

**Defense Innovation Board
Public Meeting Minutes
Virtual
March 5, 2024**

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 a public meeting on Tuesday, March 5th virtually, via the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS). The public meeting was livestreamed and recorded by the Defense Media Agency. The livestream was viewed by 971 participants. The recording has been posted on the DIB website at innovation.defense.gov.

DIB Members Attending (4):

1. Mr. Michael Bloomberg, Chair
2. Ms. Susan Gordon
3. ADM (Ret.) Michael Mullen, U.S. Navy
4. Mr. Charles Phillips
5. Dr. Will Roper

Guest Speakers (5):

1. Jesse Levin, Executive Director, Defense Entrepreneurs Forum (DEF)
2. Ian Eishen, Board Member, DEF
3. Evanna Hu, CEO of Omelas, Prior DEF Board Member
4. Michael Madrid, Board Member, Prior Executive Director, DEF
5. Megan Metzger, Board Member and Treasurer, DEF

DIB Staff Team (14):

Dr. Marina Theodotou, Executive Director & Designated Federal Officer (DFO)
Staff: Carrie Shideler, Jongsun Kim, COL Wayne Sanders, Jason Lapadula (ADFOs); Khalia Alexander, Zackariah Crahen, Logan Hatfield, Melanie Heinlein, Christina Hilf, Abigail Linman, Dr. Juan Merizalde, Jacob Sharpe, Elliot Silverberg

Public Meeting:

The Defense Innovation Board held a public meeting on March 5th, 2024, at 4:00 pm ET.

Dr. Marina Theodotou called the public meeting to order at 4:06 pm, expressing gratitude for the Board members, staff, and key supporting agencies. She outlined the Board's operating authority and advised attendees of no significant changes to the agenda. The DFO acknowledged receipt of public citizen comments provided to the Board and posted to the DIB website, before turning the floor to the DIB Chair to kick off the discussion.

Michael Bloomberg, the DIB Chair, took the floor at 4:07 pm, providing an overview of the Board's mission to enable and strengthen the United States' military preparedness, agility, and culture. He summarized the Board's two current studies and processes, which focus on (1) how

the United States is innovating with partners and allied nations, coordinated by Mr. Charles Phillips, and (2) how to make the Departments' adoption of new technology faster and less painful, coordinated by ADM (Ret.) Michael Mullen. He announced that the DIB will provide a detailed update at the next public meeting before returning the floor to Dr. Theodotou to welcome members of the Defense Entrepreneurs Forum (DEF) Board. Dr. Theodotou directed Evanna Hu to kick off with an answer to the following questions:

Q1. How do we optimize the way we innovate with allies and partners?

A1. Evanna set the scene for why working with allies is imperative and noted that acquiring a nuanced, in-depth cultural awareness and empathy for social realities inherent to theater of operations, through informal convenings with international partners (e.g., Singapore, Taiwan, and the Philippines) will foster genuine working relationships with allied and partner forces. Jesse Levin echoed the importance of junior officer corps, enlisted and other DoD personnel gaining visceral exposure to and establishing a rapport with allies, as current systems for leveraging resources and fielding needed capabilities are often incapable of supporting the current environment. To address the gap between warfighter and advanced technologies, Jesse discussed a new DEF fellowship program to be established within six months in concert with the defense industrial base and key partners.

Q2. What is the fellowship program looking to accomplish?

A2. Jesse noted that the human element has been lost, as there are not opportunities at will for junior officers and enlisted personnel to gain on-the-ground exposure to our allies in their operating environments. To enable systemic change, a greater intuitive understanding of how allies operate within their respective ecosystems is needed.

ADM Mullen emphasized that culture barriers for standing up the program include getting the services to expand military exchanges with allies and partners beyond the war colleges, training commands, and other graduate programs, and in the number of fellows allocated to participate. Jesse and Evanna affirmed the cultural barriers and mindset shift this would require for the Department, adding that it is important to pull prospective fellows out of the defense context to better understand the experiences of ordinary civilians. ADM Mullen added that normal cultural adaptation for the warfighter will typically occur during and not before a fight.

Mr. Bloomberg asked for examples of challenges the Department has attempted to address, but failed and why they may fail in the current system. Jesse replied, acknowledging that while the DEFs process is regimented, the reality of cash flows in environments outside of government contracting is drastically different. Dr. Will Roper added that junior officers and enlisted are leading the ideas on tech in countries like Ukraine. Dr. Roper highlighted a lesson we should learn from Ukraine, as they are constantly in development mode while the United States remains in procurement mode, trying to win a war with outdated technology. Instead, we should adapt a development approach alongside innovators to ensure our systems are current and capable of

winning the war today. ADM Mullen closed this discussion with a question to consider, asking how you take the urgency of Ukraine and create deterrence to avoid going to war with Taiwan.

Dr. Theodotou shifted gears to aligning incentives to drive tech adoption and turned the floor to Megan Metzger to discuss low-hanging fruit. Megan described three focus areas: (1) current innovative workforce – promotion pathways; (2) remaining workforce surrounding incentives – training and upskilling; and (3) workforce we need to attract and retain – bridge the pay-gap and knowledge-gaps between government and industry, and remove bureaucratic barriers preventing seamless and ultimately, both appealing and valuable, rotational transition pipelines between industry and the Department. Dr. Theodotou raised the issue of how we train talent to take calculated risk. Megan responded that this is an opportunity for leaders to reframe risk, and the importance of leadership development for tech employees versus service members. Michael Madrid added that while top cover is necessary, it is not efficient; instead, what is needed to reform metrics for career progression from the “golden career path” to ensure the Department avoids unintentionally punishing those who seek to be innovative by going outside the traditional path, celebrating stories of smart risk-taking no matter the outcome, and exposing people to what good risk-taking looks like. Dr. Theodotou turned the final question to Ian Eishen, asking what metrics we can incorporate to scale success. Ian added that we must separate the organization from the innovators, as metrics of success and incentive structures for both are vastly different.

At 4:42 pm, Dr. Marina Theodotou provided a highlight overview of the discussion, and opened the floor to the Board for questions. Susan Gordon added that risk-taking is complex because of either systemic or culture factors enforcing no-fail approaches, leading to the view of losing the opportunity to do something again, rather than bidirectionally by the innovator and the operator, and a necessary attribute of innovation. Dr. Theodotou highlighted some relevant public citizen comments, before turning to the DIB Chair for closing remarks. Dr. Theodotou thanked the DIB members and the DEF for participating and adjourned the meeting at 4:49 pm.

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



Michael Bloomberg
Chair, Defense Innovation Board