



Software at the Speed of War: The Pentagon Revolutionizes Acquisition to Dominate the Battlefield

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The [United States Department of Defense](#) must adopt a modern approach to software acquisition to maintain technological and operational superiority over increasingly agile and innovative adversaries. If the Pentagon fails to accelerate the development and delivery of digital solutions, it risks being outpaced by those who can better leverage rapid technological evolutions.

The current leadership of the Department of Defense recognizes that old bureaucratic processes have slowed the delivery of advanced software to operational forces, making critical systems vulnerable and less responsive compared to those of rivals. To reverse this trend, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth signed the memorandum "**Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality**" on March 6, 2025, with the declared goal of maximizing the lethality and readiness of the armed forces.

"Software is the heart of every weapon and support system we deploy to remain the strongest and most lethal fighting force in the world," Hegseth wrote.

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Multi exposure of table with computer on background and data theme drawing. Concept of innovation.

A New Path for Acquisition: Speed and Flexibility

The memorandum mandates the compulsory adoption of the **Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP)**, an acquisition path designed to align with the pace of modern software development. Additionally, the Department will use more streamlined contractual tools, such as **Commercial Solutions Openings (CSO)** and **Other Transactions (OT)**, to bypass the rigidity of traditional methods and collaborate with unconventional suppliers.

Unlike traditional acquisition processes, focused on hardware and rigid deadlines, the **Software Acquisition Pathway** aims to develop and deliver **Minimum Viable Products (MVP)** in less than a year from the availability of funds. The **CSO** and **OT** also allow for shorter requirement definition and contracting times, giving the Department of Defense the ability to quickly prototype and implement solutions directly on the battlefield, staying ahead of adversaries.

The model breaks with the past, where often a single supplier dominated the provision of systems, slowing the adoption of new technologies. The new approach encourages competition, experimentation, and rapid scalability, essential elements to adapt faster than enemies.

The Defense Innovation Unit: Concrete Proof of Success

The **Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)** already represents a practical demonstration of this strategy. Since 2016, the DIU has awarded more than **500 contracts** through the **CSO** process, 88% of which to non-traditional suppliers from the commercial sector. A success story is the **Replicator** project, which turned an operational request into an awarded contract in just **110 days**—a pace significantly faster than traditional acquisition cycles.

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30 Days to Act: A Lightning Implementation

The memorandum establishes that the Department of Defense must prepare an implementation plan within **30 days**. This short timeframe reflects the urgency perceived by Hegseth. According to a senior Department official, the goal is to reduce the time between fund allocation and the delivery of a working product to less than a year. However, it was also emphasized that much remains to be done to spread these tools uniformly throughout the organization.

The identified priorities are twofold: **training personnel** and **expanding access** to private sector companies. According to another official, the Department of Defense is already directly involving its operators in commercial acquisition programs, providing hands-on experiences alongside innovation teams. This immersive approach is considered crucial to quickly bridging the skills gap.

"We can expose software programs to non-traditional and commercial developers, lowering entry barriers for these entities into the defense ecosystem," the official stated.

Security at the Heart of Digital Transformation

Despite the speed of the new model, security remains a priority. The Department of Defense is integrating **cybersecurity** directly into the software development and delivery pipeline, ensuring that all solutions meet strict security standards without slowing progress.

According to Department executives, the new reform not only aims to accelerate timelines but also to strengthen the decision-making and operational capabilities of frontline forces. If the Pentagon fails to overcome the old paradigm, too centered on hardware, *"it will be the warfighters who pay the price,"* Hegseth warned.

From autonomous systems to real-time intelligence solutions, modern software, developed and deployed quickly, ensures better decisions, more effective defenses, and a decisive advantage in the most complex operational contexts.

"Software-defined warfare is not a futuristic concept, but the reality in which we already operate today," a Department of Defense official stated.

With the obligation to adopt the **SWP**, **CSO**, and **OT**, the Pentagon is determined to transform digital innovation into a tangible operational advantage, delivering **lethality at the speed of innovation**.

News link: <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4114775/modern-software-acquisition-to-speed-delivery-boost-warfighter-lethality/>