



DEFENSE

17–19 MARCH 2026 | LAUREL, MD | Secret/NOFORN

EVENT RECAP

DRIVING ACCELERATED INNOVATION
TO THE WARFIGHTER

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THANK YOU FROM AIAA

AIAA DEFENSE Forum 2026 exceeded all expectations. This year's event brought together **449 individuals** to accelerate collaboration between the science and engineering communities, operational commands, and defense decision makers to support the warfighter.

During the three-day event, attendees heard keynote talks, operational briefings, and panel discussions designed to bridge technology with the mission and connect innovation to implementation. Insights from the **97 technical briefings** delivered on AIAA's enduring promise to present deep technical content to our community. Presenters examined cutting-edge research contributing to today's national security capabilities and readiness.

We hope you enjoy this multidimensional summary of the value of AIAA DEFENSE Forum. The numbers are impressive, and the attendee quotes clearly illustrate the impact of the forum experience.

Many thanks go to the members of the AIAA DEFENSE Forum Executive Steering Committee and the Technical Program Committee for their leadership. These hardworking AIAA volunteers are the force behind curating the thought-provoking high-level sessions and technical content provided at the forum.

We are immensely grateful to this year's sponsors. Your generous contributions enabled the insightful knowledge transfer, impressive technology advancement, and countless valuable exchanges we experienced together.

To our attendees, your participation helped ensure that critical dialogue will drive forward today's essential national security technologies and solutions.

As the forum theme illustrates, together we are **"Driving Accelerated Innovation to the Warfighter."**

WHAT ATTENDEES ARE SAYING

"[AIAA DEFENSE Forum] is one of the few venues for classified and sensitive presentations on current events."

"This event serves as a valuable touchpoint to meet previous customers in person and network with others in the field."

"The keynote speakers, especially those from government agencies discussing trends, needs, and obstacles, are the most valuable part of the forum for me."

"The classified threat briefings and classified strategy talks are the most valuable. High-quality technical talks are also very important."

"I'm going to suggest to my leadership that we consider yearly attendance at AIAA DEFENSE Forum."

"AIAA DEFENSE Forum is one of my favorite events of the year both personally and professionally."

"Sharing research with a room full of industry experts at AIAA DEFENSE Forum was an incredible experience."

"I prefer interacting with technical professionals from government and industry [at AIAA DEFENSE Forum] and find it a more productive way to engage with the defense community."

*These quotes are taken from the post-event survey and are anonymous.

TECHNICAL PROGRAM

17

**TECHNICAL
DISCIPLINES**



97

**TECHNICAL
BRIEFINGS**

TECHNICAL DISCIPLINES

- Advanced Prototypes
- Air and Missile Defense
- Autonomy, Collaborative Engagement, Machine Intelligence, and Robotic and Uncrewed Systems
- Digital Engineering
- Directed Energy Weapons
- Guidance, Navigation, Control, and Estimation
- High-Maneuverability and Hypersonic Systems and Technologies
- Signature and Sensing
- Space Access and Space Systems
- Strategic Missile Systems
- Survivability
- System and Decision Analysis for National Security
- System Performance Modeling and Simulation
- Tactical Missiles
- Test and Evaluation
- Weapon Systems History and Lessons Learned
- Weapon System Operational Performance



KEYNOTE PROGRAM TOPICS

- AI on the Battlefield
- Autonomous Systems Operational Context
- Collaborative Combat Aircraft
- Comprehensive Layered Defeat
- Evolving Modern Warfare
- History of Maritime Air and Missile Defense
- National Security Innovation
- Space Cyber Threats

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION



449
TOTAL ATTENDEES

29
AIAA CORPORATE
MEMBERS REPRESENTED

127
ORGANIZATIONS
REPRESENTED

29
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES
REPRESENTED

Check out the [full list of organizations](#)
that participated

Check out the [full list of agencies](#)
that participated

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION



9.9%
ACADEMIA



6.6%
FFRDCs



19%
GOVERNMENT



64.5%
INDUSTRY

ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE LARGEST REPRESENTATION

Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

RTX

Lockheed Martin

Los Alamos National Laboratory

MIT Lincoln Laboratory

Air Force Research Laboratory

Sandia National Laboratories

Air Force Institute of Technology

CUBRC

Southwest Research Institute

SPEAKERS



MICHAEL S. ATWOOD

Vice President,
Advanced Programs Aircraft Systems, General
Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc.



ADAM BEKIT

Decision Dominance Branch Supervisor,
Air and Missile Defense Sector,
Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics
Laboratory



JUAN DE BEDOUT

Chief Technology Officer,
RTX



MATT FULCHINO

Executive Director,
Mission Analysis, RTX



VISHAL GIARE

Sector Head,
Air and Missile Defense,
Johns Hopkins University
Applied Physics Laboratory



COL MATT GIDLEY, USAF

Deputy Director, Advanced Command and
Control Accelerator (AC2A), Office of the
Secretary of War Chief Digital and Artificial
Intelligence Office (CDAO)



MIKE "RABBI" HARASIMOWICZ

Managing Director of AI Innovations,
Lockheed Martin



VADM JON HILL (USN, RET)

Lockheed Martin



THE HONORABLE JOSEPH JEWELL

Assistant Secretary of War for
Science and Technology,
Department of War

SPEAKERS



JARED JONKER

Senior Director of Agentic Warfare,
ScaleAI



VADM SARA JOYNER (USN, RET)

Senior Managing Director,
Cerberus Capital Management



CONOR MAHONEY

Principal Autonomous Systems Engineer,
The MITRE Corporation



BRADLEY "BONES" MCCOY

Director, Next Gen Requirements, Integrated
Systems, Advanced Development Programs,
Lockheed Martin



LAURA MCGILL

Director,
Sandia National Laboratories



ERIN MILLER

Director,
Space ISAC



ELIAHU NIEWOOD

Director,
Integrated Capabilities Office,
Department of the Air Force



LAUREN PERRY

Principal Engineer,
Information Systems and Cyber Division,
The Aerospace Corporation



KATHERINE RINK

Head, Air, Missile, and Maritime
Defense Technology Division,
MIT Lincoln Laboratory

SPEAKERS



TONY ROMERO

Director of Integrated Military Systems,
Sandia National Laboratories



GUPARTAP "GP" SANDHOO

Acting Director,
Space Development Agency



**PATRICK M. "MIKE"
SHORTSLEEVE**

Vice President, Strategic Development,
General Atomics Aeronautical Systems



DAVE VAN WIE

Director,
Johns Hopkins University Applied
Physics Laboratory



MICHAEL WHITE

Former Principal Director,
Hypersonics, Department of Defense

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS

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We extend our sincere appreciation to our facilities partner and AIAA Corporate Member, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory.

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SAVE THE DATE: 16–18 MARCH 2027