



Air Force NETCENTS-2

The 436th Airlift Wing command post at Dover Air Force Base, Del, is packed with computer and projection screens where controllers track aircraft, accommodate aircrew needs and coordinate emergency management. (U.S. Air Force photo/Jason Minto)

Two Will Be Better Than One

The NETCENTS-2 award process is moving steadily forward; NETCENTS-1 has been extended.

It has been almost 3 years in the making and finally an end seems to be in sight.

Go to the FedBizOpps page describing the upcoming Air Force NETCENTS-2 contract and you will see a timeline that goes back to April, 2007 filled with changes and modifications going right up to October 9, 2009.

Who would have thought it would take so long? But when you are completely changing the format and structure of your main, mandatory IT and networking contract, it can take time.

So, for a little while longer, customers will use NETCENTS-1 and when NETCENTS-2 becomes operational, new requirements – whether or not NETCENTS-1 is still in force – will be procured using NETCENTS-2. (See sidebars.)

The Two NETCENTS

According to the Air Force, the purpose of NETCENTS-1 is “to provide Air Force, Department of Defense and other Federal Agencies a primary source of networking equipment/product supply and a means of system engineering, installation, integration, operations, and maintenance for a family of Department of Defense (DoD) adopted commercially standardized networking solutions that are interoperable with Air Force, Joint, and DoD Standardized Networking Technical Architectures.”

The NETCENTS contract vehicle is a key enabler for enterprise standardization and effective IT management across the AF.



NETCENTS-2 Timeline Detailed

The question both customers and IT vendors are asking is: When will NETCENTS-2 finally be ready for “prime time”?

1105 Government Information Group Custom Media asked NETCENTS officials the following: “Can you detail the NETCENTS-2 timeline for awards and when the first TOs might be awarded? RFP’s are supposed to be released soon, and are supposed to be staggered but, are there any RFP’s that are more developed, and will likely be released first?”

Here is what the Air Force had to say as of October 27, 2009.

“We are currently projecting to release 6 of the 8 RFP’s before the end of the year (2009).

- The estimated times for RFP release are no later than November 2009 for Application Services and Enterprise Integration and Service Management (EISM) (3 RFP’s).

- For NetOps and Infrastructure Solutions and Netcentric Products (3 RFP’s) we are estimating to release those RFP’s no later than December 2009.
- The contract award for Network Products and EISM are estimated to be late summer 2010.
- The contract award for NetOps and Infrastructure Solutions and Application Services are estimated to be early Fall 2010.
- The remaining two RFPs, Telephony Products and Solutions and IT Professional Support and Engineering Services (A&AS) will be released Summer/Fall of 2010.

These are estimated dates that could fluctuate based on the number and complexity of proposals received. We will begin awarding Task Orders shortly after contract award.”

Sources: US Air Force; <http://public.gunter.af.mil/aq/NETCENTS/default.aspx>

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The Air Force uses NETCENTS to buy Network-Centric Information Technology, Networking, Telephony and Security (NCITNTS), products. Whenever possible, COTS products are preferred as long as they satisfy the requirements for interoperability, compatibility, and resource to support the Air Force's Global Information Grid (GIG) architecture.

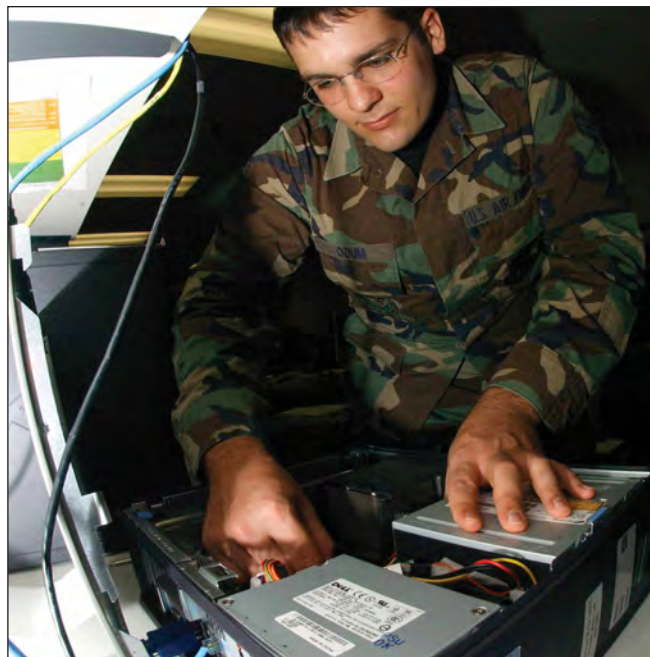
The Air Force says the new "NETCENTS-2 contracts are designed to meet the challenges through the purposeful and dedicated use of innovative business practices and tools that establish teaming relationships between the Government and industry."

