Pentagon Announces Joint AI Center

The center is led by DIUx and will further support the military’s adoption of AI talent, emerging technologies the ethics behind them.

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Photo Credit: Senior Airman Franklin R. Ramos

The Defense Innovation Unit Experimental announced the establishment of a Joint Artificial Intelligence Center to explore AI's potential for bolstering the military’s decision making, partnerships, AI talent and National Defense Strategy.
DIUx, the Defense Department’s organization that helps the military benefit from and use emerging commercial technologies, discussed the JAIC at the Defense Innovation Board public meeting in Silicon Valley on July 11. The board is an independent federal committee that advises the secretary of defense on issues related to people, technology and practices.

“We’re in the midst of an exciting and crucial time in the development of AI,” said Brendan McCord, head of machine learning at DIUx, at the board meeting. “In a sense, we’re experiencing a step change in what computers are capable of doing,” he added, citing the way AI has transformed industries like self-driving cars, recommendation systems, medical imaging and home appliances.

McCord believes the potential of AI can reach “every corner” of DOD, from the way it maintains equipment, perceives the environment, trains and protects the military’s men and women, defends its network, operates the back offices, provides humanitarian aid and responds to disasters.

So, to help the Defense Department to take advantage of AI capabilities faster and smarter while protecting the department's values and the values of its stakeholders, the JAIC has four key themes:

- **Translate technology to decisions and impact**: JAIC will focus on improving the department’s ability to translate technology into decisions and impact at the pace of technological advancement. “We need to accelerate results, and not just proof of concept, but things that bridge the last mile all the way to our end users and help to change the way they work,” McCord said. JAIC will help DOD by better organizing personnel to deliver AI enabled capabilities to end users, and increasing the learning rate through an enterprisewide approach, and with enterprisewide resources, so projects and research can flourish.

- **Evolve DOD’s partnerships**: JAIC will help the department evolve its partnerships with industry, academia and allies by communicating critical needs in industry focus areas, by coordinating and executing missions with industry, by building capacity mutually, and by working with traditional and nontraditional innovators. This way, JAIC’s advances in AI can be shared
among all its partners.

- **Attract and cultivate AI talent**: JAIC plans to cultivate a “select group of mission-driven, world-class AI talent,” McCord said, and will help with departmentwide efforts to develop and prepare a workforce of AI practitioners, software engineers and product managers. This will include ethics, humanitarian considerations, and both short- and long-term AI safety. McCord said DOD is also asking the Defense Innovation Board to assist the JAIC in providing input to AI principles for defense, which it will also develop with multiple stakeholders.

- **Dovetail to the National Defense Strategy**: JAIC will join the strategy in capturing the dynamic of the current strategic environment and the connection to the military’s fundamental roles of keeping peace, protecting the country and improving global stability. Ultimately, AI can be an instrumental step in achieving these goals.

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