

HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation

## **RFI-ACT-SACT-22-145**

Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation Norfolk Virginia



REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

RFI-ACT-SACT-22-145

This document contains a Request for Information (RFI) call to industry and academia in support of NATO cyberspace operations concepts and enabling capabilities.

Industry and academia wishing to respond to this RFI should read this document carefully and follow the guidance for responding.

HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation

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HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation RFI 22-145 General Information	
Request For Information No.	22-145
Project Title	Request for Information (RFI) call to industry, academia and Nations in support of Merchant Ship Crypto System (MERCs).
Due date for questions concerning related information	9:00 am EST 07 November 2022
Due date for submission of requested information	9:00 am EST 30 November 2022
Contracting Office Address	NATO, HQ Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) Purchasing & Contracting Suite 100 7857 Blandy Rd, Norfolk, VA, 23511-2490
Contracting Points of Contact	Ms Magdalena Ornat Email: <a href="mailto:magdalena.ornat@act.nato.int">magdalena.ornat@act.nato.int</a> Tel.: +1-757-747-3150  Ms Tonya Bonilla E-mail : <a href="mailto:tonya.bonilla@act.nato.int">tonya.bonilla@act.nato.int</a> Tel : +1 757 747 3575  Ms Catherine Giglio E-mail : <a href="mailto:catherine.giglio@act.nato.int">catherine.giglio@act.nato.int</a> Tel :+1 757 747 3856
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All request for clarifications and responses to this RFI must be sent via email to all Points of Contact reported above.	

**1. Introduction**

**Summary.** Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT) is issuing this Request for Information (RFI) in order to engage with industry, academia and nations. The objective is to identify existing and under-development industrial/commercial/academic concepts, products, or capabilities which NATO

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could consider towards the development of the Merchant Ship Crypto System (MERCs). This will include potential for tailoring and further development, evaluation, testing, and experimentation.

**This RFI does not constitute a commitment to issue a future Request for Proposal (RFP).** The purpose of this request is to involve industry and academia through collaboration, in an examination of existing and under-development concepts, products or capabilities. HQ SACT has not made a commitment to procure any of the items described herein, and release of this RFI shall not be construed as such a commitment, nor as authorization to incur cost for which reimbursement will be required or sought.

Further, respondents are advised that HQ SACT will not pay for any information or administrative costs incurred in responding to this RFI. The costs for responding to this RFI shall be borne solely by the responding party. Not responding to this RFI does not preclude participation in any subsequent RFP if issued in the future.

### **1. Description of the Programme**

Naval Cooperation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) provides the means to support the military commander through effective interaction and cooperation with merchant shipping in peace, crisis and conflict in order to enhance merchant ship safety and security and to deconflict shipping and military operations.

Another contributor to Freedom of Navigation is the Allied Worldwide Navigational Information System (AWNIS), which is the provision of Safety and Security of Navigation information for the military and shipping industry in support of maritime operations. AWNIS carries out this function by facilitating the cooperation between military and civilian organizations that have maritime safety, navigational and routing responsibilities in peacetime.

The Merchant Ship Crypto System (MERCs) will:

- Provide secure communications (duplex voice and data up to NATO SECRET) between NCAGS personnel ashore, deployed Naval Liaison Officers on board civilian (merchant) vessels, and military vessels.
- Provide reliable and secure access to services listed in Section 3 in order to support lead through procedures/transit on classified routes.
- Fulfil the NCAGS/AWNIS organization needs for a secure and portable system for the dissemination of Maritime Security Information ashore and at sea.

### **2. Scope of Capability (MERCs)**

The scope of the MERCs capability should meet the following minimum requirements. The list below is not all encompassing. HQ SACT is open to entertaining other novel ideas, concepts, products or capabilities. All recommendations should address potential needs to MERCs, and a clear proposal on how NATO could apply the solutions.

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Characteristics of the MERCS capability include:

- Secure (encrypted) communications accreditable up to NATO SECRET between:
    - shore and ships at sea,
    - NATO vessel and merchant vessel,
    - merchant vessel and merchant vessel
  - Be provided in one or multiple pieces, portable in a self-contained form factor (e.g., briefcase) to be easily carried by a single person
  - Utilise NATO interoperability STANAGS or standards where appropriate; e.g., NINE, SCIP, LEF CIS
  - Reliable communication from shore (e.g., NATO Shipping Centre) to a ship anywhere in the Atlantic
  - Achieve global coverage by linking with SATCOM means on board of civil and military ships
  - Provide on-demand controlled and secure (accreditable up to NATO SECRET) access to services including:
  - Secure duplex voice
    - Secure data and file exchange
    - Secure chat (e.g., JChat)
    - Receiving classified routing data and representing on charts (e.g., WECDIS<sup>1</sup>)
    - Allied Information Flow System Integrated Messaging System (AIMS)
    - Accurate geo-fencing and positioning
- Offline loading of data (e.g., maps/charts) is allowable. If offline data is a characteristic of the solution, the ability to overlay additional data (e.g., specific route information) when deployed is a requirement.
- The solution should be reprogrammable, extensible or upgradeable
  - Documentation and training materials should be provided

### 3. Requested Information

#### White Paper

HQ SACT is inviting industry, academia and Nations to submit a white paper on existing and under-development concepts, products or capabilities in the area of MERCS.

