

WRITTEN STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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Introduction:

Good morning, Chairman Bacon, Ranking Member Khanna, and distinguished members of this subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you and the American people to speak about data and artificial intelligence (AI) at the Department of War (DoW).

My aim is to clearly present how the Chief Digital and AI Office (CDAO) is equipping the DoW's most operationally demanding and forward-leaning warfighting organizations – from Special Operations to Combatant Commands – with AI-enabled technology solutions that will secure the United States' Armed Forces' continued dominance in the modern battlefield with the clarity and conviction of a wartime mission.

MSS, WDP, and Operation Epic Fury:

Since February, our flagship capability teams – Maven Smart System (MSS) and War Data Platform (WDP) – have been operating overtime in support of Operation Epic Fury. In just weeks, they have enabled U.S. forces to strike upwards of 13,000 targets and compress targeting timelines from days into seconds. This is a fundamental shift from Iraq and Afghanistan, during which analysts manually sifted through endless drone footage and scaling operations meant scaling people.

However, these capabilities did not emerge overnight. They are the hard-earned result of a seven-year journey that began with Project Maven in 2017. Back then, DoW's approach to technology kept warfighters at arm's length from capability development, resulting in stove-piped programs of record that too often delivered capabilities that were obsolete upon arrival or solved the wrong problems.

Project Maven broke from the traditional paradigm by zeroing in on a single, urgent tactical challenge: the need to identify threats in real time. At that time, it was typical for intelligence analysts to spend sixteen-hour days watching UAV video feeds, searching for tiny anomalies that could signal major threats. The sheer volume of unstructured data, the repetitive nature of the task, and the high cost of human fatigue made it an ideal problem for AI and machine learning. Maven's engineers hypothesized that models could sift through those feeds at scale and "tip and queue" analysts the moment objects of interest appeared.

Their hypothesis was correct but insufficient. Advanced AI can sift through vast datasets faster, and often more accurately, than any analyst alone. But it is not enough, because the world's best computer vision models mean nothing inside a broken workflow of PowerPoint slides, fragmented systems, and analysts swiveling between eight disconnected screens. The real breakthrough was recognizing that the solution wasn't just better technology, but technology built around how humans actually make decisions under the pressure of endless data. That insight led the Maven team to embed engineers directly with warfighters to study their workflows, understand their data, and build tools that amplify human judgment in an AI-enabled battlespace.

This approach sits at the core of the Department of War's AI strategy, and it is being validated in real time by OPERATION EPIC FURY:

- **At Massive Scale and Decisive Speed:** The Department has seen a four-fold increase in users and an eight-fold surge in daily AI data consumption. This has enabled us to reduce the time it takes to synchronize targeting in U.S. Central Command's (CENTCOM) area of responsibility (AOR) from weeks to hours.
- **With Unified Command from the White House to the Warfighter:** MSS is providing the "single-pane-of-glass" for decision-makers, from the forward-deployed operator to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President, with over 50 thousand users across the platform, allowing hundreds of users concurrently accessing shared decision-resources and collaborating through common workflows.
- **Through Integrated Data Dominance:** Our War Data Platform team provides immediate support through data readiness and data agility, activating bi-directional data sharing for critical logistics and personnel datasets like GATES and TRAC2ES, while our MSS teams have integrated new signals intelligence (SIGINT) data sources and satisfied CENTCOM requests for commercial data in under 24 hours.
- **And From the Core to the Tactical Edge:** CDAO continues to install MSS-linked edge nodes to forward-deployed units and assets in support of the CENTCOM AOR. This focus has already allowed for the accelerated delivery of capability to a Service partner and has enabled the acceleration of four more tactical data nodes directly to the CENTCOM AOR in the coming days and weeks, hydrating our command-and-control ecosystem with the latest and most accurate tactical data from across the globe.

Operation Epic Fury is proving the power and scope of AI-enabled, data-centric warfighting in real-world conflict. The question now is not whether it works, but rather how it can be scaled to over three million users across the DoW enterprise.

The Strategy:

On January 12, 2026, the Department of War released its AI Acceleration Strategy, laying out how CDAO will integrate AI across warfighting, enterprise, and intelligence functions in support of the aims of our National Defense Strategy: defending the homeland, deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, strengthening alliances, and supercharging the defense industrial base.

The Department, and this subcommittee know that not all strategies are equal. What makes this one different, and why will it win? It will win because it codifies seven years of hard-won lessons from Project Maven and subsequent AI efforts into a clear, executable, department-wide plan. In that spirit, I will walk through each line of effort, the lesson behind it, and how it is being operationalized today.

First, American economic history teaches us that the Department must leverage – not compete with – commercial innovation. In 2025 alone, frontier AI labs raised over \$120 billion, and private sector capital expenditure on AI infrastructure exceeded \$400 billion. CDAO must not outspend our thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem but instead harness its economic and technological dynamism for national defense.

