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Defense Innovation Board Public Meeting

Moderated by Marina Theodotou

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

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A P P E A R A N C E S

List of Attendees:

Michael Bloomberg, Board Member

Marina Theodotou, Executive Director

Evanna Hu, Guest Speaker

Jen Sovada

Michael Madrid, Guest Speaker

Ian Eishen, Guest Speaker

Meagan Metzger, Guest Speaker

Jesse Levin, Guest Speaker

Ryan Swann, Board Member

Will Roper, Board Member

Admiral Michael Mullen, Board Member

Charles Phillips, Board Member

Mac Thornberry, Board Member

Sue Gordon, Board Member

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 DR. THEODOTOU: Welcome, everyone, and
3 thank you for joining us for today's Defense
4 Innovation Board public meeting. My name is
5 Dr. Marina Theodotou and I'm the executive director
6 and designated federal officer for the Defense
7 Innovation Board.

8 Today's meeting is being live streamed
9 and recorded to allow members of the public to attend
10 the meeting virtually now or view it later. Thank you
11 to the Defense Media Agency for providing their expert
12 support to support this event and to the Defense
13 Innovation Board staff team and everybody else
14 involved making this event happen today.

15 The board would now convene in its
16 public session. Please allow me to share a few
17 procedural comments. The board is discretionary
18 independent advisory board operating under the
19 advisory -- the Federal Advisory Committee Act and the
20 Government Sunshine Act. Today's meeting was
21 announced in the Federal Register notice posted on
22 February 21, 2024. There have been no significant
23 changes to the meeting's agenda as posted in the
24 Federal Register's notice.

25 The public was invited to submit

1 written comments for the board, and we received
2 several written comments in advance of today's
3 meeting. Those have been collected and culled and
4 they have been posted on the Defense Innovation Board
5 website. As a reminder, these are comments to the
6 board and not a question-and-answer session.

7 And now, I would like to turn it over
8 to the Defense Innovation Board Chair, Mr. Mike
9 Bloomberg. Mike, over to you.

10 MR. BLOOMBERG: Well, thanks, Marina,
11 and thanks to everyone tuning in and watching online.
12 In case anyone in the audience isn't familiar with the
13 board's mission, our job is to provide independent
14 recommendations to the Secretary of Defense and other
15 senior leaders across the department. It's a job
16 we're all honored to do, and by doing it well, we can
17 help empower even more of our men and women in uniform
18 as their jobs become even more dangerous in the face
19 of escalating challenges around the world.

20 Now, this public meeting will proceed a
21 little differently from our previous meeting at the
22 Pentagon in January. This time, we're inviting the
23 public to hear directly from some of the experts who
24 will help inform the board's two current studies,
25 which Secretary Lloyd Austin and Undersecretary Heidi

1 Shyu have asked us to undertake.

2 To help set the table, let me summarize
3 the two studies quickly. The first focuses on how the
4 United States is innovating in partnership with allied
5 nations. Board member Charles Phillips is
6 coordinating this study. We'll identify not just the
7 strengths and technology strategies we have in common
8 with our allies; we will also look at some of the
9 barriers that exist across multilateral agreements and
10 how we might work to remove those barriers and improve
11 how we collaborate.

12 The second study focuses on how we
13 might make the department's adoption of new technology
14 both faster and less painful. Retired Admiral Mike
15 Mullen, who knows a thing or two about navigating the
16 halls of the Pentagon, is coordinating this study.
17 There's no innovation without taking risks, and right
18 now, it's clear that we need to incentivize more
19 individuals and teams across the department to take
20 more risks.

21 So we'll collect insights from
22 department research labs, contracting officers,
23 service members from each branch, and external
24 partners across industry too. That way, we can better
25 understand the different timelines and incentives of

1 each of the parties involved. Then, we can better
2 align those timelines and incentives and speed up the
3 adoption of promising new tech. Nothing to it; right?

