

How long? How much? What every Program Manager should know

SITUATION

a. The U.S. Army is a Soldier-centric organization, where information is second only to the Soldier as the most critical element in the 21st Century operations environment. Network-enabled capabilities are an integral component of a campaign quality, joint and expeditionary force capable of meeting the protracted war on terrorism. Net-enabled command capabilities require cross-program integration to overcome interoperability challenges.

From HQDA EXORD for the CTSF - 9 Jul 2007

-- The Central Technical Support Facility (CTSF) at Fort Hood, Texas executes Army Interoperability Certification (AIC) planning and testing on behalf of the Army CIO/G-6 to ensure the interoperability of battle command and other net-enabled systems. AIC is mandated to ensure the Warfighter is provided the capabilities promised by the systems with the assurance that the network will not be compromised. In addition to AIC, the CTSF is capable of providing a wide-range of support to materiel developers and tactical units, for example, Interoperability Capabilities and Limitations assessments (IC&L); examination of COTS/GOTS function and/or suitability; software configuration; and tactical network engineering assistance.

-- The most common, most formal, and most talked about mission - AIC testing - is often the most bewildering for PMs who must reserve scarce resources to meet the HQDA directive for AIC. The CTSF should be viewed as a partner in this process, an enabler who can facilitate delivery of new systems and system upgrades in a way that is most cost-effective, most timely, and most beneficial to the Program and ultimately the Army.

"We're from the Government; we're here to help." All kidding aside, it is in no one's best interest for any program to stall during or fail to obtain interoperability certification. The CTSF recommended course of action for a successful, efficient certification test event is outlined below.

AIC Testing - 3 evolutions

a) Block testing - As you know, since the advent of Software Blocking (SWB) and now under the Capability Set (CS) construct, software releases (or new systems) undergo AIC testing as a block, or group, or set, for example, CS 11-12. Block testing is scheduled by ASA(ALT) when a new CS must to be certified.

b) Tri-annual testing - Three times a year (Jan - May - Sep) the CTSF runs scheduled test events to facilitate certification of software upgrades and fixes.

c) Out-of-cycle testing - When mission dictates, CTSF offers out-of-cycle testing to PMs that are trying to meet a deadline that cannot be met with the block or tri-annual test schedule.

Where do I begin?

-- In most cases, whether initiating any type of formal AIC testing or requesting other less formal support, contacting an action officer in the CTSF Operations section is a great first step.

CTSF Operations - 254.532.8321 ex 2505

"How can I ensure success at AIC? I want to be a first-time GO to keep my costs down."

A no-cost solution is to take advantage of the integration lab services offered in Systems of Systems Integration (SoSI). The SoSI team provides a robust knowledge base in integration

- from message based and xml based interface testing to thread testing and AIC rehearsal. Three world-class integration labs offering representative tactical architectures allow the developer to choose the appropriate baseline for the product, and to test in a variety of communication and networking environments. The result is reduced risk and increased probability of success in certification testing.

Feel free to call and discuss your particular product and/or environment with one of our engineers.

CTSF SoSI Branch - 254.532.8321 ex 2439

AIC Testing - 3 phases

-- Every test event has three distinct phases:

- ✓ Phase I - Plan and Prep (Test-45)
- ✓ Phase II - Execution (Test)
- ✓ Phase III - Report (End Test +45)

-- Phase I - *Plan and Prep*, also referred to as the I2E Phase [Integration and Interoperability Event Phase], begins when an interested PM submits a signed 'request to test' letter to the CIO/G-6. The letter must indicate that the PdM has met all the AIC entrance criteria and should include requested test dates and locations as well as POC information. A copy of DA Memo: Army AIC Entrance Criteria and a sample 'request to test' letter are posted to the CTSF AKO webpage. [\[LINK\]](#)

Using the information provided in the request to test letter, a CTSF test officer will draft a test plan and coordinate that plan with the CIO/G-6, the TRADOC capability manager, and the PdM. Once the test plan is signed, test costs are determined and provided to the PdM. Thirty days prior to the requested test date, the PdM should provide system hardware and software to the CTSF along with a MIPR to cover the cost of the test.

-- Phase II - *Execution*, also referred to as the Test Phase is normally completed within 21 calendar days. The first week is reserved for pilot testing which ensures the integrity of the network. The

next two weeks are for actual mission thread testing IAW the agreed upon test plan.

-- Phase III - The *Report* phase follows immediately upon conclusion of AIC testing. For planning purposes, the CTSF allows up to 30 days for test officers to prepare and internally staff their reports. NLT end-test + 30 (E+30), reports are coordinated with and signed by CTSF leadership and forwarded to CIO/G-6. Completed result reports are in the hands of the CIO/G-6 NLT E+45.

The entire process takes, on average, 90 days. Expedited testing (approx. 60 days) can be accomplished if the Army G-3/5/7 re-prioritizes your event. Action officers in G-3/5/7 LWN/BC can assist with prioritization.

CTSF AIC Test Costing Process

The CTSF, as a fee for service provider, uses two different methods for determining the costs of the tests they perform. Individual and pre-CS 11-12 block tests are estimated by calculating the number of hours per job function that will be required to complete the test. Weighted average labor rates are applied to these hours to arrive at a cost. The number of systems participating in the test event and the planned mission threads weigh into this calculation. For CS 11-12, a base cost is also estimated and divided proportionally between the systems undergoing testing. Base costs are charged for those activities that support several systems at once and, therefore, could not be assigned to one specific system. Details pertaining to test location assist with determining any TDY costs that should be included.

Whitfill Central Technical Support Facility
Murphy Road & 53rd Street, Fort Hood, Texas, 76544-0414
Phone: (254) 532-8321 - Fax: (254) 618-4047 - DSN: (312) 738-4035
<http://ctsf.army.mil>

