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

Patrick Tucker
Science & Technology Editor
Defense One

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

Patrick Tucker
Science & Technology Editor
Defense One

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

Lt. Col. Eric Sturzinger
Director of Research & Engagements
Artificial Intelligence Integration Center (AI2C), U.S. Army

Will Ryan
Acting Deputy Director and PM, Autonomy Portfolio, Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)
U.S. Department of War

Patrick Tucker
Science & Technology Editor
Defense One

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

Editorial Closing Remarks

Patrick Tucker
Science & Technology Editor
Defense One

Thank you for joining us!

6:05 PM EDT

1 HR

Cocktail & Conversation Reception