

Understanding the COMSEC Materiel Control System

Replacing communications security equipment has specific requirements. Knowing those requirements and following them can reduce replacement wait time.

■ By Maj. Saul Decker

Requisitioning communications security (COMSEC) key devices is challenging to those who are unfamiliar with the COMSEC Materiel Control System (CMCS). COMSEC key device requisitions require a valid shortage, a COMSEC custodian with an Information Systems Security Program (ISSP) account, and frequent follow-up with key personnel and agencies throughout the process.

Army Regulation (AR) 710-2, Supply Policy Below the National Level, divides COMSEC equipment into two categories: unclassified and classified. Unclassified COMSEC equipment has a controlled item inventory code (CIIC) of U, 7, or 9 (less key devices), while classified or accountable COMSEC equipment has a CIIC other than U, O, 7, or 9. This article will explain how to replace simple key loaders (SKLs) after the maintenance activity determines them nonrepairable.

COMSEC Repair Request Process

Tobyhanna Army Depot (TYAD), Pa., repairs COMSEC equipment. AR 710-2 states that unserviceable COMSEC items must be repaired by a depot or special repair activity and only TYAD performs COMSEC materiel demilitarization and disposal.

When a customer submits an SKL for maintenance using a Department of the Army (DA) Form 2407, Maintenance Request, he expects to receive the same item back

fully mission capable. However, if the SKL is nonrepairable, TYAD keeps the item for disposal and provides the customer with a Department of Defense (DD) Form 1348-1A, Issue Release/Receipt Document, stating that the item is nonrepairable. The maintenance transaction then becomes a supply transaction, creating a valid shortage.

The cover letter with the DD Form 1348-1A informs the customer of the process to request replacements. The unit must process the paperwork provided by TYAD through the local property book office to remove the items from the consolidated property list. Once this action is complete, the COMSEC custodian uses the CMCS to

request replacements. The COMSEC custodian uses the ISSP system to submit the requisition.

SKLs have a CIIC of 9, but since they are key devices, they fall into the accountable COMSEC category. The COMSEC custodian, not the unit property book officer, is the accountable officer for classified COMSEC materiel.

The Communications Security Logistics Activity (CSLA) uses the ISSP system to centralize COMSEC requests. The ISSP system manages COMSEC requisitions not only to ensure equitable distribution but also to capture current and future COMSEC requirements across the Army. If the COMSEC custodian does not have an ISSP



Soldiers receive instruction on the operation of a simple key loader at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, La. (Photo by Sgt. Terence Ewings)

account, he must establish one at <https://issp.army.mil/>.

The COMSEC custodian enters the requisition in either the MS4X (IA tools/support) or the MX5T (COMSEC) section within the ISSP and uploads the cover letter and DD Form 1348-1A provided by TYAD. Expedited requests require a memo signed by the brigade commander.

Reducing Wait Times

Once requisitions are submitted, the unit must monitor them closely. Maintaining close oversight of COMSEC requisitions by monitoring the ISSP system and following up with key COMSEC materiel approving authorities reduces wait times. COMSEC materiel request approval requires the concurrence of several offices, usually in-

cluding the unit's Army command COMSEC manager, CSLA, and the COMSEC program director, before the item manager can release any assets.

If any of the approving officials discover an error, the request is returned without action to the requester through the ISSP system for correction and resubmission. The key to reducing customer wait time is for the requesting COMSEC custodian to monitor the ISSP system for any returned requisitions, quickly correct the errors identified, and immediately resubmit the request.

If the COMSEC custodian is unclear on how to fix the errors, he should contact either the Army command COMSEC manager or the CSLA help desk for guidance. (See figure 1.)

Navigating the CMCS is a challenging task. In many cases, the process is one of discovery and learning. The requirements for replacing COMSEC are detailed and sometimes confusing. Even if requesters satisfy the minimum requirements they must also be willing to remain patient, learn, and correct mistakes in order to be successful.

