

RECORD VERSION

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BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

SECOND SESSION, 119TH CONGRESS

**REVIEWING DEPARTMENT OF WAR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY,
POLICY, AND PROGRAMS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027**

MAY 19TH, 2026

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE COMMITTEE

Chairwoman Ernst, Ranking Member Slotkin, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Army's innovation enterprise. It is an honor to represent the dedicated scientists, engineers, and acquisition professionals who work tirelessly to ensure that our Soldiers remain the most lethal, protected, and technologically advanced land force in the world.

Our world is at an inflection point where disruptive transformation now will mean victory in the future. America's Army must change now. It must be unshackled from waste and inefficiency, or Soldiers will pay the greatest price.

*-Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll in testimony before the House
Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, April 16, 2026*

This is an exciting time for the Army, as we embark on a generational transformation of how we do business. In coordination with the Department of War and our partners in Congress, the Army has undertaken a bold acquisition reform effort, aligning the whole ecosystem of how we innovate, develop and buy under the Portfolio Acquisition Executives (PAE).

We are operating in an era of unprecedented technological disruption and increasing Great Power competition. The battlefield of the future will be hyper-connected, highly contested, and characterized by extremely rapid technological cycles. To dominate in this environment, the Army cannot rely solely on the acquisition methods of the past. We must fundamentally transform how we discover, develop, and deliver capabilities to the tactical edge. The new PAE structure is designed to do just this.

Today, I will discuss how the Army is optimizing its innovation enterprise to meet these challenges. We are aggressively modernizing our approach by balancing our traditional, foundational Science and Technology (S&T) pipelines with highly agile, venture-capital-inspired innovation models, allowing us to move at the speed of change, leveraging our Nation's incredible technological talent.

In April of 2025, I was asked to conduct a comprehensive review of the Army's S&T program. We identified areas where the Army must keep or increase S&T investments, such as Fires and counter-C5ISR, and areas where we should leverage the commercial sector, such as C3 and Autonomy. As a result of this analysis, we began to realign funding in FY25 and FY26 through reprogramming actions, in coordination with your defense committees, and you can see the full effect of this rebalancing in our FY27 budget request.

This analysis proved to be especially timely, as in January of 2026, the Secretary of War directed the Department and the Services to organize to deliver innovation in three ways:

Technology Innovation. In an environment where basic building blocks are increasingly accessible to adversaries, the Department must create differentiated capabilities and concepts that only we possess—capabilities that change what is possible. Much of this work must be protected – and, where appropriate, classified – to enhance our advantage. The Department must sustain investment in this defense-unique innovation where no scaled market exists. Basic research feeds this work and must remain open to the widest scientific exchange; technology innovation converts discovery and ideas into protected advantage.

Product Innovation. The Department must harness the creativity and drive of American entrepreneurs and capital markets, who draw from abundant commercial and dual-use technology to create reliable, scalable products fielded in serial production. We must pivot from only asking companies to build to specification and must learn to once again adopt and scale external creations. American innovators are building and producing remarkable things. Our job is to adopt them faster than our adversaries can copy them.

Operational Capability Innovation. The Department must combine technologies and weapons with tactics and doctrine into new ways of fighting that create asymmetric advantage. We must avoid a gizmo culture: no wonder-

weapon by itself creates advantage. Skilled operators with strategic insight and tactical imagination must find disruptive applications of new and existing capabilities that deter, surprise, overmatch, and prevail.¹

In my role as the Army S&T Executive, I am primarily focused on the first two.

Technology Innovation

As noted above, there will always be areas where the Army must invest to develop critical technologies and capabilities with no commercial applications. The cornerstone of these efforts is our Army Laboratory and Center ecosystem, and the amazing group of scientists, engineers and support staff that dedicate their careers to solving these challenges. Our S&T Enterprise is made up of 12 Science and Technology Reinvention Laboratories (STRL), across four commands – Transformation and Training Command (T2COM), the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Space and Missile Defense Command, and Headquarters Department of the Army G-1 – with approximately 19,000 Army civilians and 1,400 uniformed personnel.

Historically, the Army has struggled with the infamous "Valley of Death"—the gap where promising research from our laboratories failed to transition into formal acquisition programs. Before our recent acquisition reform efforts, S&T development often operated on a parallel, but disconnected, track from the requirements generators and the Program Executive Offices (PEOs) responsible for developing and purchasing the weapons systems.

As part of our acquisition reform efforts, our PAEs each have a designated System Center. This System Center serves as the connective tissue and central coordinating hub for all related work across the various labs and centers.

¹ Secretary of War, "Transforming the Defense Innovation Ecosystem to Accelerate Warfighting Advantage" (memorandum, January 9, 2026).

This new construct forces synchronization by integrating three historically siloed communities – the S&T Enterprise; the requirements generators; and the materiel developers.

By coordinating through the System Centers, we have effectively eliminated the operational silos. When a scientist in one of our labs is developing a new advanced sensor, they are no longer guessing what the acquisition community might want in five years. They are working under the coordinated guidance of a PAE's System Center, in direct collaboration with the requirements writers and the ultimate program managers.

This acquisition reform ensures that every dollar spent in our S&T enterprise is deliberately synchronized with requirements generation, development, and fielding. It is this exact construct that allows us to get new, overmatching capabilities out of early research and into the hands of our Soldiers more efficiently and effectively than before.

