

## [Hot Clicks: Air Force to Use Data as Weapon](#)

Rounding up IT and advanced tech-related news impacting government and industry.

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The initiative is called multidomain command and control, or MDC2, and its goal is to take data from sensors on the ground, in the air and in space and turn it into intelligence for war commanders. The effort is being pushed by Chief of Staff Gen. David Goldfein, and though the plan isn't completely fleshed out yet, officials say having a whole picture of what's happening in all combat domains, including air, cyber and space, is needed to make better decisions and form situational awareness.

And as the amount of data available to analyze just keeps growing, there's still a lot of information locked away and inaccessible to those who need it, especially in a

somewhat “fragmented organization.” The Air Force named its first chief data officer earlier this year to connect the different parts of the branch, bring them into a multidomain environment and form a data architecture — linking space, air and cyber data.

Still, exactly how to bring all the data from sensors around the world and in space to one central location is under discussion. [SpaceNews](#)

## **Your Toy, the Pentagon’s Threat**

Drones are causing problems for American troops in war zones. Rather than being used commercially for delivering packages, some drones are reconfigured to drop explosives. Others are used to monitor troops and pick targets, or spread toxic gas, making them lethal weapons and intelligence tools. There’s also a fear of drones becoming more and more deadly as technology advances, or even of drones used as robot armies in swarms for raids.

So, the Pentagon’s Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization is looking to counter the drone threat by developing “anti-drone” weapons — lasers and microwaves to blast them away. JIDO is working with academia, startups and venture capitalists to stay on top of drone technology, embarking on what is similar to the counter-IED effort.

Companies like CACI, BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin are already developing the technology capable of tracking and taking down airborne drones. [Washington Post](#)

## **Facebook Uses AI to Save Lives**

The social media company’s “proactive detection” artificial intelligence technology can scan all posts for patterns of suicidal thoughts and flag them to human moderators rather than waiting for users to report posts. If necessary, the AI will send help via mental health resources to the user or their friends, or even contact local first-responders.

Facebook tested a similar AI in the U.S., but now it’ll be able to reach all types of content around the world (except in the European Union because of data protection laws).

The AI will also prioritize the riskier or urgent user reports so moderators address them quicker. Facebook even has tools to instantly find first-responder contact information, and dedicates more moderators to suicide prevention and training to deal with the cases. The company has partnered with National Suicide Prevention Lifeline and Forefront to provide resources to at-risk users. However, some may still have a problem with how this tech could be applied, as Facebook constantly scans the content of people's posts. [TechCrunch](#)

## **A Human Pilot Still Beat an AI Drone — For Now**

It was an experiment race by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory between a pro quadcopter human pilot and NASA's AI drone. The human won, but only after he had some practice. The race came after two years of Google-funded research into autonomous drones. The test craft used Google's Tango technology to map surroundings in 3-D and could fly at speeds of up to 60 mph, though NASA's tight indoor course restricted it to 40 mph.

The human pilot, Ken Loo, who also participates in the International Drone Racing League, was initially beat by the AI — until he learned the twists and turns of the course and then he won. Humans fly more “by feel,” a trait AI drones still lack.

Autonomous drones are already used for surveillance and deliveries, but it'll take sometime to get them to race as intuitively and energetically as humans do. But one day, they will be able to outpace us. [The Verge](#)

## **Tech Boosts Entrepreneurship Nationwide**

Perhaps to no surprise, a recent study by the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation found the number of tech-based startups in the U.S. economy grew 47 percent in the last decade, largely contributing to economic growth. While this makes a case for more government support of these tech startups, it also proves technology is opening more doors for entrepreneurial thinking, and not just inside Silicon Valley.

Startups also provide the opportunity for many to be disruptors, and tech ventures tend to provide better pay, longer-lasting jobs than other startups and more innovation, according to Rob Atkinson, president of ITIF and co-author of the report.

He also said tech-driven ventures are more likely to export their goods and services, making a “disproportionate contribution to growth.”

And don’t worry, even the top tech players like Amazon and Google aren’t slowing down the rise of innovation-based startups, but building one is challenging, and requires substantial growth before being able to make a sustainable revenue. [Forbes](#)

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