The white papers shall be in Microsoft Word for Office compatible format, and shall not contain classified information. The white papers shall address, at a minimum, the following:

- Type of proposal (idea/concept/product/ or capability);
- Purpose;
- Brief description;
- Examples of potential use;
- Level of maturity/implementation/integration;
- When applicable, brief description of effort/cost requirement to finalize its

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<sup>1</sup> Warship Electronic Chart Display Information System; see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic\\_Chart\\_Display\\_and\\_Information\\_System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_Chart_Display_and_Information_System) for reference.

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implementation/adaption/adoption;

- Other relevant information, including constraints or limitation to the adoption of the proposal by NATO.

Information in the white papers may be considered in developing any potential final Statement of Work requirements. HQ SACT will consider selected white paper proposals for developmental contracts and experimentation candidates.

#### **4. Presentation.**

HQ SACT may ask selected RFI respondents to provide a presentation based on their white paper submission.

#### **5. Clarifications and Questions**

Inquiries of a technical nature about this RFI shall be submitted by e-mail solely to the aforementioned POCs by **2359 hours EST on 07 November 2022**. Accordingly, questions in an e-mail shall not contain proprietary and/or classified information. Answers will be posted as soon as possible on the HQ SACT P&C website at: <https://act.nato.int/contracting>.

#### **6. Organizational Conflicts of Interest.**

Companies responding to this RFI are hereby placed on notice responding to this RFI could conceivably create an organizational conflict of interest (OCI) on a future procurement, if a future procurement were to occur within the capability development process. Companies are cautioned to consider OCI when responding to this RFI, and to consider internal mitigation measures that would prevent OCI's from adversely affecting a company's future procurement prospects. OCI's can often be mitigated or prevented with simple, early acquisition analysis and planning and the use of barriers, teaming arrangements, internal corporate nondisclosure policies and firewalls, and similar prophylactic measures. HQ SACT is not in a position to advise responding companies on the existence of OCI or remedial measures, and encourages responding companies to consult internal or external procurement and legal consultants and in-house counsel.

#### **7. Handling of Proprietary information.**

Proprietary information, if any, should be minimized and clearly marked as such. HQ SACT will treat proprietary information with the same due care as the command treats its own proprietary information. HQ SACT will exercise due care to prevent its unauthorized disclosure. Please be advised that all submissions become HQ SACT property and will not be returned.

#### **8. Non-disclosure principles and/or nondisclosure agreement (NDA) with third party company.**

HQ SACT will follow non-disclosure principles and possibly conclude an NDA with any companies to protect submitted information from further disclosure. As the third party beneficiary of this nondisclosure, this RFI serves to inform you of how HQ SACT plans

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to proceed and of HQ SACT's intent to protect information from unauthorized disclosure, requiring the third party company to protect the disclosed information using the highest degree of care that the company utilizes to protect its own Proprietary Information of a similar nature, and no less than reasonable care. This includes the following responsibilities and obligations:

The third party company receiving the information shall not, without explicit, written consent of HQ SACT:

- Discuss, disclose, publish or disseminate any Proprietary Information received or accessed under nondisclosure principles and subject to an NDA, if an NDA is concluded;
- Use disclosed Proprietary Information in any way except for the purpose for which it was disclosed in furtherance of the goals of the instant project, collaboration, activity or contract; or
- Mention the other Party or disclose the relationship including, without limitation, in marketing materials, presentations, press releases or interviews.

### **Exceptions to Obligations**

The third party company receiving the information may disclose, publish, disseminate, and use Proprietary Information:

- To its employees, officers, directors, contractors, and affiliates of the recipient who have a need to know and who have an organizational code of conduct or written agreement with the recipient requiring them to treat the disclosed Proprietary Information in accordance with nondisclosure principles and the NDA (if executed);
- To the extent required by law; however, the company receiving the information will give HQ SACT prompt notice to allow HQ SACT a reasonable opportunity to obtain a protective order or otherwise protect the disclosed information through legal process; or
- That is demonstrated in written record to have been developed independently or already in the possession of the company receiving the information without obligation of confidentiality prior to the date of receipt from HQ SACT; that is disclosed or used with prior written approval from HQ SACT; obtained from a source other than HQ SACT without obligation of confidentiality; or publicly available when received.

Any response to this RFI is considered to establish consent to this process. A copy of the NDA, if or when concluded, can be provided on request.

### **9. Questions**

Questions of any nature, including technical ones, about this RFI announcement shall be submitted by e-mail solely to the contracting and technical POCs. Accordingly, questions in an e-mail shall not contain proprietary and/or classified information. Answers to questions will be posted, for everyone's awareness, on the HQ SACT P&C website at: [www.act.nato.int/contracting](http://www.act.nato.int/contracting).

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**10. Summary.**

This is a RFI only. The purpose of this RFI is to involve industry, academia and Nations through collaboration, in an examination of existing and underdevelopment ideas/concepts/products and capabilities in the area of cyberspace operations. HQ SACT has not made a commitment to procure any of the items described herein, and release of this RFI shall not be construed as such a commitment, nor as authorization to incur cost for which reimbursement will be required or sought. It is emphasised that this is a RFI, and not a RFP of any kind. All responses to this RFI should be received no later than 30 November 2022.