Before we can rapidly field new technologies, we must first invent them. Engineers create useful things with science; scientists conducting Basic Research make the new scientific breakthroughs that feed the engineers. While the outcomes of 6.1 funding may not be fielded tomorrow, they are the very discoveries that will ensure operational overmatch in 2040 and beyond. If we underinvest in this area today, we will inherently starve the innovation pipeline of tomorrow.

Basic Research does not just mean conducting science for science's sake. Our investments are tightly aligned with where we anticipate our needs in the future and are executed in deep partnership with academia and industry. A robust Basic Research program also allows us to conduct technological overwatch and see where our adversaries are investing for their future capabilities. Our program makes focused investments in a number of areas, including synthetic biology, disruptive energetics, and quantum sciences.

Made today, these investments will shape the battlefield for the next century of Army dominance.

Product Innovation

As we have seen over the course of the war in Ukraine, product development cycles can now be measured in weeks and days, not years. To address the need for extreme agility, the Army has engineered a paradigm shift in how we engage with non-traditional defense contractors, startups, and the commercial tech sector. We have realized that speed is *the* mission imperative.

We often refer to our acquisition reform effort as containing six PAEs plus one. That plus one is the Pathway for Innovation and Technology.

Pathway for Innovation and Technology (PIT)

The PIT represents "innovation in the dirt" and operates under three guiding principles – speed is more important than perfection; early Soldier iteration is critical; and we must validate the demand signal before committing large sums of money. Bringing together existing innovation organizations at the Corps (Joint Innovation Outpost (JIOP)) and Army Service Component Command (Global Tactical Edge Acquisition Directorate (G-TEAD)) echelons, the PIT embedded model allows acquisition professionals to iterate directly with Soldiers in the field, turning tactical demand signals into fielded prototypes in months, rather than years or decades.

Operating as the core innovation engine within the PIT are the Army's innovation programs, unified under Army FUZE. FUZE takes those tactical demand signals and operates with a venture-capitalist mindset: broad discovery, targeted investment, and rapid transition. By leveraging xTech competitions, rapid contracting, and programs like SBIR, Technology Maturation Initiatives, and ManTech, FUZE engages over one thousand companies annually—many of them completely new to the Army.

FUZE ensures that we double down on technological winners while learning fast and cheap which concepts do not meet mission requirements. This paradigm allows us to avoid the trap of sinking billions into programs that ultimately fail to deliver. If a startup

wins an xTech competition, FUZE provides the continuous pathway through SBIR funding, TMI prototyping, and connects to PAEs to scale that product and field broadly across the Army.

These new initiatives are already bearing fruit. In late 2025, a series of unmanned aerial incursions into Polish and Romanian airspace underscored a growing capability need along the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s Eastern Flank. Traditional air defense responses were too costly and slow to counter the volume and pace of modern drone activity. As a result, U.S. Army Europe and Africa Command (USAREURAF) issued an urgent request for a low-cost, highly mobile counter-unmanned aerial systems (c-UAS) solution capable of addressing this emerging threat.

Within days of the initial hostile act along the Eastern Flank Deterrence Line, G-TEAD deployed a team in-country to identify, validate, and onboard a combat-proven c-UAS system for immediate experimentation and iteration. Working alongside USAREURAF, the team witnessed live demonstrations of the Merops system and confirmed its suitability for rapid fielding.

Merops is an American-made mobile counter-drone platform that launches small interceptor drones from a truck-mounted system to disable incoming threats. The system had already demonstrated its effectiveness in Ukraine and was also in use among NATO partners, providing a proven foundation for accelerated deployment.

Leveraging an existing contract vehicle through the 409th Contracting Support Brigade, G-TEAD immediately obtained 50 systems for experimentation and operational use during a joint exercise between Poland and Romania. In parallel, G-TEAD synchronized efforts across Task Force UxS (U.S. Special Operations Command) and Joint Interagency Task Force 401 (JIATF-401) to eliminate duplicative innovation work and ensure enterprise alignment. This rapid, coordinated action closed a critical capability gap and demonstrated the agility, integration, and operational focus that defines the PIT's mission.

Most significantly, the Merops system—which started as an urgent G-TEAD initiative—is now slated for initial procurement by our traditional acquisition programs this Fiscal Year.

Conclusion

Members of the Subcommittee, the character of war is changing, and the Army's innovation enterprise is changing with it.

We are better aligning our S&T Enterprise under the PAE construct, synchronizing lines of effort to ensure our S&T investments translate into real capabilities in the hands of our Soldiers. Simultaneously, through the disruptive mechanisms of the Army PIT and FUZE, we are tearing down bureaucratic barriers, adopting a venture capital mindset, and getting our hands dirty alongside the Soldier to deliver capabilities at the speed of relevance.

Finally, at the direction of the Secretary of War, and under the leadership of the Deputy Undersecretary of the Army, the Army continues to build on the significant efforts we have already undertaken to further guide our transformation over the next year. We are spearheading lab reforms to expedite technology delivery to the warfighter, and transforming our Intellectual Property enterprise to leverage lab-generated IP as a core strategic asset.

By synchronizing these efforts with the Department of War and Administration priorities, we are guaranteeing that the United States Army will never be technologically overmatched and remain the most powerful land force the world has ever seen.

Thank you for your enduring support of our Soldiers, our scientists, and our mission. I look forward to your questions.