-acquisition reform approach of using an excessive number of specifications and standards and prescribing detailed processes. A list of high-priority critical specifications and standards is being reviewed and established for appropriate use in the acquisition process. This list will include two categories: (1) those that contribute to mission success (areas that caused failures, caused significant launch delays, shortened mission life, reduced performance, caused excessive rework, or generated important lessons learned) and (2) those needed for effective program implementation (insight into program performance or status, risk reduction, evaluations and analysis, and critical process definitions). The specifications and standards selected for the technical baseline will be reviewed in light of current acquisition practices, Operational Safety Suitability and Effectiveness policies, and new technical knowledge. They will be updated, revised, and tailored as appropriate for use at SMC. Sources of specifications and standards may include government, industry, previous SMC Commander's Policies, and specifications and standards from AIAA, ISO, or other professional societies.

3. The baseline list of specifications and standards can be used as part of the acquisition process, in RFPs, contracts, management practices, and compliance documents. Tailored specifications and standards and contractor responses must be relevant and hold members of the government industrial partnership appropriately accountable to sound technical disciplines. They should be used in new acquisitions and can be used on legacy programs to modify contracts if benefits can be shown to warrant the changes. They will be used in a less prescriptive manner than in the past. For example, if listed as a compliance document in the RFP, the contractor response may propose the listed specification/standard or another government, industry, technical society, international or company version provided it is comparable in vigor and effectiveness. Proof of this comparability must be provided. Acceptable responses will be put on contract as compliance documents with follow-up at program reviews to ensure they are appropriately addressed.

4. An SMC instruction is being prepared that delineates all the processes, implementation ground rules for use of specifications and standards, as well as list the current approved specifications and standards. This instruction will be updated as appropriate. The first list of target specifications and standards will be available early in 2003.


BRIAN A. ARNOLD
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander