



WOMEN IN DEFENSE

2025 National Conference

Winning Tomorrow: Unlocking
Mission Success Through
Innovation and Efficiency



September 23, 2025
Arlington, VA
Hyatt Regency Crystal City
WomenInDefense.net

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NDIA WHO WE ARE



Women In Defense (WID) is a proud affiliate of the National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), the trusted leader in defense and national security associations. As a 501(c)(3) corporate and individual membership association, NDIA engages thoughtful and innovative leaders to exchange ideas, information, and capabilities that lead to the development of the best policies, practices, products, and technologies to ensure the safety and security of our nation. NDIA's membership embodies the full spectrum of corporate, government, academic, and individual stakeholders who form a vigorous, responsive, and collaborative community in support of defense and national security. For more than 100 years, NDIA and its predecessor organizations have been at the heart of the mission by dedicating their time, expertise, and energy to ensuring our warfighters have the best training, equipment, and support. For more information, visit WomenInDefense.net and NDIA.org.

GET INVOLVED

Learn more about WID's Chapters and how to join one at WomenInDefense.net/Chapters



NATIONAL COUNCIL

Tricia Ward
Chair

Debbie De La O

Sue Tellier

Arlene Korn

Ali Nepola

Diane Phillips

Gayla Suddarth

Women In Defense

WID strengthens the defense industrial base and workforce by promoting programming that creates and enhances opportunities for national security professionals.

MISSION

Powering Defense Leaders: Provide national security professionals with a formal environment for professional growth through strategic networking, education, and professional development.

Growing Our Replacements: Create educational, coaching, and mentoring opportunities to encourage and enable national security professionals to pursue careers in support of national defense.

Welcome

It's a true honor to welcome you to this year's conference. As I wrap up my first year as Executive Director, I'm proud to stand with such a strong and dedicated community.

This year's theme, *Unlocking Mission Success Through Innovation and Efficiency*, couldn't be timelier. We're facing complex challenges across the defense landscape, and we're here to meet them with bold ideas, smarter strategies, and stronger collaboration. We're also focused on building the next generation of professionals who will lead this mission forward.

You'll find a powerful lineup of speakers, panels, and workshops designed to spark new thinking and give you practical tools you can take with you. Whether

you're here to grow your expertise, meet new people, or explore fresh perspectives, you're in the right place.

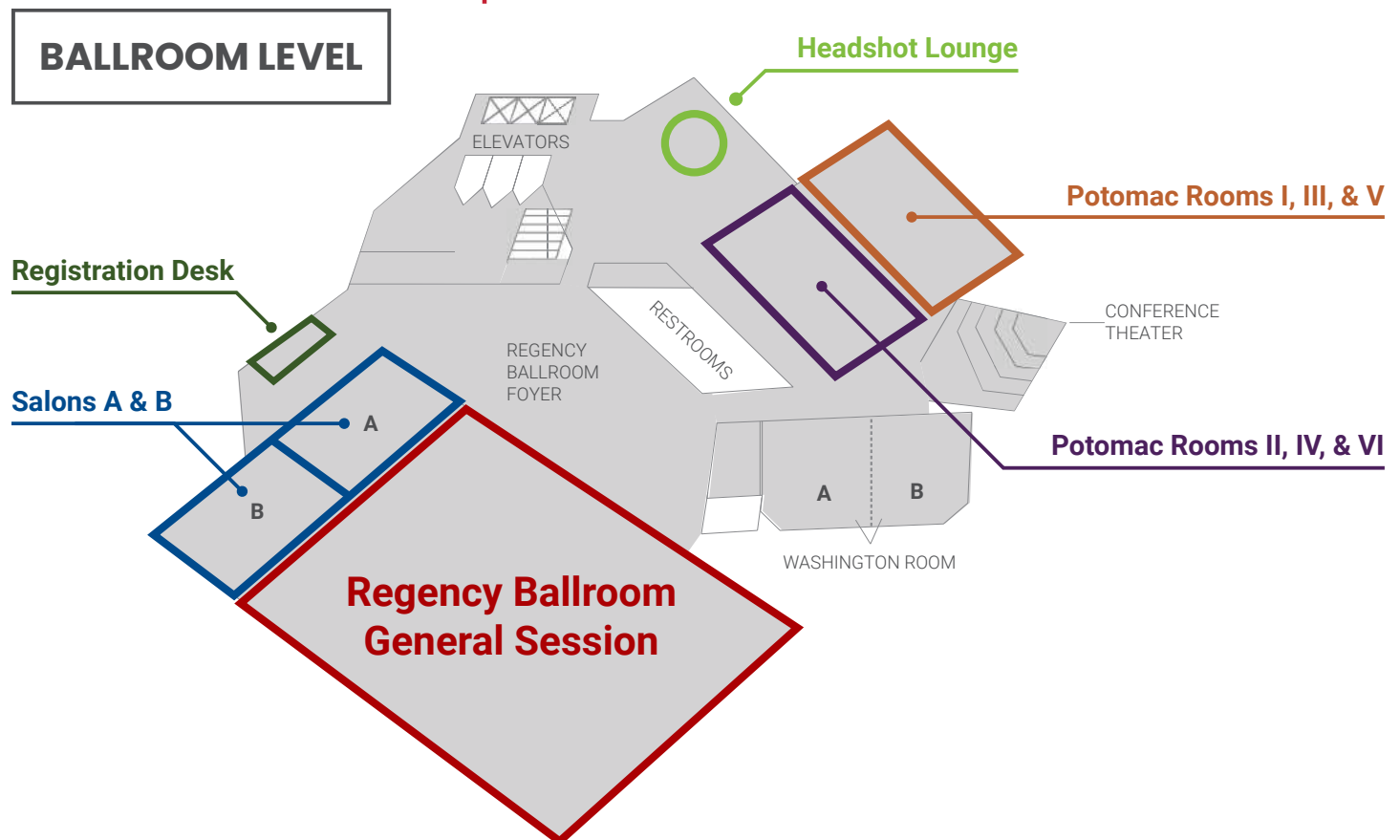
We've built in time for real conversations because they matter. The people you connect with today might be your next partners, mentors, or collaborators. Don't miss the chance to build those relationships.

And if you haven't yet joined a local WID Chapter, I encourage you to get involved. What begins here continues all year long through our Chapters, events, and shared work.

I'm excited for what's ahead. Let's get started and unlock what comes next together. Welcome to the 2025 WID National Conference!

Audricia "Driece" McKinney
Executive Director
Women In Defense

Venue Map





Women In Defense
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Meet the Leader You Want to Be!

Join the Conversation

 [WomenInDefense.net/LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/womenindefense)

 [@WIDNational](https://twitter.com/WIDNational)

 [@WIDNational](https://www.facebook.com/WIDNational)

Event Information

Location

Hyatt Regency Crystal City
2799 Richmond Hwy
Arlington, VA 22202

Attire

Appropriate dress for the conference is business attire for civilians and Service Members / Service Khaki / Class B Service uniform or equivalent for military personnel.

Wi-Fi

Network: WIDNC2025
Password: LeonardoDRS

slido: Real-Time Crowd-Sourced Q&A



Event code:
WIDNC25

Join the conversation and drive meaningful discussion! With a simple thumbs-up to other attendees' questions, it will allow the most relevant topics to rise to the top. Scan the QR code or visit [Slido.com](https://www.slido.com) and add the event code to get started.

Survey and Participant List

You will receive via email a survey and list of participants (name and organization) after the conference. Please complete the survey to make our event even more successful in the future.

Mother's Room

Please visit the registration desk for instructions.

Event Code of Conduct

NDIA's Event Code of Conduct applies to all National Defense Industrial Association (NDIA), National Training & Simulation Association (NTSA), Emerging Technologies Institute (ETI), and Women In Defense (WID) meeting-related events, whether in person, at public or private facilities, online, or during virtual events. NDIA, NTSA, ETI, and WID are committed to providing a productive and welcoming environment for all participants. All participants are expected to abide by this code as well as NDIA's ethical principles and practices. Visit [NDIA.org/CodeOfConduct](https://www.ndia.org/CodeOfConduct) to review the full policy.

Photography and Video Recording

Attendance at this event constitutes consent to NDIA's recording and use of your image, voice, name, and participation for event-related purposes, including marketing and distribution. Read our full [photography and video policy](#)

Harassment Statement

NDIA is committed to providing a professional environment free from physical, psychological and verbal harassment. NDIA will not tolerate harassment of any kind, including but not limited to harassment based on ethnicity, religion, disability, physical appearance, gender, or sexual orientation. This policy applies to all participants and attendees at NDIA conferences, meetings and events. Harassment includes offensive gestures and verbal comments, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, inappropriate photography and recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome attention. Participants requested to cease harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately, and failure will serve as grounds for revoking access to the NDIA event.

Antitrust Statement

NDIA has a policy of strict compliance with federal and state antitrust laws. The antitrust laws prohibit competitors from engaging in actions that could result in an unreasonable restraint of trade. Consequently, NDIA members must avoid discussing certain topics when they are together at formal association membership, board, committee, and other meetings and in informal contacts with other industry members: prices, fees, rates, profit margins, or other terms or conditions of sale (including allowances, credit terms, and warranties); allocation of markets or customers or division of territories; or refusals to deal with or boycotts of suppliers, customers or other third parties, or topics that may lead participants not to deal with a particular supplier, customer or third party.



Committed to meaningful change

PwC is proud to support the 2025 Women In Defense National Conference as part of our commitment to making a meaningful difference in the world and helping others thrive.

[pwc.com](https://www.pwc.com)



Agenda

7:00 am – 5:00 pm

Registration

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

7:00 – 8:00 am

Networking Breakfast

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

8:00 – 8:10 am

Welcome

REGENCY BALLROOM

Audricia “Driece” McKinney

Executive Director, Women In Defense

The Hon. David L. Norquist

President and Chief Executive Officer, National Defense Industrial Association

8:10 – 9:10 am

Kick-Off Keynote: Innovation and Efficiency—Leading the Next Generation of National Security

REGENCY BALLROOM

BG Michelle Letcher, USA (Ret)

CEO and Founder, Break Trail, LLC

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NDIA



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[NDIA.org/VS26Survey](https://ndia.org/VS26Survey)

9:10 – 9:40 am

Networking Break & Headshot Lounge

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

9:40 – 10:45 am

Young Professional Panel

REGENCY BALLROOM

Haley Britzky

National Security Reporter, CNN

Alisha Kelly Faulkner

Founder and Chair, Women for Outreach and Leadership (WOL)

Anna Kim

Associate Research Fellow, NDIA Emerging Technologies Institute

Adrienne Rudolph

Student Research Collaborator, NASA GSFC

10:45 – 11:00 am

Networking Break

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Breakout/Workshop Session #1

Workshop Descriptions can be found on page 13

REGENCY BALLROOM
SALON B

Navigating Other Transaction Authority (OTA): Accelerating Innovation in Defense

Kameke Mitchell

Federal Senior Executive

POTOMAC ROOM
II, IV, VI

Unforgettable: Building Your Reputation in National Security

Kim Bode

Owner, 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications

POTOMAC ROOM
I, III, V

Mentorship That Matters: Cultivating Transformative Relationships

Danielle White

Partner, Digital Core Modernization, PwC

REGENCY BALLROOM
SALON A

Innovation Under Pressure: Driving Change in Resource-Constrained Environments

Sandra Perez

Vice President, Gladius Communications



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12:00 – 1:15 pm

Service to the Flag Award Luncheon

REGENCY BALLROOM

2025 Service to the Flag Award Ceremony

Announcement of WID Scholarship Awardees & Welcome Remarks

Debbie De La O

VP/Division Manager, Digital Modernization/Army and Mission Partners, Leidos

Presentation of the Service to the Flag Award

Lieutenant General Donna W. Martin, USA (Ret)

The 67th Inspector General of the United States Army

Government Awardee

Tara Murphy Dougherty

CEO, Govini

Industry Awardee

Adjourn

The Service to the Flag Award celebrates exceptional leadership in the national security and defense enterprise. Each year, Women In Defense honors individuals—one from government and one from industry—who have addressed some of our nation's most complex security challenges. Beyond their strategic impact, awardees inspire others to apply their talents in service of protecting and defending the United States.

1:15 – 1:30 pm

Networking Break

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER



Your resource for defense-focused education & training.

Start Today at [NDIA.org/BI](https://ndia.org/BI)

1:30 – 2:30 pm

Breakout/Workshop Session #2

Workshop Descriptions can be found on page 13

REGENCY BALLROOM
SALON A

Tech Horizons: Emerging Technologies Reshaping National Security

Liz Specht, PhD

Fellow, Horizon Institute for Public Service

POTOMAC ROOM
I, III, V

Decoding Regulations: What Small Businesses Need to Know Now

Angela Dingle

President & CEO, Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP)

POTOMAC ROOM
II, IV, VI

From Insight to Action: Turning Intelligence into Operational Advantage

Maryanna Diaz

Founder and Principal, Willow Informative Services

REGENCY BALLROOM
SALON B

The Business of Defense: Unlocking Resources for Growth

Sonja Greene, MBA

Program Director of Government Contracting Center, The Catalyst Center

2:30 – 2:45 pm

Networking Break

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

2:45 – 3:45 pm

Panel Discussion – Winning Tomorrow: Collaborative Strategies for Mission Success

REGENCY BALLROOM

Col Pamela Powers, USAF (Ret)

Executive Managing Director, Defense Market, Maximus

Dr. Theresa Watson

Chief Operating Officer, Kegman

Heather Hopkins

Head of Defense Policy, Amazon

Halimah Najieb - Locke

SVP of Global Public Policy, Darkhive

2025
**FUTURE FORCE
CAPABILITIES**
CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

REGISTER NOW!

September 30 – October 3 | Fort Worth, TX | [NDIAFFC.org](https://ndiaffc.org)

NDIA

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3:45 – 4:00 pm

Networking Break

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

4:00 – 5:00 pm

Fireside Chat – Leadership Lessons: Navigating Change and Building Resilience

REGENCY BALLROOM

Ashley Roque

Pentagon Reporter, Breaking Defense

Tara Murphy Dougherty

CEO, Govini

5:00 – 5:15 pm

Closing Remarks

REGENCY BALLROOM

Audricia "Driece" McKinney

Executive Director, Women In Defense

5:15 – 6:45pm

Networking Reception

REGENCY BALLROOM FOYER

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Skyline Scientific

Workshop Presenters

Morning Breakouts

Navigating Other Transaction Authority (OTA): Accelerating Innovation In Defense

Explore how OTAs are streamlining acquisition processes, enabling agile partnerships, and promoting faster access to cutting-edge technology. Ideal for industry and government professionals navigating rapid procurement cycles.



Kameke Mitchell
Federal Senior Executive

Unforgettable: Building Your Reputation in National Security

Equip attendees with tools to articulate their value, build a compelling presence (online & in-person), and position themselves for career growth in a competitive, mission-driven field.



Kim Bode
Owner, 8THIRTYFOUR Integrated Communications

Mentorship that Matters: Cultivating Transformative Relationships

Highlight effective mentorship models across government, industry, and academia. Discuss how to find the right mentor, build meaningful connections, and measure impact.



Danielle White
Partner, Digital Core Modernization, PwC

Innovation Under Pressure: Driving Change in Resource-Constrained Environments

Explore strategies for advancing innovation within bureaucratic, financial, or operational constraints. Includes real-world case studies from defense, cybersecurity, and R&D sectors.



Sandra Perez
Vice President, Gladius Communications

Afternoon Breakouts

Tech Horizons: Emerging Technologies Reshaping National Security

Delve into AI, quantum computing, unmanned systems, and other emerging tools shaping the future of defense. Session includes implications for readiness, efficiency, and ethical application.



Liz Specht, PhD
Fellow, Horizon Institute for Public Service

Decoding Regulations: What Small Businesses Need to Know Now

Break down recent regulatory and compliance shifts and their impact on small businesses in the defense ecosystem. Learn practical takeaways on navigating CMMC, DEI guidance, and procurement requirements.



Angela Dingle
President & CEO, Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP)

From Insight to Action: Turning Intelligence into Operational Advantage

Explore how data analytics, intel fusion, and cross-agency collaboration can be used to drive faster, smarter national security decisions—especially in an age of disinformation and hybrid threats.



Maryanna Diaz
Founder and Principal, Willow Informative Services

The Business of Defense: Unlocking Resources for Growth

Equip attendees with knowledge of funding pathways, government programs, partnership models, and industry coalitions that support small business scaling and innovation in national security.



Sonja Greene, MBA
Program Director of Government Contracting Center
The Catalyst Center



Encouraging National Security & Defense Careers

Formerly HORIZONS Scholarship

The WID Scholar program, established by Women In Defense in 1988, supports individuals pursuing careers in U.S. national security with a focus on defense or foreign policy. Since its inception, the program has awarded over \$976,000 to 196 recipients studying fields like law, engineering, math, and public policy. Scholarships are based on academic achievement, involvement in defense and national security, field of study, work experience, personal statements, recommendations, and financial need. Recipients must periodically report on the awards' impact. The program aims to boost diversity and innovation in government, academia, and the defense industry. Learn more at WomenInDefense.net/WIDScholar/Apply

2025 WID Scholars

Paige Berg

University of Alabama in Huntsville
PhD Candidate in Aerospace Systems Engineering

Sarah Popeck

Northeastern University
MS Candidate in Data Science

Olivia Williams

University of Alabama in Huntsville
MS Candidate in Mechanical Engineering

Jordyn Nash

University of Texas at El Paso
MS Candidate in Systems Engineering

Adrienne Rudolph

University of Maryland, College Park
PhD Candidate in Aerospace Engineering

Tanya Yu

University of Utah
Undergraduate Student in Data Science

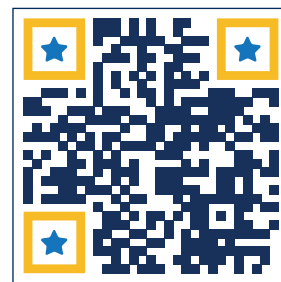
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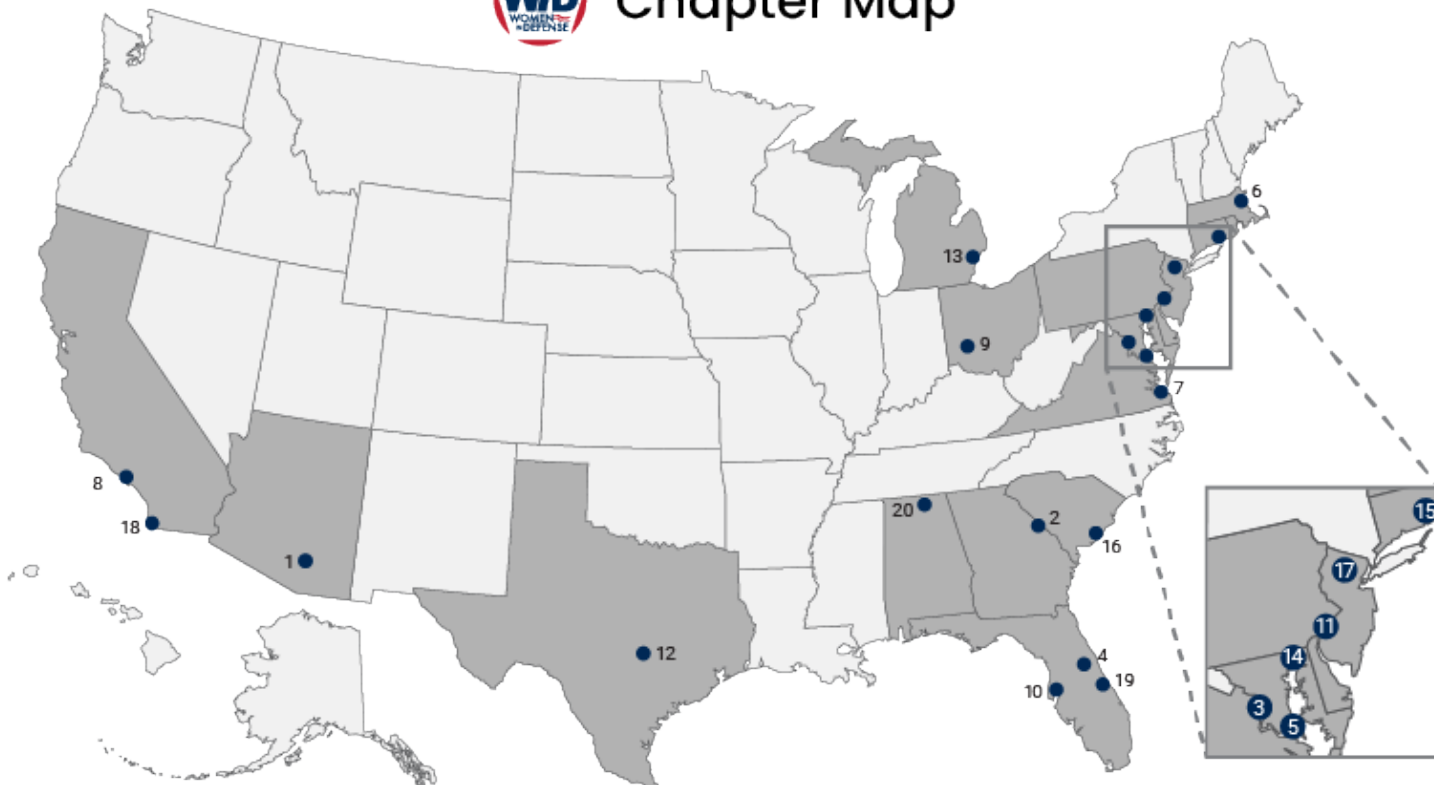
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Join the **WID** family today!

Women In Defense (WID) began in 1979 to support networking and professional development in defense and national security. We welcome both women and men from government, industry, and academia. Members gain access to a national network and 20 local Chapters offering leadership, networking, and mentoring opportunities year-round. Membership is free for government employees and active military, and \$95 per year for industry and academia members. Learn more at WomenInDefense.net/Join



Chapter Map



- | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Arizona | 6. Greater Boston | 11. Liberty | 16. Palmetto |
| 2. Augusta | 7. Greater Hampton Roads | 12. Lone Star | 17. Picatinny |
| 3. Capital | 8. Greater Los Angeles | 13. Michigan | 18. San Diego |
| 4. Central Florida | 9. Greater Ohio Valley | 14. Mid-Atlantic | 19. Space Coast |
| 5. Chesapeake Bay | 10. Greater Tampa Bay | 15. New England Shoreline | 20. Tennessee Valley |

Biographies

Keynote



BG Michelle Letcher, USA (Ret)

CEO and Founder, Break Trail, LLC

Michelle leads executives and national security strategy priorities for complex

organizations that drive change across the enterprise and impact global security, human capital initiatives, quality of life, and modernization efforts at the intersection of defense, industry, and academia.

For over 27 years as an Army logistician, she led at all levels, from the tactical to the strategic and enterprise levels, leading soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, alongside our Allies and Partners in Europe and the Army, and within the Defense Organic Industrial Base.

Michelle recently published her first book. Additionally, she provides executive advice to national security focused small businesses, leads strategic planning support to the National Defense Industrial Association's Lone Star Chapter, lectures on decision-making and problem-solving at multiple academic institutions, and serves as a Senior Mentor to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, focused on logistics and leadership.

As the Chief of Staff of the Army's most recent start-up, Army Futures Command, she managed the maturation of the acquisition and merger of over eighteen

organizations with an annual budget valued at \$12B in support of over 26K personnel to advance Army future force modernization and transformation efforts across defense, industry, and academia in support of our national security strategy.

