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STATE OF DEFENSE 2026



Virtual Event / March 24-26

REGISTER NOW

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

2:00 PM EDT

30 MINS

Keynote

Leadership Keynote - Navy

2:30 PM EDT

30 MINS

Panel

Building the Golden Fleet

President Trump has focused on shipbuilding as one of his top priorities in his second administration, and Navy Secretary John Phelan in December announced that Trump had OK'd a future "Golden Fleet." Speaking at the Reagan Defense Forum, Phelan said, "We will continue to build ships that are the cornerstones of the fleet—carriers, destroyers, amphibies, submarines. But we need new ships and we need modern ships." Join us for a conversation with experts about the current challenges in the shipbuilding industry, how the Navy is working to overcome those challenges, and what the Golden Fleet may look like.

3:00 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Operation Southern Spear

The U.S. in late August began a naval buildup in the Caribbean Sea, and in September began launching strikes against alleged narcoterrorists in the region as part of Operation Southern Spear. Join us for a conversation about the Caribbean operation designed to “crush” drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere, and what America’s naval forces are learning from the ongoing efforts.

3:30 PM EDT
10 MINS

Break

3:40 PM EDT
30 MINS
Keynote

Leadership Keynote - Marines

4:10 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Beyond sea to shore

The Marines’ mission has moved beyond the traditional capability of projecting power from the sea to the land, to now include operating from and to all domains. But despite rapid advances, challenges remain: Low amphibious ship readiness is a consistent problem, and the long-anticipated landing ship medium program is only now getting underway. Join Defense One for a discussion of the new amphibious capabilities Marines in the Pacific are developing, and the hurdles they’re overcoming to evolve.

4:40 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

The future of Marine technology

New technologies are steadily changing how the Marine Corps plans, trains, and operates on modern battlefields. Advances in autonomy, unmanned systems, and long-range precision fires are expanding the tools available to commanders and creating new options for operating in complex, contested environments. In this session, Marine Corps leaders and defense technology experts will discuss how autonomous and semi-autonomous systems are being integrated into today's force. The conversation will explore the growing role of drones for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and logistics, the emergence of robotic wingmen and human-machine teaming, and how long-range fires are evolving alongside modern sensor and targeting networks to enable more precise and responsive operations.

2:00 PM EDT
30 MINS
Keynote

Leadership Keynote - Air Foce

2:30 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

CCAs

The Air Force has rapidly progressed on its first collaborative combat aircraft, going from concept to first flight in just 16 months. Now, the service is looking at the second round of its drone wingman completion and has incorporated the robot drone concept into its future fighter jet plans. What innovations does the Air Force want to see from industry on future CCAs while still balancing cost expectations? What will the integration of drone wingmen mean for future combat operations?

3:00 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Acquisition reform

The Air Force has worked quickly to comply with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s acquisition reform mandates. In addition to announcing new program acquisition executives, the service has named an Air Force general as a portfolio manager for critical major weapons systems, reporting directly to the Office of the Secretary of Defense on major programs such as the Sentinel and Minuteman III intercontinental ballistic missiles, the B-21 bomber, the F-47 fighter jet, and the VC-25B presidential aircraft. Does Air Force leadership believe these changes will lead to more affordable and effective defense programs? This panel will examine that question and more.

3:30 PM EDT
10 MINS

Break

3:40 PM EDT
30 MINS
Keynote

Leadership Keynote - Space Force

4:10 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Contested space

As space becomes an increasingly critical domain for military operations, the United States and its allies are facing a more congested, competitive, and contested orbital environment. From counterspace threats and debris risks to the growing reliance on space-enabled intelligence, communications, navigation, and missile warning, space is now inseparable from modern deterrence and warfighting. In this session, senior military leaders and space policy experts will examine how the U.S. is preparing for operations in a contested space environment. The conversation will explore evolving threats from peer competitors, the role of resilience and deterrence in orbit, and how military and commercial partnerships are reshaping space architecture. Panelists will also discuss what it means to operate, defend, and sustain space capabilities in an era where space superiority can no longer be assumed.

4:40 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

To Be Announced

2:00 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Leadership Keynote - Army

2:30 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

Transforming Army Tech

The Army’s modernization initiative, Transformation in Contact, is dramatically changing how the service handles acquisition—allowing contractors to bring their tech to soldiers in the field, take feedback, and make changes on the spot. In just the first iteration of the initiative, soldiers tested 360 unmanned aerial systems, 800 mobility systems, 50 counter-UAS systems, 20 persistent lower-orbit communications systems, and 10 electronic warfare systems. And now the Army has expanded the program to more units throughout the service. In this panel, Defense One will speak to leaders about what they’ve learned so far, and what the future holds for Army tech.

3:00 PM EDT
30 MINS
Panel

To Be Announced