

**Defense Innovation Board  
Winter Board Meeting Minutes  
Pentagon, Washington, DC  
January 13, 2025**

The Defense Innovation Board (DIB) is a federal advisory committee in the Department of Defense (DoD) operating pursuant to the Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972, the Government in the Sunshine Act of 1976, and other related federal regulations.

The DIB held its first fiscal year 2025 (FY25) board meeting, which was partially closed, on Monday, January 13th in the Pentagon. The public meeting was livestreamed and recorded by the Defense Media Agency and made accessible via the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service ([DVIDS](#)). The livestream garnered 1,139 online engagements. The meeting recording was posted on the DIB website at [innovation.defense.gov](http://innovation.defense.gov).

**DIB Members Attending (7):**

1. Mr. Michael Bloomberg, Chair
2. Dr. Gilda Barabino
3. HON Sue Gordon
4. Mr. Charles Phillips
5. HON Dr. Will Roper
6. Mr. Ryan Swann
7. HON William “Mac” Thornberry

**DIB Members Not Present (2):**

1. Ms. Mary Meeker
2. ADM (Ret.) Michael Mullen, U.S. Navy

**Distinguished Guest Speaker (1):**

1. HON Kathleen H. Hicks, Deputy Secretary of Defense

**DIB Staff Team (13):**

Dr. Marina Theodotou, Designated Federal Officer (DFO), Mr. Douglas Beck, Director, Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), Ms. Kirstin Riesbeck, Deputy Director People Finance & Management (DIU)

Staff: Carrie Shideler (ADFO); Khalia Alexander, Zackariah Crahen, Colin Edwards (on leave), Logan Hatfield, Melanie Heinlein, Kimberly Hidalgo, Christina Hilf, Laura Hunnewell (DIU), Dr. Juan Merizalde, Jacob Sharpe, Jessica Sheffield, Elliot Silverberg.

**Public Meeting:**

The Defense Innovation Board (DIB) held a public meeting on January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 3:00 pm Eastern Time.

Dr. Marina Theodotou, DIB Designated Federal Officer (DFO), called the public meeting to order at 3:04 pm, expressing gratitude for the Board members, staff, and key supporting stakeholders. She outlined the Board's operating authority and notified attendees of no significant changes to the agenda. The DFO noted that due to time constraints detailed in the [Federal Register Notice Waiver](#), public citizen comments were not provided in advance to the Board, before turning the floor to the DIB Chair to kick off the discussion.

Michael Bloomberg, the DIB Chair, took the floor at 3:08 pm, thanking the Board for a successful culmination of 2.5 years of service and commitment to the mission, meeting with over 750 leaders across the Department, universities, and businesses, delivering over 150 independent recommendations, tailored to eight specific challenges which Secretary Austin directed the Board to study in depth. He noted that by the end of 2024, the Department had begun to implement 40 percent of the Board's recommendations, with more to follow. Mr. Bloomberg then introduced the Board's two latest reports to be presented and voted on, "[A Pathway to Scaling Unmanned Weapon Systems](#)" and "[Scaling Nontraditional Defense Innovation](#)," before introducing DIB Members HON Mac Thornberry and Dr. Gilda Barabino to discuss the Board's findings.

At 3:10 pm, HON Thornberry took the floor acknowledging the impact that unmanned weapons have had on the state of warfare. He emphasized that the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, and potential for future conflicts in Asia, necessitate a proactive approach to expanding the development and deployment of unmanned systems. HON Thornberry noted that the Board examined existing studies in the space and met with the Replicator Initiative's key implementers, industry professionals, warfighters, and DoD leaders. This resulted in five high level recommendations:

1. Buy enough systems to experiment and understand warfighter needs.
2. Provide more available and flexible funds.
3. Empower the workforce to drive the Replicator Initiative.
4. Address known issues with supply chains.
5. Work hand-in-hand with industry to deliver at speed.

HON Thornberry concluded by emphasizing that "the Board's most important recommendation is to Act. Do something with the urgency that advancing technologies demand." At 3:16 pm, Mr. Bloomberg called the Board to vote, with the exception of Ms. Mary Meeker and ADM Michael Mullen, who were absent, and HON Dr. Roper who recused himself, with each member replying "yea." The Chair concluded the study and turned the floor to Dr. Gilda Barabino.

Dr. Barabino, at 3:19 pm, outlined the Board's effort to provide outcome driven recommendations on scaling nontraditional defense innovation, having met with over 200 stakeholders, to include DoD leaders, industry experts, companies, warfighters, and academics. The Board found that despite the competition with China and conflicts in Ukraine and the

1. Innovation cannot be the sole province any one organization within the Department, nor the Executive Branch, but always the responsibility of every component.
2. Execution is paramount across the entire delivery chain.
3. Well intentioned disruptors have more allies than realized.
4. Moving fast and breaking things is necessary to win the fight – but, we cannot break the law, our oaths to the Constitution, or the public’s trust.
5. We can never get complacent.

Deputy Secretary Hicks closed by thanking the Board for their contributions, followed by the Chair expressing his gratitude for Deputy Secretary Hicks, Secretary Austin, and the Executive Secretary’s team for their leadership, before returning the floor to the DFO.

Dr. Marina Theodotou, DIB DFO, adjourned the open session at 3:47 pm.

I hereby certify, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.



Michael Bloomberg  
Chair, Defense Innovation Board

Middle East, the Department still lacks the ability to test, procure, and field emerging capability at speed, urging the Department to take the following actions:

- Re-allocate a significant portion of Research, Development, Test and Evaluation (RDT&E) investment out of the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution (PPBE) process, and place in a flexible procurement process.
- Significantly enhance the acquisition system's risk tolerance for failure.
- Enforce existing authorities in contract mechanisms for nontraditional vendors.
- Incentivize the Department's contracting workforce to place larger bets on new market participants through both critical acquisition targets and Open Topic-based pathways.

The Board's overarching recommendation is to address the immediate imperatives of organizational structure, cultural optimization, and dedicated capital to best leverage nontraditional vendor capabilities at scale. Some key recommendations include:

1. Expanding the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) into a cross Service "sherpa office," capable of providing entry to exit support to nontraditional vendors at scale.
2. Training the workforce on relational contracting.
3. Eliminating burdensome and lengthy contracting.
4. Establishing a Nontraditional Vendor Investment Review Committee led by the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) to maintain clarity on trade-offs across cost, schedule, and performance.
5. Committing to securing 5 to 10 game-changing capabilities and embracing a minimum viable product mindset to prevent Chinese overmatch.
6. Streamlining security clearance requirements for nontraditional vendors for greater access to utilizing Sensitive Compartmented Information Facilities.

At 3:28 pm, Mr. Bloomberg called the Board to vote, with the exception of Ms. Meeker and ADM Mullen, and each member replied with "yea." The Chair concluded the second study.

The Chair reiterated the key takeaway – to think and take action in the midst of rapid changes to current and future global affairs.

At 3:30 pm, Dr. Theodotou called the meeting to an intermission.

At 3:38 pm, Mr. Bloomberg introduced HON Kathleen Hicks, Deputy Secretary of Defense, where she acknowledged the Board's dedication to delivering innovations at scale with speed, having substantially lowered barriers to innovation across the DoD enterprise, "from the boardroom to the battlespace." Deputy Secretary Hicks noted that innovation adoption is fundamentally a change-management problem – demonstrating possibilities, rewarding game changers, and promoting success through teamwork. Looking ahead, HON Hicks emphasized five key insights for innovative success: