



Committee: House Armed Services Committee on Cyber, Information Technologies & Innovation

Event: [Science, Technology, and Innovation Posture of the Department of Defense](#)

Date: May 14, 2026

Executive Summary: On Thursday, May 14, 2026, the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Cyber, Information Technologies & Innovation held a hearing to review the Department of Defense's (DOD) science and technology work. Leaders from the DOD's newly reorganized research and engineering functions testified on efforts to accelerate the development of dual use technologies and maintain technological leadership against adversaries. Members from both parties were broadly supportive of DOD efforts to do so.

Member Toplines:

[Chair Don Bacon \(R-NE-02\):](#) Bacon underscored that the current era of unprecedented innovation creates significant threats to our national security and major opportunities for the U.S. to maintain military superiority by embracing innovation. He praised a recent reorganization of DOD for allowing the department to better coordinate with industry, academia, and other agencies.

[Ranking Member Ro Khanna \(D-CA-17\):](#) Khanna also highlighted the reorganization of DOD's "research and engineering ecosystem" and expressed interest in hearing from the witnesses on lowering barriers for commercial entry and implementing an artificial intelligence (AI) strategy.

Witness Toplines:

[Emil Michael, Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, DOD:](#) Michael discussed his work to streamline and unite DOD's innovation work. He announced that the DOD has pared down its Critical Technology Areas (CTAs) from 14 to six focused areas: applied AI; biomanufacturing; contested logistics; quantum and battlefield information dominance; scaled directed energy; and scaled hypersonics. Michael said that DOD is focused on leveraging its own investment authority and private sector capabilities to support these CTAs and other important technologies. He also highlighted the rollout of the "GenAI.mil" generative AI platform to 3 million personnel and the signing of fixed-price contracts with new entrants to build low-cost munitions.

[Cameron Stanley, Chief Data and Artificial Intelligence Officer:](#) Stanley emphasized that DOD must leverage, rather than compete with, commercial innovation. He warned of an "AI infrastructure arms race" with China and said DOD is working with the Department of Energy to build an "AI arsenal" to ensure U.S. computing power meets capacity needs.

[Owen West, Director, Defense Innovation Unit \(DIU\):](#) West emphasized DIU's role in converting commercial technology into combat power. He praised the role of private capital in accelerating

technology development and said DIU's core investment focus is the intersection of speed, scale, and lethality.

Major Takeaways:

Artificial Intelligence & Advanced Technologies

- Chair Bacon asked about the department's Fiscal Year 2027 budget request; Michael highlighted numerous budget increases related to building the "AI arsenal."
- Ranking Member Khanna pressed Michael about his previous stock holdings in **Elon Musk's** xAI (yielding a 500 percent gain) while DOD signed a \$200 million contract with the company. Michael confirmed he had fully recused himself from all matters regarding xAI until he sold his holdings.
- Rep. **John McGuire** (R-VA-05) asked Michael how the CTA consolidation will impact investments in other technology areas. Michael replied that DOD is investing in a wide range of technologies and that CTA categories just show where more, not all, focus is needed from funding authorities.
- McGuire also emphasized the need to deploy multiple large language models across classification levels and asked about the DOD internal usage of AI. Stanley said they aim to be an "AI first" department.
- Responding to Rep. **Sara Jacobs** (D-CA-51), Stanley affirmed that while DOD is increasingly relying on AI, robust policies predating AI are in place to ensure human commanders maintain responsibility for lethal force decisions.

Defense Industrial Base & Supply Chains

- In response to a question from Bacon on key accomplishments, Michael explained that the unification of the innovation ecosystem allows the Office of Strategic Capital to more efficiently pursue "critical minerals deals" and rebuild the defense industrial base.
- Rep. **Brad Finstad** (R-MN-01) asked about DIU's work to help small businesses avoid the "valley of death." West pointed to DIU's OnRamp hubs and said the agency is focused on connecting entrepreneurs with military opportunities.
- McGuire highlighted funding from the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* in the defense industrial base for unmanned aircraft systems.
- Rep. **George Whitesides** (D-CA-27) asked about the use of advanced purchase commitments. West highlighted that the DOD is using \$1.1 billion in advanced purchase commitments to fund the "Drone Dominance" program. Michael emphasized that such commitments are crucial for attracting private capital to defense startups.

Wildfire Mitigation

- Whitesides asked about DOD's work addressing the "wildfire crisis" in the West. In response to Rep. George Whitesides (D-Calif.), Michael and West confirmed that DOD is partnering with states to utilize commercial dual use technologies like autonomous aircraft and AI to detect and treat wildfires.