The US Army Launches the Tactical Radio Marketplace

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During the 2025 edition of TechNet Augusta, one of the most anticipated events in the digital defense and military communications landscape, the United States Army unveiled an ambitious project aimed at radically transforming the way military units acquire tactical radio capabilities. The new model, called **Common Hardware Software Solutions Tactical Radios (CHESS-TR),** was described as a sort of **e-commerce platform for defense, where departments can select and order the solutions best suited to their operational needs**.

A model inspired by e-commerce

According to Major Dominic Adams, head of requirements development at the Army Futures Command, CHESS-TR is currently in the conceptual phase within the Army Software Factory. The goal is to publish a draft of requirements through the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System within one or two years.

Colonel John Harrell, manager of tactical radio capabilities, explained that **the model will allow suppliers to present hardware, software, maintenance services, and lifecycle management, subject to approval according to Department of Defense standards**. Once included in the catalog, the products will be available for purchase by military units, which can browse the options and order what is needed for future missions.

Strategic and operational advantages

The CHESS-TR system promises to accelerate the distribution of updated radio capabilities to soldiers, increasing the speed and scale of implementation. Harrell emphasized that this approach will stimulate innovation and provide direct feedback on what units are looking for, fostering competition among suppliers and improving the quality of proposed solutions.

Another key advantage is flexibility: tactical communication needs vary greatly between different operational theaters. A unit deployed in Africa, for example, will have very different requirements compared to one in Europe or the Indo-Pacific. CHESS-TR aims to respond to these differences dynamically and in a personalized manner.

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Lessons from the past: the failure of the “radio-as-a-service” model

The new model draws inspiration from the Common Hardware Systems program of the Program Executive Office of Command, Control, Communications and Network (PEO C3N), which already

offers a similar system for commercial IT hardware. Additionally, CHESS-TR integrates the positive aspects of the previous “radio-as-a-service” project, an initiative that envisioned providing radios as a subscription service.

This approach would have allowed the army to rent the necessary capabilities when needed, avoiding the burden of purchasing, maintaining, and upgrading equipment for each unit. However, the project was abandoned because it was deemed unsustainable for the industry. Adams admitted that “it was probably destined to fail.”

Oversight and collaboration with the industry

One of the most significant innovations of the CHESS-TR model is the centralized management of funds by project managers, rather than leaving the budget to individual units. This should facilitate cooperation with the industry, improving transparency and investment planning.

“The idea is to proceed at the speed of industrial development,” said Adams. Although the project is still in its embryonic stage, the enthusiasm expressed during TechNet Augusta suggests that CHESS-TR could represent a turning point for the modernization of military communications.

If successfully implemented, **CHESS-TR could become a replicable model in other areas of defense, where the speed of adaptation and the customization of solutions are crucial**. The digitization of procurement processes, combined with transparency and competition among suppliers, could lead to greater efficiency and continuous improvement of the technologies employed.

In an increasingly unstable and technologically advanced global context, the ability to quickly adapt to new challenges is essential. TechNet Augusta 2025 demonstrated that the United States Army is determined to pursue this path decisively, and CHESS-TR is concrete proof of this.

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