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"DoD Says Biometric Identifiers Could be Required of Personnel By 2010"

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The Pentagon is expecting that by 2010, biometric technologies will become so widespread throughout the military that contractors and other Defense Department personnel could be required to submit their fingerprints or iris patterns to DOD for security purposes, according to a recent memo.

"In some instances, providing a biometric may be a condition of employment," writes Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in an Aug. 25 memo released to InsideDefense.com.

The military already uses biometric identifiers to guard access to some computers and office buildings. The Pentagon last year began a test program using an iris scanner at its officers' athletic club in lieu of membership cards.

The "biometrics enterprise vision," outlined by Wolfowitz and widely distributed throughout DoD, indicates that additional acquisition instruction for the services is imminent. The vision will be "incorporated into a biometrics technologies directive and implementing instruction," Wolfowitz states.

As for what to expect, the deputy defense secretary says DoD's Biometrics Management Office will ensure a "scalable biometrics component" of the military's information infrastructure is in place. BMO will also make available to the services the "appropriate standards, interoperability tools, testing frameworks and approved product validations."

"This is an important step toward establishing a single biometric system across the DOD enterprise," BMO director Linda Dean said in a statement issued today. "The technologies have the potential to provide deep and multilayered protection, especially in combination with traditional security tools and methods like firewalls, smart cards and public key infrastructure."