



DOD to test contactless cards, readers

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The Defense Department is setting up a lab to test contactless smart cards and readers for industry standard compliance and interoperability.

Mike Butler, DOD's chief of smart-card programs for the Common Access Card Office, said today that the labs would be in place this spring using a testing software from Cubic Corp. of San Diego. The labs will test for the International Standards Organization 14443 standard.

Butler added that if a vendor wants to sell contactless smart cards and readers to DOD, the lab must approve their products.

"All DOD physical access control systems and readers must be replaced," he said.

The labs would follow a request for information DOD issued in October detailing a series of dates to refresh their CAC cards and asking for vendors to tell them whether their products can meet some of the new requirements and when those products would be available.

Butler said DOD expects to award a contract for 20,000 dual-interface 64K smart cards that meet Federal Information Processing Standard 140-2, Level 2 certification. DOD also will evaluate card stock with 64K FIPS 140-2, Level 2 certified Java cards.

When the RFI went out, DOD provided all interested vendors with cards that meet the requirements with performance applets. Those vendors then tested the applets and were to report back those tests to DOD, which used the information to choose the vendors to compete for the request for proposals for the new CAC cards, Butler said.

"We want competition from vendors to supply us smart cards, but we only want the best four," he said after a panel discussion today on Homeland Security Presidential Directive-12 sponsored by the Bethesda, Md. chapter of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association. "We only have \$100,000 to integrate each card into our system so we want cards that meet the standard and we only want the best ones."

DOD will run a series of pilots to test the dual-interface cards from March or April to July. And by December 2006, officials said they plan to purchase 64K dual-interface cards as the next generation of CAC. DOD does not expect to add any new vendors for up to two years after this CAC refresh, the RFI said.