As the Deputy Commanding General of the Combined Arms Support Command, she led the Joint Force's efforts to publish the Joint Warfighting Concept's Joint Concept for Contested Logistics. She led over 22 joint service executives globally to deliver a hypothesis that matured into a concept with required capabilities, including experimentation and resource investments, to deliver a future force capable of sustaining troops over vast distances, through contested domains, in a competitive space with increased sustainment demands through competition, crisis, and conflict. Simultaneously, she managed the professional development and career management programs and policies for 95K Soldiers globally across 40 areas of expertise in maintenance, munitions, and explosive ordnance disposal, with an annual training throughput of 180K Service members.

As the Commanding General of the Joint Munitions Command, she served as the chief executive officer for the life cycle management for all conventional munitions from development to production, storage,

security, fielding, and sustainment including global supply chain management and distribution. Her leadership included the operations and maintenance of fourteen plants, arsenals, depots, and activities across thirteen states to maintain and deliver the readiness of over \$57B worth of missiles and munitions in support of the Department of Defense.

She commanded a forward-stationed battalion and brigade in Europe alongside our Allies and Partners, with a presence in eighteen locations across eight countries. Following the Wales Summit, she enabled NATO's establishment of Force Integration Units by embedding U.S. leaders in shaping the security environment to deter aggression and assure the Alliance. Additionally, she led interoperability efforts across the alliance for sustainment capabilities in training and execution in competition.

Michelle holds a Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from Illinois State University, a Master of Science in Human Services and Counseling from SUNY Oswego, a Masters in Military Arts and Sciences from the Command and General Staff College, and a Master of Arts in National Security and Strategic Studies from Kansas State University. She began her Army career as a Second Lieutenant in the Air Defense Artillery.

ETI | NDIA

EMERGING TECH HORIZONS

NDIA's Technology Podcast



EmergingTechnologiesInstitute.org/Podcast



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Leonardo DRS, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer, and qualified applicants are considered without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, disability, veteran, or any other characteristic prohibited by law.

Young Professional Panel



Haley Britzky

National Security Reporter, CNN

Haley Britzky is a National Security reporter covering the Pentagon for CNN.

Britzky joined CNN in November 2022, where she tracks daily and long-term developments at the Department of Defense and reports on the Pentagon and military issues as a

part of the national security team.

Previously, Britzky was the U.S. Army reporter at military news site Task & Purpose where she reported on military culture, policies, and everyday developments in the Army. Her reporting extensively covered how decisions made by senior leadership impact troops on the ground, military veterans, and their

families, everywhere from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, and beyond. Before Task & Purpose, she worked as a breaking news reporter at Axios.

Britzky is a Texan now living and working in Washington, D.C. She graduated from Texas Tech University with a degree in journalism.



Alisha Kelly Faulkner

Founder and Chair, Women for Outreach and Leadership (WOL)

Alisha Kelly Faulkner is an experienced leader in strategic initiatives for mission-critical

IT, communications, and infrastructure programs for the Department of Defense and national security customers. In her prior role as a Vice President at Trace Systems Inc., she focused on operational efficiency, modernization, and customer alignment

to enable successful program execution.

Alisha brings over a decade of experience in federal contracting, with expertise in business development, strategic communications, and client engagement. She is recognized for her ability to connect people, ideas, and priorities—helping teams deliver real-world impact in complex defense environments.

She is also the founder of Women for Outreach and Leadership (WOL), an initiative committed to mentorship and professional growth for women in national security and government contracting. Alisha is an active member of AFCEA Rocky Mountain and DC Chapters and is a strong advocate for inclusion and equity across the federal technology space.



Anna Kim

Associate Research Fellow, NDIA's Emerging Technologies Institute

Anna Kim is an Associate Research Fellow at ETI. Her research and analysis portfolio

includes projects on AI regulation and integration and technology transition. Prior to joining ETI, Anna led cybersecurity and counterproliferation programming to impede North Korea and Iran's sanctions evasion

activities and nuclear programs at CRDF Global. She holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Tufts University.



Adrienne Rudolph

Student Research Collaborator, NASA GSFC

Adrienne Rudolph completed her bachelor's degree in Aero/Astro Engineering at

Purdue University and received her master's degree in Aerospace Engineering from

the University of Maryland (UMD). She is currently pursuing her PhD under the advisement of Brent Barbee and Dr. Ray Sedwick at UMD. Currently leading the student team for UMD's TERP RAPTOR mission to the asteroid Apophis, Adrienne is conducting research on asteroid

disruption modeling to determine what heuristics define robust disruption, predict fragment behavior, and ultimately help prevent future Earth impacts. This summer, Adrienne is interning with The Aerospace Corporation and training for UMD's Scientific Diving Program.