4 But seriously, I think it's fair to say
5 that we have plenty of work to do. We'll provide a
6 detailed update on the studies at the public meeting
7 next month, but first today, we're glad to welcome
8 several members of the nonprofit Defense Entrepreneurs
9 Forum and to hear their firsthand perspectives on the
10 challenges we're tackling. To ensure we hear from
11 everyone in the 45 minutes that we have asked, I've
12 asked Marina to moderate a Q&A with the group. Board
13 members should feel free to chime in and question --
14 with their questions and comments throughout.

15 Marina, over to you.

16 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you, Mike. We're
17 delighted today to welcome the Defense Entrepreneurs
18 Forum members and hear from them, as Mike mentioned,
19 and from your insights and expertise. The Defense
20 Entrepreneurs Forum connects, inspires, and empowers
21 innovators across the national security ecosystem and
22 I'm personally very fond of the Defense Entrepreneurs
23 Forum because, actually, I was involved in the early
24 stages -- probably five or six years ago -- and
25 delighted to welcome today, Jesse Levin, Meagen

1 Metzger, Michael Madrid, Evanna Hu, and Ian Eishen.

2 And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention
3 that almost everyone has been a TEDxDAU speaker here.
4 So if you're not familiar with TEDxDAU, look it up and
5 try to attend. So let's zero in in today's
6 conversation. Because we do have only 30 minutes, I'd
7 like for us to split the time in 15 minutes for each
8 of the studies.

9 So we're going to start with optimizing
10 how we innovate with allies and partners and I'm going
11 to ask Evanna to lead the first -- to kick us off with
12 answering the first question. And so, as a reminder,
13 the answers need to be about three minutes. So no
14 matter how many people respond, let's try to keep it
15 around three minutes and then we'll have about six
16 minutes total for members to ask questions.

17 So Evanna, how do we optimize the way
18 we innovate with our allies and partners? It's a very
19 broad question. Over to you.

20 MS. HU: Thank you so much for having
21 me, and I will do my little spiel in about a minute
22 and a half. And so I would like to actually set the
23 scene by talking a little bit more about why we need
24 to work with our allies; right? So for DEF we see as
25 the best way to strengthen our mutual defense posture

1 and to prevent further democracy backsliding against
2 authoritarianism. Especially against the backdrop of
3 great power competition, partnerships are seen as a
4 lynchpin in the U.S. department defense's strategy
5 deterrence as outlined in the 2022 national security
6 strategy, yet little capacity and few initiatives
7 exist in terms of fostering cross-national comradery
8 via cultural intelligence and atmospherics.

9 These socioeconomic human factors have
10 taken a backseat. To remain relevant and competitive,
11 our younger Junior Officers and Enlisted Corps must
12 garner in depth cultural awareness and empathy for the
13 nuanced operational and social realities inherent to
14 these likely theaters of operation. Whole of society
15 informal working groups are incredibly well resourced,
16 supporting kinetic operations and are vastly
17 disrupting the acquisition supply -- and tech
18 development and fielding cycles we would normally
19 associate with DOD.

20 Very few cultural exchanges intended to
21 foster true rapport and working relationships with
22 ally partner forces exist for the Junior Officer Corps
23 and enlisted DOD personnel. DEF aims to fulfill that
24 gap through informal exchanges and convenings with our
25 international partners, specifically those in the

1 Asian theater, including Singapore, Taiwan, and the
2 Philippines. With that, I want to turn it over to
3 Jesse to discuss the solution.

4 MR. LEVIN: Thank you, Evanna. And
5 thank you to the DIB for having us back. As Evanna
6 mentioned, innovation -- we almost have -- it's almost
7 been indoctrinated in the western DOD now. We have a
8 number of programs of record. The DIB is an
9 incredible example of how we've evolved to ensure and
10 expedite technological advances in the private sector
11 to get them in the hands of the war fighter very
12 quickly.

13 However, what's happening around the
14 world and in various AOs are these proxy environments
15 that the game is very different, how things are
16 transpiring on the ground. And as Evanna mentioned,
17 there aren't a lot of opportunities for our junior
18 officers and our enlisted DOD to get exposure to the
19 sociocultural elements of how operations, logistics,
20 acquisitions, things are transpiring in environments
21 like Ukraine for example. And a lot of what we
22 hear -- as an example, using Ukraine, because that's a
23 very current situation -- FPV drones and other
24 technologies have changed the face of war as we know
25 it.

