The IUID Corner

Have a question? Let us know!

Does the Quick Compliance Tool Suite (QCTS) plan to have a Mobile Barcode Innovation in the future? A smart phone application would revolutionize DoD logistics capabilities!

That solution was actually pursued several years ago at the request of OSD. At first blush, the problem looked very simple. The Intermec CK61, which we have been using as a test platform for the QCTS handheld software, runs the Windows Mobile operating system. In fact, it is exactly the same operating system (OS) used by a Motorola Q9C smart phone. Given that the CK61 is essentially a camera attached to a smart phone processor and OS, it looked like all that needed to be done was to install a module on the phone to interpret the image captured by the camera, feed the data to the normal QCTS software and, voila!, an incredibly inexpensive (at least when compared to dedicated handhelds) solution to getting handhelds to everyone needing them. Unfortunately there was a problem that, interestingly enough, revolves around the lenses that most smart phones use. The lenses are not adjustable. Therefore, in most cases, if you take a picture of the IUID up close, it is too blurry. If you hold the IUID out at the right focus length, there is not enough resolution. This issue is exacerbated by small 2D barcodes with the result being that a smart phone is unable to read the barcode.

Most phones are capable of reading UPCs reasonably well, so the current technology will support the consumer “quick lookup” concept. But the individual data elements that make up a UPC are much larger than those in a normal 2D barcode making reading a UPC much less technically challenging than reading an IUID.