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The World's Biggest SANs

Who has the world's biggest storage network? We've unearthed a few candidates
U.S. Department of Defense

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Storage snapshot: 17,000 to 20,000 Fibre Channel switch ports serving 3 million employees in 163 countries; 700 Fibre Channel switches and just under 60 directors

Key suppliers: Brocade, others

Background: Last year the [Department of Defense \(DoD\)](#) teamed up with Brocade and Denver-based consultancy reVision to build the "Meta SAN," which is already being touted as one of the world's largest storage area networks.

With more than 3 million employees spread across 163 countries, and a budget of \$419.3 billion, the sheer scale of the DoD dwarfs virtually all of America's largest firms. The agency is now building a SAN to match.

Described by Brocade as "one of the largest consolidated enterprise storage networks in the world," the DoD deal calls for that vendor to supply a total of 17,000 Fibre Channel switch ports, although reVision's general manager Shawn Landry tells *Byte and Switch* that this figure is now closer to 20,000. "We have been scaling pretty well," he says. "It's probably over 700 switches in total and just under 60 directors."

Specifically, the DoD is using SilkWorm 48000 Directors to eventually link storage at more than 100 different "areas of interest," such as different service agencies, according to Landry. Fibre Channel over IP (FCIP) routing is provided by SilkWorm FR4-18i Director Blades.

A key element of Meta SAN is its ability to tie together disparate islands of storage right across the DoD. "As for the storage target, we have got many, many different storage vendors," says Landry, noting that building a SAN on this scale is largely unprecedented.

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