1 What's also very interesting and
2 important to study is how the entire whole of society
3 has been engaged and how hundreds of millions of
4 dollars have flown through groups like YPO and social
5 impact entrepreneurs who have partnered up with local
6 businesses and adopted direct action units. And the
7 way innovation is being done on the ground in these
8 environments is radically different than what we've
9 built systems to support.

10 It doesn't make it right, wrong, or
11 otherwise, but it's imperative that our Junior Officer
12 Corps and our enlisted and other DOD personnel gain
13 visceral exposure and establish rapport with
14 individuals operating with our allies. So when we
15 have to support -- whether through the advised assist
16 of company or from a deterrence perspective, we are
17 really well-versed and understand culturally what is
18 transpiring on the ground.

19 So we're asking -- we'd love for the
20 DIB -- and what DEF is going to try to do is in six
21 months we're going to work to stand up a fellowship
22 and this is going to really largely rely on business
23 relationships and then these international environs
24 that Evanna mentioned -- includes Singapore, Taiwan,
25 and Philippines -- and there's going to be a number of

1 challenges from security clearance, from any number of
2 structuring issues that we're going to face, and we'd
3 love for DIB to hold DEF accountable to this project,
4 and we'd love to ask the DIB and the individual DIB
5 members for support as we structure and architect this
6 cultural exchange. Thank you.

7 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you, Jesse. Yes.
8 So you're building a fellowship. And so how do you
9 see the fellowship program addressing the biggest
10 challenges and opportunities? What is the fellowship
11 program looking to accomplish?

12 MR. LEVIN: Evanna, do you want to take
13 that, or would you like me to take it? What we're
14 looking to accomplish is right now there's a
15 tremendous amount of focus on tech and added
16 manufacturing AI. These things are all, of course,
17 imperative. You know, how we do this in the private
18 sector and how we channel these improvements and these
19 innovations into DOD, of course, is imperative.

20 But what's not being studied enough in
21 our estimation is the human element, the human
22 terrain. And the fellowships are not new, it's not a
23 new approach, there's nothing revolutionary about
24 this. However, there are not a lot of opportunities
25 for the junior officers and for the enlisted to gain

1 this type of exposure and to have systemic change.

2 We feel it's imperative for the younger
3 officers and people getting involved in the national
4 security community earlier on to gain exposure to how
5 our allies are operating in their environments because
6 we cannot expect them to do things the way that we do
7 things, and if we want to be in the best position to
8 support -- and again, to advise -- we have to have a
9 visceral understanding for how society is operating in
10 their respective countries and how we can best plug
11 into the existing cultural nuances of how their
12 respective ecosystems function.

13 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you for that. So
14 let's pause here and open the floor for our board
15 members to ask any questions. Admiral Mullen?

16 ADMIRAL MULLEN: So Jesse, as I listen
17 to this -- I mean, historically, the cultural barrier
18 for the program you're talking about is allies and
19 partners come here. If we've had fellow -- typically.
20 I mean, it's not exclusive -- but they actually come
21 here in numbers to our war colleges, to our graduate
22 schools, to our train commands.

23 And to do this, I think what you're
24 talking about is -- and I don't disagree with this --
25 it's just that getting the services to cut loose with

1 numbers -- not one of, because typically we do "one
2 of's" in Singapore or "one of's" in Taiwan or the PI.
3 You know, there's a volume requirement here across
4 DOD -- I'm not just talking military. It's that we
5 are so acculturated to people coming here that we
6 don't even think about being in their shoes, in their
7 country, which is absolutely critical.

8 So it's a big -- it's a big bar that
9 you've raised in terms of trying to get over, in
10 all -- at least as I understand it, in all the aspects
11 of it. It's not -- I couldn't agree more. I think
12 one of the things that we don't do well that we need
13 to focus on is how do we see it through other's eyes,
14 how do we see it from their perspective, and we're not
15 very good at it.

