The National Directors on Codification met in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on 20-22 May 2014 to assess progress and to plan for future developments of the NATO Codification System (NCS).

In view of the growing number of government contracts for services, the Directors have been considering the need for codification of services. Some nations, including Austria, Brazil, and New Zealand, needed a cataloguing of services for use with ERP packages (to identify training packages, for instance). A working group led by the Czech Republic identified existing and potentially required NCS data elements. The Netherlands intends to further investigate operational requirements for codification of services in light of Smart Defence. However, in the absence of a consensus on the need for further development, the Directors encouraged the nations to proceed with individual implementations as required and to share their lessons learned.

The Directors agreed to introduce six key volumetric data elements. Panel A technical experts will work on further developments to cater for that need. In the United Kingdom, suppliers have a contractual obligation to provide volumetric data under the codification clause. The UK would like volumetric data to be shared where available.

Supplier Sourced Codification is an R&D project whose aim is to automate codification by enabling cataloguing data from suppliers to be fed automatically into defence repositories in an NCS compliant form. The United Kingdom has led this project for several years, but is currently unable to invest any further resources. Further work is on hold until a new lead nation volunteers. The four completed phases of the project have pointed to a considerable potential to save time and effort while improving the richness and quality of NCS data. However, the success of the SSC project depends on widespread industry adoption of ISO 22745 Open technical dictionaries, which has yet to materialize. The project has been successful in providing an SSC methodology enabling companies to provide better data for defence contracts. In one ongoing project, Dutch company Damen Shipyards is considering adopting SSC to provide faster identification for the Dutch armed forces.

Sponsorship and cooperation makes NCS stronger. The NORDEFCO Cooperation Area Armament Subgroup on NATO Codification (NORDEFCO COPA ARMA SG NC) is a forum to explore synergies and facilitate efficient common solutions. The possibility of establishing a virtual warehouse among member nations is being studied, with the NATO Stock Number (NSN) as a key for item identification. At the Nordic Defence Industry Seminar organized in Norway in May by NORDEFCO, NCB Norway had a stand where representatives from NSPA were present to promote NCS and NMCR.

Following successful completion of system testing for Tier 2 compliance, two countries reached Tier 2 sponsorship status: Morocco (from 1 January) and Serbia (from 1 June). Morocco has already completed CAGE code conversion and Serbia is expected to do so shortly.

Regrettably, sponsorship for Fiji was formally cancelled for administrative reasons and Fiji's NSNs will be removed from the NMCR. Sponsorship for Kuwait and Tonga was suspended for administrative reasons. Implications in terms of data maintenance need to be considered because Kuwait is registered against some 40,000 NSNs (involving Germany and France in particular).

Bilateral agreements provide a legal basis regulating the exchange of codification data between NATO nations and sponsored countries. During the Directors' May meeting, Germany signed bilateral agreements with the Republic of Korea and Austria.

Work led by Belgium and France has resulted in a standard codification training syllabus for use in national training courses. The syllabus includes a set of standard presentations and a guide to codification processes. These are to be adopted as Allied Codification Publications. Five e learning courses based on the curriculum have been developed by the Republic of Korea, and further courses will be available later this year on the NCS website training page.
A South America Codification Seminar (SACS) was held on 24-26 June 2014 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to foster codification cooperation in that region. The seminar was attended by participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Spain, Surinam, Uruguay, Venezuela and Italy, and by the Chairman and Secretary of AC135, Allan Webb, Aura, Emgepron and ESG. The MoD Undersecretary for Science, Technology and Production, Mr Roberto De Luise, opened the seminar and encouraged attendees to use the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) as a platform to foster cooperation in codification and in other areas. Nations presented their national codification systems, described their activities and shared lessons learned in using the NCS as an enabler for cost-effective logistics. Numerous actions and initiatives are undertaken by SACS nations to educate their stakeholders and commanders and to explain benefits of the NCS. The Director of Chile presented a case showing how comparison of the technical features of spare parts had allowed suitable replacements from alternative sources of supply to be identified. SACS nations expressed interest in establishing a permanent organization within the framework of the UNASUR Defense Council. Although Terms of Reference and tasks remain to be agreed, SACS intends to focus on the following areas: technological support and cooperation to help Tier 1 countries achieve Tier 2 status; encouraging other UNASUR countries to join NCS; cooperation in training and experience sharing in the area of codification; technological integration and standardization compatible with NCS; integration, cooperation and sharing of the UNASUR countries’ industrial base. The seminar also resulted in an undertaking to align ongoing SACS training on the NCS standard training curriculum.

NMCRL, NCAGE and AcodP2 3 have gone through significant technical improvements. Database engines and operating systems have been renewed, the software framework has been updated, development tools have been upgraded to an integrated development environment and source control software has been implemented. NMCRL Release 3.0 will adopt the new NATO visual guidelines, support multiple browser types, allow wildcard searches and, in advanced mode, provide a query building tool.

The new XML format for codification data exchange had been partly developed and successfully deployed by NSPA for the exchange of producer and vendor related data segments. Work is continuing to cover all NSN data segments, the target for completion being 2015. Work is also continuing to enhance business rules governing transactions, the goal being to considerably reduce the number of transactions by sending the entire TIR of an NSN whenever a change is made.

A number of enhancements to the codification IT tools are envisaged: a full text search capability will be available in AcodP2 3, daily updates of NMCRL raw data will be implemented, an online NSN maintenance tool will, in phase one, allow NCB-to-NCB exchanges for maintenance actions, and a new tool will provide automatic compliance testing for Tier 2 applicant countries and compliance checks on systems in use.

Reference number related codes provide core information about the type and relevance of reference numbers. The Directors have decided to establish a Panel A Task Group on Reference Number Related Codes with a view to bringing the most valuable information to the users and eliminating codes those no longer needed. The Task Group’s findings should be available within a year.

The DVD based off line version of the NMCRL will be discontinued in early 2015. An off line version will be available for download from NSPA via FTP. Your opinion matters in this transition period, so please keep us informed of your needs.