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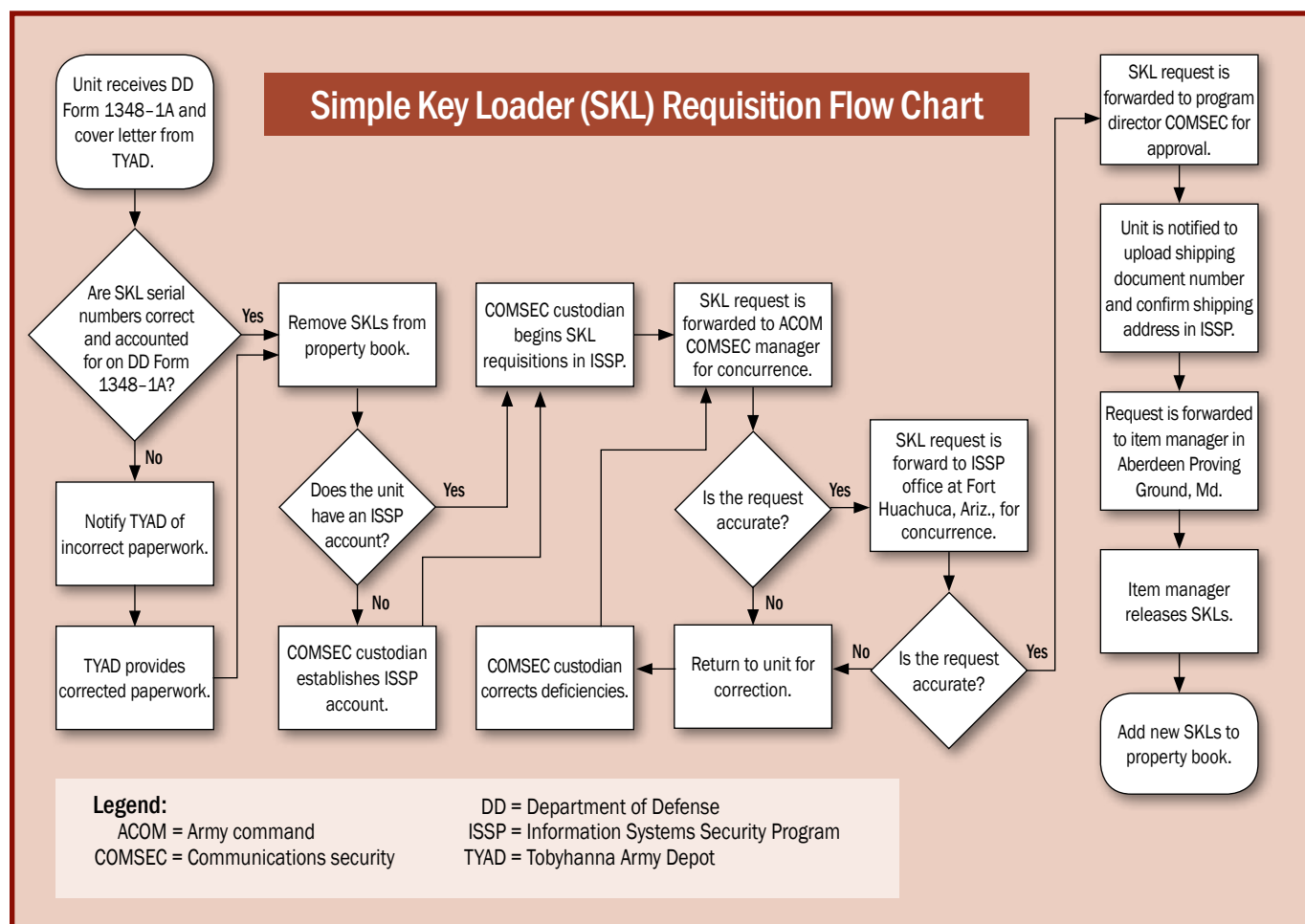


Figure 1. This chart illustrates the simple key loader requisition process.