This lesson is reshaping how CDAO contracts and recruits. For example, since the President's AI Action Plan in July 2025, CDAO has reduced timelines for awarding Other Transaction Authority (OTA) contracts from years to as little as 45 days. This accelerated process has enabled

CDAO to onboard top-tier engineering talent into mission workflows at speed expedite AI adoption across the Department.

This engagement between CDAO and industry is not one-sided. Industry brings capital, talent, and cutting-edge innovation. However, the Department brings something no private actor can replicate – operational data at scale, real-world mission constraints, and the ability to test and refine systems in live environments. Together, the collaboration between DoW and industry creates capabilities, and ultimately markets, that would not emerge from either side alone but will lead to groundswells of innovation and commercial value downstream.

Second, just as the Department must leverage American commercial innovation rather than compete with it, it must also build on the unique advantages of its military force. The United States military is the best-equipped and best-trained fighting force in the world, not just because of what it builds, but because of its ability to field and sustain advanced capability at the edge, across globally dispersed units and under the most austere conditions. For example, over the past several years, CDAO has directly collaborated with U.S. European Command (EUCOM) to embed AI-enabled capabilities directly into operational environments under real warfighting conditions:

- Project Koravai, a CDAO and EUCOM co-developed joint and coalition registry for synchronizing weapons, training, logistics, and security assistance for Ukraine.
- Sky Blue Environment, a CDAO and EUCOM co-developed digital collaboration environment which hosts War Data Platform and is used as the US, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the European Union’s (EU) digital operations and collaboration environment for Security Assistance and training support to Ukraine; and
- Decision Advantage Environment (DAE), a CDAO and EUCOM co-developed platform that drives EUCOM's decision dominance by transforming the MSS into a unified, AI-powered command and control capability to replace the legacy Common Operations Picture (COP). DAE is now considered the gold standard for cross-directorate and cross-domain collaboration.
- As a next step after creating shared environments, CDAO and EUCOM are co-developing an Agentic Warfighting CCMD initiative leveraging AI for enhanced decision-making and process automation.

Third, the Department has learned that traditional “Programs of Record” (PORs) are built for scale – but they are not built for speed. The AI era demands both. To close that gap, we introduced the Pacesetter Project (PSP) – rapid, focused project vehicles that solve DoW’s greatest adoption challenges by drawing from the characteristics of Project Maven nearly a decade ago. To date, CDAO has launched seven PSPs across our warfighting, intelligence, and enterprise functions, with additional fast-follow efforts already underway. CDAO looks forward to briefing members of this subcommittee on each in greater detail. However, in broad terms, our efforts are as follows:

- CDAO’s warfighting PSPs range from Swarm Forge—a semi-autonomous swarm development program being tested in collaboration with the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group and the Drone Dominance team—to Ender’s Foundry, an advanced simulation environment for optimizing human-machine teaming and developing novel

tactics, informed by data from live exercises in partnership with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

- CDAO's intelligence PSPs, including Open Arsenal and Project GRANT, accelerate both warfighting and intelligence capabilities by breaking down barriers between Title 10 and Title 50 data—unlocking the Department's ability to shift deterrence from static postures to dynamic pressure.
- CDAO's enterprise PSPs include GenAI.mil, the Department's official platform for frontier AI capabilities, which has scaled to over 1.2 million users and delivered training to more than 30,000 personnel. Through its Agent Factory, the platform has deployed over 60,000 AI agents across the Department. Whether querying the U.S. Code to meet legislative requirements in record time or providing real-time guidance on the law of armed conflict, these agents are replacing static manuals with dynamic, responsible tools that improve effectiveness, reduce costs, and enhance security.

Furthermore, CDAO is leveraging the PSP structure not only for its own PSPs but also as a vehicle for collaborating more closely with combatant commands on their existing efforts. For example, while U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) is a co-lead for the AI Strategy's "Agent Network" and "Project GRANT" PSPs, CDAO is providing technical expertise and funding to enable INDOPACOM's work on tools, including their Joint Sustainment Decision Tool (JSDT), an AI-native decision layer for sustainment and risk, radically expanding INDOPACOM's ability to structure command and control.

Similarly, CDAO is engaging with U.S. Africa Command's (AFRICOM) Defense Economics Engagement Cell to integrate AI-driven tools to counter terrorism and narco-trafficking and fund AI capabilities within the FLINTLOCK ecosystem. This collaboration also extends to enabling their exploration of AI solutions for large-scale combat operations, specifically by leveraging Africa's unique environmental challenges.

Fourth, the Department has learned that meeting the demands of modern warfare requires modernizing the underlying data infrastructure for AI-enabled operations. To that end, CDAO is pursuing two complementary efforts: transforming Advana into the War Data Platform and elevating Maven Smart System into a department-wide program of record.

War Data Platform's transition restructures the Department's data architecture by decoupling enterprise business functions from frontline mission needs—allowing the legacy Advana environment to continue supporting financial management and audit, while WDP serves as the “single source of truth” for warfighting and intelligence, delivering mission-relevant data to operators in high-stakes environments. Meanwhile, as a part of Maven Smart System's transition to a program of record, the Department will evaluate the centralization of Combined Joint All-Domain Command and Control efforts with the aim of accelerating the deployment of AI-enabled applications across the force. Taken together, these efforts will establish the data infrastructure required to scale AI advantage across the Department.

A fifth lesson the Department cannot afford to relearn is that firing a multi-million-dollar missile to intercept a \$20,000 drone is a losing equation. In other words, it is time for DoW to embrace the model demonstrated in Ukraine, where millions of drones are now produced annually, many costing less than \$1,000. More important than cost alone is the underlying approach: the ability

to identify battlefield problems and deploy solutions at the speed of warfare. Cheap mass, combined with rapid iteration, is becoming the defining characteristic of modern conflict.

The Department is acting swiftly to address these challenges. With multi-billion-dollar investments in unmanned systems through Congress' Reconciliation Bill and CDAO's support to the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group, the Department is streamlining the sensor-to-shooter cycle between AI enabled human-machine teams. This includes analyzing extensive training and combat footage using advanced compute to identify enemy assets and coordinate large drone swarms to provide real-time, comprehensive decision support for warfighters, enhancing their operational effectiveness through autonomous warfare.

The final lesson comes from our adversaries. In recent decades, experts estimate that the Chinese state has invested upwards of \$150–300 billion in the energy and compute infrastructure that underpins AI, compared to tens of billions in coordinated federal investment in the United States. Moreover, in the early days of OPERATION EPIC FURY, the Department witnessed retaliatory strikes from Iranian drones and missiles targeting commercial data centers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain. Our adversaries understand where their only advantage lies. The United States Armed Forces excel at adoption and fielding; their only winning strategy is to compete by controlling the means of AI production.

DoW's response is simple: as we speak the Department is commanding its immense resources and requirements to co-invest in joint infrastructure projects, transcend Title 10 and Title 50 stovepipes, and break ground on energy and AI infrastructure projects on the 640 million acres of DOW-owned federal land in alignment with the Department of Energy's Genesis Mission, the Intelligence Community, and the rest of the interagency. Together, the United States Government is building the AI Arsenal—a modular ecosystem with a three-tiered deployment strategy to ensure that compute power is available at the right place at the right time. The tiers are as follows:

- The Department's Tier 1 National Compute Centers will include 100+ Megawatt (MW) scale compute and serve as the “brains” of our sovereign infrastructure, enabling us to train the largest, most complex foundational AI models on national scale classified datasets. They will be collocated with Service planned base-level power plants and provide joint capacity.
- The Tier 2 Regional Compute Centers will include 10+ MW and will link our Tier 1 centers to the tactical edge, providing tailored AI capabilities to Combatant Commands, intelligence agencies, and major operational theaters. They will be particularly useful for model-fine tuning to specific, regional datasets – from recognizing different equipment profiles in the INDOPACOM AOR to understanding local dialects from CENTCOM SIGINT feeds.
- Finally, Tier 3 will consist of Modular Tactical Compute, each up to 1MW. These self-contained, high-performance AI “data centers in a box” will be deployed to the edge to enable real-time, in-theater analysis of drone footage, sensor data, and signals intelligence, even in completely disconnected environments from trucks to rail, from ships to backpacks. Most critically, they will be rapidly deployable, easily moveable and readily replaced.

The primary benefit of AI Arsenal's approach is speed. The Department will no longer wait 3–5 years for new infrastructure to come online. Instead, as DoW builds out our Tier 1 infrastructure on federal land, it is simultaneously collaborating with industry to leverage compute capacity that is already available today, optimizing our investments and timeline. The Department is looking forward to collaborating closely with Congress on the development of this project and will share further updates in the coming months.

Conclusion:

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and members of the subcommittee –

The modern battlefield is evolving at a pace unmatched in recent history. In an era of heightened geopolitical competition, our ability to achieve decision advantage is essential to maintaining the world's preeminent military. CDAO is tasked with preserving that advantage by harnessing the best technology available and delivering it directly into the hands of our warfighters.

The investments required will be significant, because they must be. No consequential effort in history has been achieved without sustained commitment. CDAO, with your collaboration and support, is acting in this defining moment to ensure that every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine, and Guardian is equipped not just to compete, but to prevail.

Thank you.