16 MR. LEVIN: Absolutely, sir. I think
17 you hit the nail on the head. And we understand
18 there's going to be tremendous cultural barriers in
19 the DOD to get requisite permissions and it's a
20 massive cultural shift. However, from what we've seen
21 on the ground operationally, we have a tremendous
22 amount to learn, and it goes both ways and it's very
23 difficult for us to ascertain those things from a
24 distance.

25 And you know, I don't know that we need

1 to have large numbers off the bat, and I think if you
2 find the right people -- you know, you start with
3 one -- our goal is to actually have six billets filled
4 when we launch this program hopefully in six months,
5 and you've got to start somewhere. But could not
6 agree more.

7 MS. HU: Yeah, and we also want to pull
8 them out of the defense context -- right -- so that
9 they also understand where the civilians are coming
10 from, so we almost see it as like a mesh -- a mesh up
11 between the Aspen Executive Seminar where, you know,
12 you have certain amount of philosophy and history that
13 you have to read about other cultures plus that hands
14 on experience with their defense counterpart but also
15 being exposed to what the -- civilian is going
16 through.

17 ADMIRAL MULLEN: Yeah, I don't disagree
18 with all that. It's just the difference between what
19 you just described and living there -- literally
20 living in a country, living with a family -- is almost
21 night and day. And to me, that's where you want to
22 get to, that kind of understanding and all of the
23 pieces that go into that. The other note I took just
24 as I was listening to you is how did -- YPO triggered
25 me because the relationship piece there is huge. It's

1 global.

2 But it goes -- it really sort of goes
3 through the business school. I mean that's kind of
4 central. That's where those relationships get
5 started. And is there a way to do this in that regard
6 which could make it subtractive from a career
7 standpoint for our junior officers in particular to go
8 to school, create that kind of connection and those
9 relationships and then bring them back. But you got
10 to go -- we got to go to other countries.

11 The normal cultural adaptation we get
12 in other countries, sadly, is typically when we're in
13 a fight, and we don't have it before we go. I mean,
14 that's -- so I admire the challenge but it's a big
15 challenge.

16 MR. BLOOMBERG: Let me ask a question.
17 Can somebody give us examples of things we tried to
18 address but failed and why they might fail in the
19 current system?

20 MR. LEVIN: I can give you an example
21 of how things have actually been happening in Ukraine
22 versus what we might require through our system. I
23 had mentioned YPO. You know, we've seen literally and
24 touched and helped facilitate literally hundreds of
25 millions of dollars of money coming through social

1 impact groups, you know, private entrepreneurial
2 venture groups, groups that have absolutely nothing to
3 do with government contracting or -- or primes but
4 simply wanted to be supportive.

5 And we've seen, you know, millions and
6 millions of dollars of procurement acquisitions and
7 last mile distribution done with zero money before
8 operational budgets even hit based on goodwill,
9 handshakes, and established rapport. So I think, to
10 answer your question to the best of my ability, our
11 process even for innovation is very systematized and
12 is very regimented and there's a clearly a place and a
13 need for that absolutely -- we're not saying that
14 that's not required.

15 However, we would be remiss and we
16 would I think be setting ourselves up for failure if
17 we were not to identify the fact that the way that
18 money flows and support is being provided in other
19 environments is drastically different than what we're
20 used to and we're seeing tech cycles and fielding of
21 tech and iterative evolutions of, you know, drone
22 technology and software back doors being fielded,
23 tested, changed, and brought back up to the field in
24 24 hours for pennies on the dollar because civilian
25 and entrepreneurial groups are just involved and have

1 adopted frontline units, something that we don't see
2 within our system.

3 MR. BLOOMBERG: Thank you.

4 MR. ROPER: Part of the necessity
5 because of how Ukraine -- I've been there and been
6 with the units on the front lines and it's very much a
7 confederacy and doesn't feel like the U.S. where
8 combined arms maneuver is possible. And so I think
9 the parodies and other entrepreneurial efforts that
10 have sprung up because there's been a lack of a
11 central procurement mandate from the government.