Service to the Flag – Government



Lieutenant General Donna W. Martin, USA (Ret)

The 67th Inspector General of the United States Army

LTG Donna W. Martin, from Yorktown, Virginia, is a proud graduate of Old Dominion University.

She was commissioned into the Military Police Corps in 1988 and holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. Throughout her career,

LTG Martin served in various command and staff roles, including commanding at the brigade level twice. LTG Martin has several notable achievements in her 36-year career; she was the first female to command the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence and Fort Leonard Wood from 2018 – 2020. She was the first woman of color to serve as the Commanding

General of the Criminal Investigations Command and held dual responsibilities as the Provost Marshal General of the Army. In 2021, she became the only woman to hold her last position in the Army as the Inspector General of the U.S. Army. LTG Martin is married to Col Chris Martin, USMC (Ret), and they have one son, Christopher and two puppies: Frankie & Gracie.

Service to the Flag – Industry



Tara Murphy Dougherty

CEO, Govini

Tara Murphy Dougherty is the CEO of Govini. She has held leadership positions across

technology, government, and nonprofit sectors, including at Palantir Technologies,

and she served as Chief of Staff for Global Strategic Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, among other senior roles. She holds a bachelor's from Georgia Tech and a master's from Georgetown University. She serves on the Board of Directors for the National Defense Industrial

Association and the National Defense University Foundation, and the Board of Advisors of the Reagan Institute's National Security Innovation Base Program.

CONGRATULATIONS

2025 WID National Scholars!

"2024 Women In Defense Rocket City Fellows" visit Huntsville, supported by the WID-Tennessee Valley Chapter and UAH

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA IN HUNTSVILLE

PROPULSION RESEARCH CENTER

PART OF THE University of Alabama System

Olivia Williams 2025 Women In Defense Scholar prepares solid fuel Ramjet for testing at the UAH Propulsion Research Center.

Panel: Winning Tomorrow



Col Pamela Powers, USAF (Ret)

Executive Managing Director, Defense Market, Maximus

Pamela Powers is a distinguished leader and retired Colonel with over two decades

of experience in both the military and corporate sectors, and was selected as one of the 2019 Top 100 most impactful Veterans and supporters by the Hill Vets Organization. Her career spans roles in

the Air Force, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and consulting services leading federal transformation initiatives.

Most recently, she served as the Managing Director for Federal Transformation Delivery at KPMG for DoD agency accounts with a team of 200+ professionals. Prior to that, she was the Acting U.S. Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, where she

spearheaded enterprise modernization for the federal government's second-largest Cabinet department.

Her senior roles at the Pentagon included serving as Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, where she focused on Total Force Management.



Dr. Theresa Watson

Chief Operating Officer, Kegman

Dr. Theresa E. Watson serves as the Chief Operating Officer at Kegman Inc, an employee-

owned small business headquartered in Melbourne, Florida. Kegman delivers world-class, on-site science, technology, and engineering expertise in support of National Security, warfighter, space launch, and earthquake monitoring missions—advancing DoD priorities, policy development, and scientific discovery. She holds a PhD in Chemistry and has dedicated her career to advancing global security, delivering operational results for the warfighter, and empowering underrepresented groups in STEM through science and mentorship.

As Kegman COO, Dr. Watson leads daily operations, strategic planning, and organizational growth, aligning technical capabilities with evolving government mission needs. She drives innovation, builds cross-sector partnerships, and ensures delivery of agile, cost-effective,

and impactful solutions across the RDT&E and operational landscape.

Dr. Watson is a nationally recognized expert in nonproliferation, emerging weapons, signature analytics, space science, and intelligence integration. She serves as a scientific leader and review board member for Los Alamos National Laboratory, guiding strategic investment and high-impact research supporting national security, deterrence, space domain awareness and exploration, energy resilience, border security, and health security.

Prior to joining Kegman, Dr. Watson served as the Deputy Chief Scientist of the Air Force Technical Applications Center, where she supported 24/7 nuclear monitoring, WMD detection, and operations for the DoD's largest sensor network. She led a strategic posture review, authored the AFTAC Strategy, and co-authored a national Nuclear Enterprise Review defining long-term direction and shaping future defense collection strategies across 18 agencies. She routinely briefed

WMD assessments and technology development to senior leaders, including the White House, Congress, and National Security Council—translating complex science into decision advantage.

Dr. Watson served on a separate Joint Duty assignment at the Defense Intelligence Agency, where she chaired a national R&D Subcommittee. In that role, she led a \$12 million research portfolio and authored the first-ever MASINT R&D Roadmap, signed by DIA Director, establishing strategic direction and priority requirements across a \$1.9B defense enterprise.

Dr. Watson is a dedicated community leader with a passion for STEM outreach, mentoring, and public speaking. She volunteers with schools and nonprofits to inspire and empower both current and future innovators and leaders. You can find her on the Peloton leaderboard, and she is a proud mother of three, finding joy in raising her children with her husband on the Space Coast.