NETCENTS-2 will "provide NCITNTS and Voice, Video and Data Communications Commercial-off-the-Shelf (COTS) products, system solutions and services to satisfy the Combat Support (CS), Command and Control (C2), and Intelligence Reconnaissance and Surveillance (ISR) Air Force and Department of Defense (DOD) requirements worldwide."

After reading those descriptions, one could ask: What exactly are the differences between NETCENTS-1 and NETCENTS-2?

There are many – including the use of categorizing services for the purpose of driving more competition and an expressed desire to speed up the process and provide better customer service.

Air Force officials readily admit the new structure of NETCENTS 2 will take a little while to get used to. What they want to continue to do is provide customers with highly competent, focused sources for the net-centric products and solutions needs. □



NETCENTS-1 Current Status

When asked to describe the current status of NETCENTS-1, with special focus on contract accomplishments, success stories and how it has helped the Air Force meet its mission, here is what the Air Force wrote 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media on October 27, 2009:

"The AF has approved an extension of the NETCENTS contract ordering period beginning 10 Sep 2009 through 9 Sep 2010, with provisions for options to extend 4 three month options. During this extended ordering period, special emphasis will be placed on the continued need to support the small business community.

The NETCENTS contract vehicle is a key enabler for enterprise standardization and effective IT management across the AF. This contract is very flexible and diverse, efficient and easy to use.

It has been instrumental in the transformation, through task orders that have been focused on changing technology, streamlining business processes, and meeting the demands of the warfighter.

It enables not just the Air Force, but the entire DoD and other federal agencies to effectively and efficiently integrate and implement COTs net-centric solutions worldwide."

Awarded in 2004 as Mandatory use program, NETCENTS-1 consisted of 8 MA IDIQ contracts with 4 small business awards

and 4 large business awards.

