



**Defense
One**

INVENTING IN THE MUD

How SOF is Upskilling Tomorrow's Operators for the Robot War Future

A COCKTAIL & CONVERSATION EVENT
05.20.2026 · TAMPA, FL

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

4:30 PM EDT
30 MINS

Registration & Networking

Pick up your badge and network with your peers!

5 PM EDT
5 MINS

Opening Remarks

Welcome to D1 Cocktail & Conversation!

5:05 PM EDT
5 MINS

Sponsor Remarks

5:10 PM EDT
30 MINS

The Cognitive Operator: Readiness in the Age of Autonomy



Gen. Francis Donovan
Commander
U.S. SOUTHCOM

Military operations are entering an era where machines process information faster than humans can fully interpret it. The challenge is no longer just integrating advanced systems, but ensuring operators can act decisively inside compressed decision timelines while maintaining judgment and accountability. In this keynote, a senior defense leader will discuss how readiness is being redefined for an AI enabled battlespace, how training is shifting toward cognitive agility and decision making under uncertainty, and how leaders are preparing teams to operate when autonomy informs or accelerates battlefield actions.

5:30 PM EDT
30 MINS

Training the Human Machine Team

Autonomy and AI are moving from experimentation into daily operational environments. Training models that once centered on human only decision making must now account for robotic teammates, automated sensing, and degraded communications as baseline conditions. Senior defense leaders will discuss how selection, training, and experimentation are evolving to prepare operators to work effectively with autonomous systems, how lessons from exercises and deployments are shaping capability development, and how leaders determine when automation should be trusted and when it should be overridden.

6 PM EDT
5 MINS

Sponsor Closing Remarks

A few remarks from our underwriters.

6:05 PM EDT
5 MINS

Editorial Closing Remarks

Thank you for joining us!

6:10 PM EDT
50 MINS

Cocktail & Conversation Reception