Heather Hopkins

Head of Defense Policy, Amazon

Heather Hopkins has spent her career in Washington, D.C. and overseas in national security.

She has successfully managed high-profile offices and led teams at the White House, the Departments of Defense and State, in warzones and on Capitol Hill. She advises decision makers and leaders at the c-suite level on best practices to achieve their priorities and advocates for their objectives. She is known as a strategic partner, problem solver, for building bridges, influencing outcomes, and providing valued counsel.

Ms. Hopkins is currently the Head of Defense Policy at Amazon Web Services (AWS). At AWS, she works with the DOD business to engage with key policy and decision makers to support the DOD mission using cloud services and capabilities, at all classification levels, from the enterprise to the tactical edge.

She drives policy solutions for maximizing cloud technology for data management, cyber, AI/ML and quantum computing.

During Ms. Hopkins most recent tour at the Pentagon, she held three different senior roles. She was the Secretary of the Army's Chief of Staff and Senior Adviser where she drove his guidance to run and manage the 1.1M person organization. Next, she advised the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the COO of the \$800B enterprise, to manage policy issues on personnel, health, and readiness, as well as his leadership of the DOD COVID Task Force. She was his representative to work with Congress and other external stakeholders.

Finally, she established a new office at the Pentagon for Intergovernmental Affairs, to synchronize and coordinate the DOD's interactions with governors, mayors and other state and local officials.

Ms. Hopkins previously was Vice President for government relations at the privately held innovative aerospace and defense company, Sierra Nevada Corporation. Prior to joining SNC, she was a director for government relations at BAE Systems, Inc. advocating on a variety of Army, Navy, and intelligence programs.

Ms. Hopkins served at the White House, on the National Security Council as a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Legislative Affairs. In the early years of the Iraq War, Ms. Hopkins served two tours in Baghdad with the State Department as the Senior Adviser for Communications at U.S. Embassy Baghdad and ran protocol at the Coalition Provisional Authority.

Prior to serving in the Executive Branch, Ms. Hopkins was on Capitol Hill with the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich.



Halimah Najieb – Locke

SVP of Global Public Policy, Darkhive

Halimah Najieb-Locke is the Senior Vice President of Global Public Policy for Darkhive,

Inc. where she leads the formation of global policy initiatives in support of the company's mission to provide an accessible situational awareness system for all US-allied military and public safety personnel while developing and maintaining the company's public sector strategy to align product and technology capabilities to partnership opportunities.

Ms. Najieb-Locke brings experience across multiple branches of government in procurement and entrepreneurial

development to help clients improve their acquisition processes and strategic approaches to expand their customer base while actively engaging with government personnel and systems. This past spring, Ms. Najieb-Locke completed her Presidential appointment within the Department of Defense as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Industrial Base Resilience where she led the drafting and publishing of the DoD's first-ever National Security Industrial Strategy (NDIS) and establishment of the first Defense Industrial Base Consortium (DIB-C) which will guide the Department's engagement, policy development and investment in the industrial base over the next 3 – 5 years.

She also held positions within the House of Representatives, serving as the Senior Procurement Counsel for the Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis, Counsel for the House Armed Services Committee, and Senior Professional Staff Member for the House Small Business Committee. She currently serves as an Adjunct Professor at the Georgetown University Walsh School of Foreign Service, a Member of the Board of Advisors at Maritime Operations Group, and a Senior Adviser at DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of San Francisco and a law degree from George Washington University Law School.

Fireside Chat – Leadership Lessons



Ashley Roque

Pentagon Reporter, Breaking Defense

Ashley Roque covers the Pentagon for Breaking Defense. Over the past two decades, she's

reported on defense, U.S. politics, and foreign policy for publications inside and outside of the United States including Janes, Roll Call, Inside Defense, and Shephard Media. Ashley holds a BA in English with

a minor in journalism from Florida State University, and a master's degree in conflict transformation from the University of Basel.



Tara Murphy Dougherty

CEO, Govini

Tara Murphy Dougherty is the CEO of Govini. She has held leadership positions across technology, government, and nonprofit

sectors, including at Palantir Technologies, and she served as Chief of Staff for Global Strategic Affairs in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, among other senior roles. She holds a bachelor's from Georgia Tech and a master's from Georgetown

University. She serves on the Board of Directors for the National Defense Industrial Association and the National Defense University Foundation, and the Board of Advisors of the Reagan Institute's National Security Innovation Base Program.

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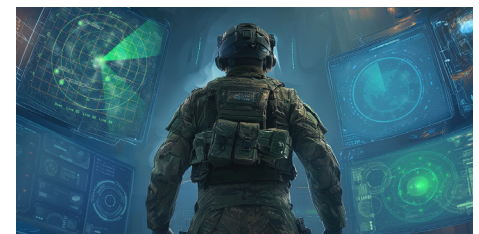
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