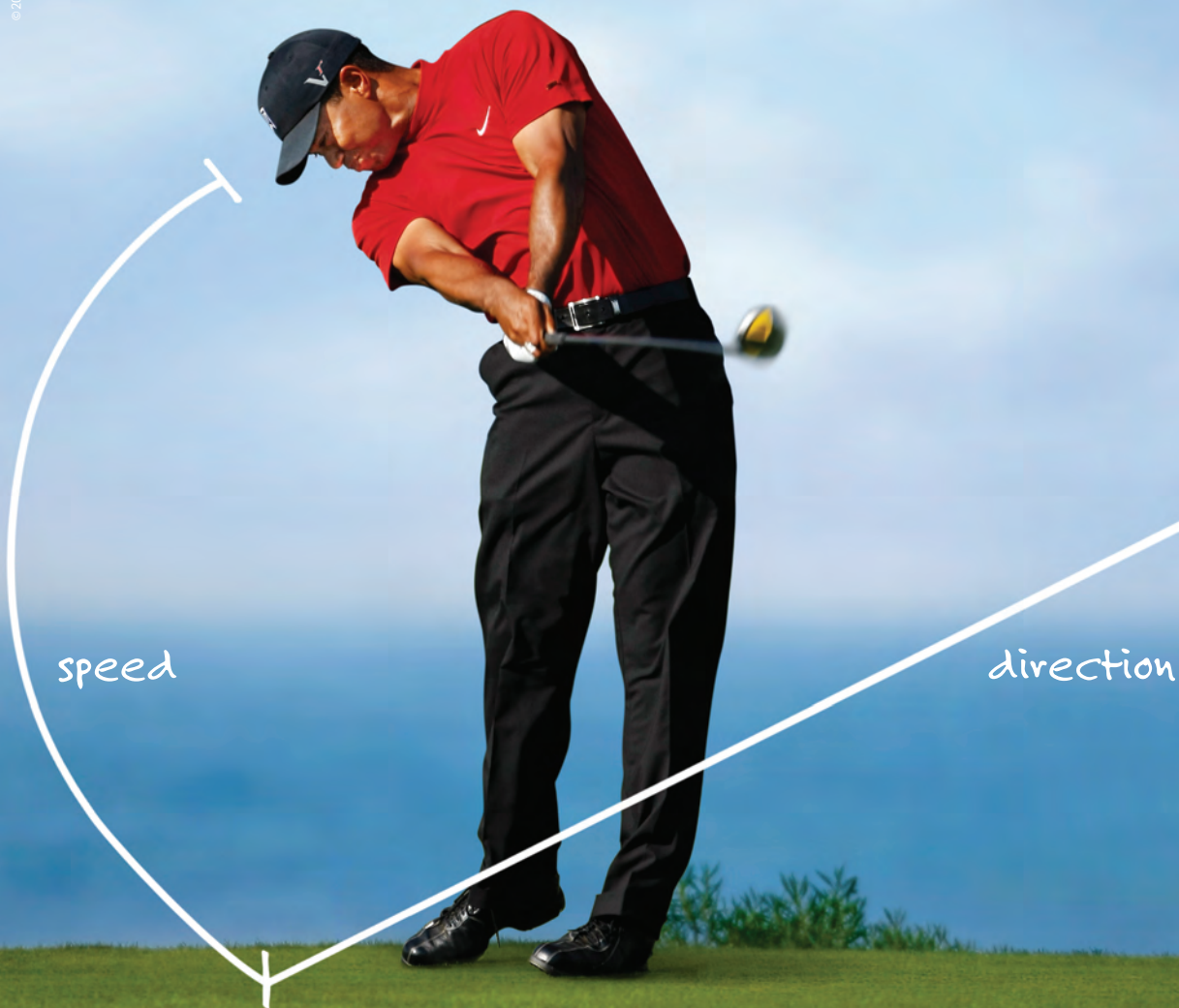
It is currently a 7-year MA ID/IQ contract vehicle; originally a 5-year – 2 additional option extensions were granted in FY2009 with a \$9 billion ordering ceiling; total spending currently at \$5.1 billion (57% of ceiling).

It offers decentralized ordering vehicles open to all military services, DOD, and Federal Agencies and is managed out of the 754th ELSG at Maxwell-Gunter AFB, Alabama. The 754th ELSG Contracting ranks first in processed orders at approximately 15%.

The contract provides hardware, software, IT services, and telecom. It began as an expansion of a LAN-focused program, ULANA. It provides support for Combat Information Transit System (CITS), the AF's 12-yr-running COTS modernization initiative.

Other major operational platforms supported include:

- Non-Classified Internet Protocol Router Network (NIPRNET)
- Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNET)
- Defense Message System (DMS)
- Defense Information System Network (DISN)
- Global Command and Control Systems (GCCS)
- Global Combat Support System (GCSS)



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NETCENTS-2 News

The NETCENTS-2 contract strategy represents the next step in the evolution of the Air Force's enterprise-wide IT acquisition strategy.

The Air Force has detailed a timeline for NETCENTS-2. "We are currently projecting to release 6 of the 8 RFP's before the end of the year (2009)," the Air Force wrote 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media on October 27, 2009.

While it will still be a while before the first NETCENTS-2 task order is awarded, preparations for its use are well underway.

Future Benefits

One benefit of NETCENTS-2 will be its role in enabling Air Force IT transformation. It will enable the IT lifecycle to include legacy operational and sustainment activities, migration of legacy systems, and future service-oriented capabilities.

The Air Force also says it will provide "a streamlined, enterprise-supported contract vehicle that enables the consolidation of many existing base-level contracts for Operations and Maintenance (O&M) activities."

