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1st Commandment: *To the maximum extent possible, adopt best-in-class commercial software solutions instead of building customized government software solutions.*

Justification/Background

Technology is advancing at a breakneck pace. New advancements in areas such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and cybersecurity require a major investment of time and money. Couple the need for faster response times with tightening federal budgets, and the Department of Defense (DoD) is faced with a difficult task of keeping up with evolving technology in a budget conscious way that enables mission success. Leveraging the use of commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) technology to its fullest extent is the most effective strategy to help DoD overcome this challenge.

While there is no one single tool, product, or technology that can solve all challenges, a conscious selection of best of breed commercial software tools can help DoD define an effective, sustainable, and secure strategy. The implementation of COTS products offers much faster time-to-mission impact and higher quality at a lower cost than those entirely developed by or heavily customized for the DoD. If technology customization is a business requirement for security, compliance, or governance reasons, starting at the highest level of solution maturity is essential.

The government recognized this same COTS value proposition when it issued a government-wide preference to acquire commercial items over government-developed solutions.^[1] Leaders from across the federal government, particularly within the DoD, have called for increased public-private partnerships as a way to winnow down the growing technology innovation gap between the government and private sector. In fact, Secretary Mattis' key takeaway from his recent tour to Silicon Valley and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) was that the DoD needs to embrace and adopt technology coming out of the private sector if it hopes to keep pace with the technological curve. Yet despite this commonsense notion, some DoD programs continue to focus on building their own systems when COTS solutions would provide better performance at lower lifetime cost in most cases.

^[1] Title 10, United States Code, Section 2377