



USA, artificial intelligence on the soldier's wrist: California startup raises \$61 million for Alpha tactical display

Published on 03/09/2026

Military artificial intelligence could soon leave servers, command centers and large digital platforms to reach directly to the wrist of individual operators.

This is the idea behind Alpha, the new wearable device developed by California-based startup [Smack Technologies](#), which has just raised \$61 million to accelerate its development and bring it more quickly toward possible operational application.

The concept is simple: provide military personnel operating in the field with a flexible display to wear on the forearm, capable of receiving and presenting in real-time information from sensors, surveillance systems and other operational sources, integrated with decision-support tools based on artificial intelligence.

AI directly on the battlefield

Today, most advanced military data processing is carried out through computers and servers located even at great distances from the battlefield. The processed information is then transmitted to operators through radio, tablets or other terminals.

According to Smack Technologies, the next step is instead to bring these capabilities directly to individual equipment.

Alpha should connect to the Omega AI platform developed by the same company, receiving updated data on the tactical situation and translating it into information immediately usable by the operator.

The device could, for example, show the position of opposing forces detected by external sensors and simultaneously provide different operational options, processed taking into account the mission, allied units present in the area and objectives established by command.

The stated objective, however, is not to leave the final decision to artificial intelligence.

According to Andy Markoff, co-founder and CEO of Smack Technologies and former Marine Raider, the system is designed to provide the operator with the elements necessary to make better and faster decisions, reducing time and resource waste.

From notepad to flexible computer

Markoff explained that the idea comes directly from his own operational experience.

During missions, operators often use small supports on the forearm, maps, notes or tables containing information essential to the mission.

Alpha aims to replace this type of solution with a true flexible wrist computer.

The concept is compared to the wristbands used by quarterbacks in American football to quickly consult play diagrams: a few seconds to look at the forearm, get the necessary information and immediately return to focusing on the surrounding environment.

Decentralized command and control

One of the most interesting aspects of the project concerns possible use in environments characterized by limited or restricted radio or data links.

According to Smack Technologies, Alpha should be able to operate even in conditions of reduced or near-absent connectivity.

The company aims instead to "encode" within the system the commander's intent: mission objectives, operational priorities, constraints and information relating to adjacent units.

In this way, even an operator temporarily isolated from his command could have a sufficiently complete picture to continue acting in accordance with higher objectives.

This is a concept closely linked to the growing attention of Western Armed Forces toward distributed command and control and toward the ability of smaller units to continue operating even in the presence of disturbed, degraded or denied communications.

Why the wrist and not a visor

Many defense industry companies are developing visors, helmets and HUD systems capable of overlaying digital information on the military's field of vision.

However, Smack Technologies believes that the forearm display can offer some advantages.

According to Markoff, a system mounted in front of the eyes can become impractical in particularly hot, humid environments or characterized by dense vegetation, where glasses and visors can fog up or limit visibility.

The wrist device, on the other hand, would allow the operator to consult information only when necessary, leaving the field of vision completely free during the rest of the mission.

The real challenge is not the hardware

According to the company, physically creating the display is only part of the problem.

The main challenge is determining which information should actually be shown to a military engaged in combat.

An excess of data could indeed increase cognitive load instead of reducing it.

The system must therefore select and present only information truly relevant to the situation, avoiding turning the device into an additional element of distraction.

It is precisely at this point that artificial intelligence should come into play: not only in data processing, but also in their selection and contextualization.

A project still in early stages

Alpha remains a project still in its initial phase.

According to the company's statement, development has only just begun a few months ago and Smack Technologies aims to produce a working prototype within about a year.

The next objective would be to obtain the first contracts for the system within the following two years.

It is not, therefore, at least for now, a device already adopted by the U.S. Armed Forces.

The \$61 million funding, however, demonstrates the growing interest of the defense industry in a new generation of systems capable of bringing artificial intelligence ever closer to the tactical level.

The real technological leap could indeed be not only using AI to analyze enormous amounts of data in large command centers, but putting that same capability directly into the hands of the individual operator.