Further using a standard, consistent AF roadmap and architecture, it will support the re-engineering and modernization of legacy systems. Finally it will provide for the acquisition of components, such as infrastructure, services, resources and activities, required to implement service-oriented capabilities.

Evolutionary Next Step, But Mandatory Use

NETCENTS-2 will help enable the enterprise IT policy and programs that support the Air Force vision for IT development and management.

According to the Air Force: "The current NETCENTS contract is the foundation of the methodology applied to IT portfolio acquisitions for information management, and the NETCENTS-2 contract strategy represents the next step in the evolution of the Air Force's enterprise-wide IT acquisition strategy."

Further "lessons learned resulted in a strategy that will (1) match the evolution of the Air Force's vision about how to manage its IT portfolio in the face of rapidly changing network technologies and increased threats to the security of Air Force systems; and (2) address the concerns raised by the DoD IG, reviewing officials, and others about the structure of the contracting vehicle.

The Air Force also explained why there will be a mandatory use policy for NETCENTS-2.

"The plan is for a mandatory use policy to be in effect for seven of the eight contracts:

- Netcentric Products
- NetOps and Infrastructure Services (Full and Open)
- NetOps and Infrastructure Services (Small Business)
- Application Services (Full and Open)
- Application Services (Small Business)
- Telephony Products and Solutions
- Enterprise Integration and Service Management (A&AS)."

The plan is to include NETCENTS-2 (with other Enterprise level contracts & BPAs) using AFWAY-2.



"Mandatory Use for the AF allows for visibility and control (governance) of much of the IT acquisition across the enterprise. The ability to see and govern IT requirements at the enterprise level will be a mechanism to reduce security risks and allow for more effective, interoperable and compliant solutions," said the Air Force.

Strategic Sourcing Goals

NETCENTS-2 will also help the AF meet its strategic sourcing goals.

"NETCENTS-2 will set up contracts that use enterprise wide contracts to support standardization of acquisition business processes," according to the Air Force.

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“We are implementing post award processes so the USAF can collect and analyze IT spend on COTS products and IT services. This will allow us to provide spend data and analysis to make business decisions about acquisition of IT commodities and services.

This set of contracts will also leverage volume buying power in strategic markets in order to reduce Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

Functional Categories Foster Increase Competition, Lower Costs

Unlike NETCENTS-1, NETCENTS-2 has functional area categories.

In that way it is similar to some of the large civilian IT contracts such as the current DHS EAGLE contract and the future contracts from NIH NITAAC.

1105 Government Information Group Custom Media asked why this format was chosen. How will this be better for the customer? And how does this differ from NETCENTS-1?

“Under the current NETCENTS contract all requirements are lumped together under one contract,” the Air Force wrote.

“An AF IG Audit found that the contract may not be achieving the anticipated lower costs and benefits. It also found that this configuration was promoting single integrator solutions. What the AF has done is group requirements into logical categories based on the scope of the work to be performed.

We have broken work out into separate contracts to allow for more granularity and to reduce the risk of building single integrator solutions. The categories were determined through thorough market research and Industry feedback.

These new categories should also promote more competition within specific categories while ultimately driving down prices. The categories are as follows:

- **Netcentric Products (COTS Only)** – Networking

equipment, servers/storage, peripherals, multimedia, software (shrink wrapped), identity management/biometric hardware and associated software, delivery, installation, warranty, maintenance

- **Telephony Products and Solutions** – Phone systems, hybrids, peripherals, global installation, warranty, delivery, maintenance, integration, engineering
- **NetOps and Infrastructure Solutions** – Network mgt/defense, infrastructure, information transport systems, enterprise level security/mgt and implementation/ops
- **Application Services** – Systems sustainment/development, migration, integration and netcentric data services
- **IT Professional Support & Engineering Services (A&S)** – IT Program Management Support and Engineering Services
- **Enterprise Integration & Service Management (A&S)** – Services to enable enterprise integration service management support for both infrastructure and mission capabilities

The contract is planned to be open for use by all DOD and other federal agencies in all of the above categories if any of the following criteria exist:

- Related to requirements for interoperability with Air Force capabilities;
- Supports Air Force IT infrastructure, applications, or operations;
- Supports host-tenant arrangements involving Air Force units; or
- Support of joint operations or solutions

