

INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY



Countering emerging threats requires equipping our warfighters with cutting-edge technologies. The FY26 NDAA is focused on rapidly deploying innovative, new technologies that our warfighters need to prevail on future battlefields.

Expedites Innovation to the Warfighter:

- ★ Further improves DoD's Authority to Operate (ATO) process for software and information technology - a key enabler of more rapid and iterative development practices - by expediting the ATO decision process.
- ★ Authorizes the Office of Strategic Capital to collect fees to help improve the speed of application reviews.
- ★ Establishes a pilot program for Special Operations Command to test and procure innovative technologies and equipment that enhance operational capabilities to meet emerging requirements.
- ★ Requires DoD to review the standards, guidance, and policies that inform the use of digital engineering across the military services to help accelerate program design, development, and testing.
- ★ Establishes a digital test and evaluation environment to help expedite program design and development.
- ★ Integrates modern software practices at DoD by establishing a pilot program to leverage commercial software innovations for test and evaluation.

Prioritizes Biotechnology Development:

- ★ Encourages increased inter-service and inter-department research to capitalize on the advantages of new biotechnologies.
- ★ Requires a feasibility assessment of applying military-relevant biotechnology into wargaming exercises.
- ★ Requires DoD to develop requirements for the effective and responsible use of biological data.
- ★ Ensures military requirements allow the integration of biobased products.





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Capitalizes on Commercial Capabilities:

- ★ Fast-tracks promising technologies by small businesses and fosters R&D and commercialization of innovative technologies.
- ★ Includes provisions to improve information sharing between DoD and small businesses on contract opportunities relating to DoD critical technology areas.
- ★ Incentivizes contracting managers to look for commercial off-the-shelf solutions before entering into costly new contracts.
- ★ Allows the Direct to Phase II authority to be extended to the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR) program, enabling the fast-tracking of promising technologies.
- ★ Allows for the Department to award additional sequential Phase II STTR awards to allow promising technologies a limited amount of additional time to mature.

Accelerates Emerging Technologies:

- ★ Bolsters DoD cybersecurity skills by adding AI-related content into mandatory annual training.
- ★ Leverages cutting-edge technologies by creating new lines of effort using generative AI.
- ★ Authorizes the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering to conduct developmental prototyping and to provide direction to the services on Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E) matters.

Strengthens the Innovation Workforce and Research Partnerships:

- ★ Allows the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to continue expanding their talent pool by extending the authority to temporarily assign employees from nontraditional defense contractors to the Agency.
- ★ Expands the reach of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) by authorizing regional outreach centers to be established either domestically or internationally.

