



## Considerations for Multi-Link Interoperability

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NATO Tactical Data Links (TDLs) have now been in use for well over 30 years, however, the standards which are supposed to guide interoperability remain subject to continuous change. Platform TDL programmes are invariably non-aligned in time and therefore must deal with the moving target that is the TDL standard, typically resulting in different levels of standards adoption. This, in itself, does not need to pose a problem if interoperability with other key platforms is considered prior to finalising the requirements; however, Platform TDL programmes are subject to their own budgets and constraints and, more often than not, deal with their TDL requirements either in complete isolation or in a sub-optimal way. To add further to the TDL interoperability challenge, quite often, an “off-the-shelf” solution is required and, if there is no/little scope for development, its current implementation may have to be accepted. TDL interoperability in one nation is therefore a significant challenge, so one can imagine that this is further exacerbated when we consider multi-national operations and when we go from single link to multi-link operations.

The aim of this brief is to draw out some specific challenges to TDL interoperability and to propose how TDL interoperability can be managed to aid in mitigating such challenges.