NETCENTS-2 is coming. It promises to increase quality, speed solutions delivery and lower costs. The sooner, the better. □

Fed Biz Opps on NETCENTS-2

“The NETCENTS-2 effort supports initiatives and programs such as, but not limited to, the Enterprise IT Acquisition (EITA), Distributed Common Ground System (DCGS), Air Force Surgeon General, SPACECOM/Unicom, Expeditionary Combat Support System (ECSS), Defense Enterprise Accounting and Management System (DEAMS), Net-Centric Enterprise Solutions (NCES), Defense Information System Network (DISN), Defense Switch Network (DSN), Defense Message System (DMS), Air Force Systems Networking (AFSN), Secret Internet Protocol Router Network – (SIPRNET), Non-Classified Internet Protocol Router Network – (NIPRNET), Defense Research &

Engineering Network (DREN), Global Command and Control System (GCCS), Global Combat Support System (GCSS), Combat Information Transport Systems (CITS) and the Air Force's Voice Switching Systems (VSS), Theater Battle Management Control System (TBMCS), Air Operations Center (AOC) Weapon System (WS), the Air Force Satellite Control Network (AFSCN), Theater Deployable Communications (TDC), DoD Biometrics Task Force, and others.”

For complete documentation visit:

<https://www.fbo.gov/spg/USAF/AFMC/ESC/R1613/listing.html>

Better For The Customer

NETCENTS-2 will help customers with standardize purchasing policies and procedures.

NETCENTS-2 will be an enabler for the Air Force wide trend towards consolidation; on where common applications and data run using common, not stovepiped architectures.

“Taking mission applications and getting them on the same architecture is actually happening; you can track it in the discrete programs,” Kate Naunheim, Senior Analyst, Federal Opportunities at INPUT said.

In a recent interview with 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media, Naunheim noted there is really a ton of consolidation coming to light.

Naunheim said NETCENTS-2 as a whole will provide the following coverage for the federal customer when buying net-centric products and services:

- Hardware and Associated Software and Peripherals
- Information Assurance (IA) Technical Considerations
- Product Support
- Warranty
- Maintenance
- Customer Support
- Delivery

Naunheim said NETCENTS-2 will help the Air Force standardize purchasing policy and procedures.

“While there will never be one set of solutions for every Air Force base nationwide, there will be an Air Force approach to purchasing networking equipment or video conferencing equipment.” And it allows the Air Force to standardize as much as possible to make their network as

interoperable as possible.

For the customer, there should be a huge benefit according to Naunheim. “The response time will get better; the cycle will get shorter and shorter; ordering what you really need will be easier than on NETCENTS-1.”

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Post Award Management

Once NETCENTS-2 is awarded the contract will be administered by the 754 ELSG Team.

The Management Oversight Team will administer the Basic Contracts through surveillance of decentralized orders; coordination on D&Fs and close monitoring of all Labor Hour orders; and implementing lessons learned from NETCENTS-1.

There will be Performance Management Reviews and a Technology Governance Team. Customer support will consist of providing on-site training for the Contract Ordering Process and Ordering Guide; and ongoing communication via the NETCENTS-2 website and by phone with a dedicated Customer Support Team. □

Customer Friendly NETCENTS-2

When asked “How will NETCENTS-2 be better for the customer? Can you talk about what you are doing to make sure it is easy to use? What kind of support can the customer expect?” by 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media, here is what the Air Force wrote:

“NETCENTS-2 will allow significant flexibility to provide a wide range of innovative solutions with established standards. This contract will be efficient and easy to use, utilizing practices of the current contract while incorporating new ordering and reporting functions.

From a customer perspective, NETCENTS-2 will enable the ability to gain operational and life cycle savings from increased standardization

and more enterprise level approach to O&M requirements.

NETCENTS-2 will act as the IT clearing house for the customer so that technicians do not have to individually search for required technical policies, languages, instructions and clauses.

Much of these are included in the contract so there is no need for AF customers to research for each task order. There is a centralized Due Diligence checklist for all USAF Enterprise contracts or BPAs-no need to independently research alternatives.

NETCENTS-2 will provide sample and standardized task orders for repeatable tasks across the USAF and greatly reduce duplication of effort across similar types of activities.”

Expanding Competition

Air Force: From Open/Unrestricted To Functional Area Competition

What multiple award contracts – especially mandatory use contracts such as NETCENTS – do best is relieve buyers from having to do a full and open competition starting from scratch for every contract.

The contracts provide the buyer with a list of approved contractors for the requirement needed and also provide some level of protection against protests.

Contracts are let for specific task orders (TOs). Who can compete for those TOs is what makes each contract vehicle different. Some have open/unrestricted competition for each TO; others have contractors divided up into groups or functional areas where they only compete against others in their group.

New Competition

NETCENTS-1 allows open competition among all those who are on the contract for every TO. When the new Air Force NETCENTS-2 contract is finally awarded next is will be an example of a contract that has moved from open competition to functional categories.

Officials have done that to put an increased emphasis on

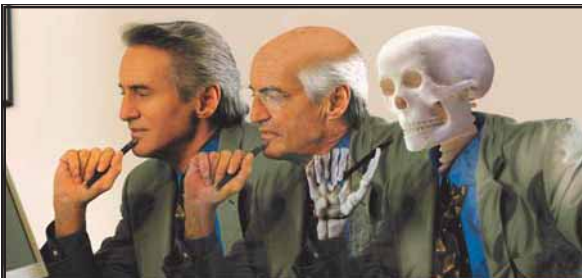
turning orders around faster along with contracts featuring specialized functional categories rather than open ended contracts; the goal is to not develop a new contract with new costs every time a requirement arises.

NETCENTS-2 buyers will determine what functional category fits their requirement and are then assured that all those contract holders within that category have been vetted for not only their expertise, but have agreed to all the terms and conditions as well as governance procedures as a condition of contract participation.

To provide for the most flexibility, each category has its own NAICS code. Each category has its own contract ceiling and contract duration – e.g. Netcentric products are at \$6.9 billion. There will be 6-9 awardees in each category, so there could be as many as 70 awardees.

Five (5) categories have been designated for full and open competition. Two (2) are designated for Small Business and one (1) is set aside for service disabled veteran owned small business (SDVOSB). (See sidebar.)

For the Air Force, all organizational issues will now be



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decided at the task order level. This allows for better planning and leveraging the expertise of the vendor community to get needed products and services at reduced costs.

For the Program Manager, it means getting to select from responsible contractors who are deemed the best overall offerors, based upon an assessment of the Technical Proposal, Past Performance and Price.

For those who wish to be on NETCENTS-2, INPUT's Kate Naunheim said because of the contract's mandatory use, business opportunities will be much decentralized, with many points of sale.

"There will be plenty of money," said Naunheim. "Once on the contract, even though you have to compete at the task order level, you have a good chance of winning a lot of business." □

Runways for Small Business

When asked how NETCENTS-2 is going to meet its goals for using small business and service disabled veterans owned businesses, here is what the NETCENTS program office told 1105 Government Information Group Custom Media.

"The acquisition strategy for NETCENTS-2 separates the scope of work into separate contract categories.

Two of those categories (Network Operations and Infrastructure Solutions and Application Services) include Small Business companion contracts with an estimated ceiling of \$4.1B and \$860M respectively.

We also have a category (IT Professional Support & Engineering Services (A&AS)) that is completely set-aside for service disabled veteran owned businesses and that contract is valued at \$713M.

Additionally, within our other categories our contractors will be required to meet minimum percentages of small business requirements as outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Based on this, it is reasonable to expect that small businesses will be major players; thus NETCENTS-2 will meet and exceed the small business goals as well."

As to who determines whether to use the small business or the full and open contract for requirements?

Expect that on a case by case basis, "the contracting officer will work with the local small business specialist to determine whether the work is suitable for small business. If it is, the work will be competed using the small business companion contracts. If not, the work will be competed using the full and open contracts. A DD Form 2579 must be accomplished for each order issued on the NC-2 contracts," according to the Air Force.

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