12 But I do think you've got -- Ukraine is
13 an example that you can hold up to the U.S. and all of
14 our allies and partners, especially with respect to
15 junior officers and enlisted. And that's in Ukraine
16 it is often the junior officers and enlisted who are
17 being looked to as the technical experts. They're the
18 ones that are working with the companies or sometimes
19 doing things inside the units because they've got more
20 currency in technology. So I've seen that across all
21 different echelons.

22 The junior officers are leading the
23 ideas on tech, and I think that's something that could
24 become part of training and scaled across most
25 militaries where senior officers lean on junior

1 officers for greater insight on technical matters, and
2 if conflict occurs -- and we pray it doesn't -- the
3 same kind of development and operations go hand in
4 hand. Now they're -- now you've already trained for
5 that, you've prepared for that, you've educated for
6 that.

7 So I think there's a great opportunity
8 to make having tech currency being brought into the
9 units the focus of your first training efforts and I
10 think that's something that every nation that we work
11 with would want to partner with and try to standardize
12 that so that our teams and our units would be
13 interoperable in a conflict.

14 So I think there's a good idea there
15 that you can focus through a lens based on what's
16 making innovation go so quickly in Ukraine and that's
17 one imperative. Two, the DevOps, developers and
18 operators working together. And three, there are
19 typically a few tech-savvy people in the units who can
20 speak tech speak and help on the rapid iteration
21 cycles and that sounds like something we could codify
22 into a process that could be scaled.

23 MR. BLOOMBERG: Well, let me ask you
24 something. The craziness that's going on with
25 congress where they won't even consider authorizing

1 money to go to stop -- to help Ukraine stop Russia,
2 our war fighters, our people on the ground, what do
3 they think about the domestic political process and
4 how little support or do support their efforts?

5 MR. ROPER: Well, our units aren't
6 there on the ground, but I've spoken with many of the
7 Ukrainian units. Of course, they're very worried
8 about the west losing support for funding the war. I
9 think the lesson we should learn from what's working
10 in Ukraine that should be in place right now in the
11 Pentagon as well as our allies and partners is
12 Ukraine's in development always and we're in
13 procurement mode.

14 We're trying to help them win the war
15 with yesterday's technology, which Russia has already
16 responded to and countered, and I would argue there's
17 likely never been a war in history that's been won
18 with the equipment that was possessed on day one.
19 Some of the great innovations of World War II --
20 Barnes Wallis building the bouncing bombs and the
21 bunker buster -- but these were developed during the
22 war.

23 And I think that's the lesson is that,
24 as opposed to trying to squeeze supply chains until
25 they're dry, we should be going back to the drawing

1 board with our innovators that we have quite a few of
2 in the U.S. and figuring out what new systems can help
3 them win. That's an old lesson that the Pentagon
4 should really relearn because that is what Ukraine is
5 doing day-to-day.

6 What they don't have the ability to do
7 is to think further than, like, a month cycle, in some
8 cases more than a week cycle. But we do, and I think
9 that's an area that we could really help and maybe
10 find some more cost-effective solutions that would
11 make supplying the war more politically palatable, but
12 I think it's critical that Ukraine prevail in this
13 war. What Russia's doing is template for other
14 nations to follow in the future.

15 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you so much,
16 Will. I think this has been great so far --

17 ADMIRAL MULLEN: Hey, Marina, just one
18 quick comment --

19 DR. THEODOTOU: Yes, sir.

20 ADMIRAL MULLEN: Ukraine brings a sense
21 of urgency despite the fact our troops aren't there.
22 How do take this -- and Jesse, this is a question for
23 you -- how do you take this and create deterrence,
24 which is much more difficult, so that we don't go to
25 war in Taiwan?

1 MR. LEVIN: Be happy to --

2 ADMIRAL MULLEN: I don't need you to
3 answer that. I just have that question out there --

4 DR. THEODOTOU: That's a good way to --
5 thank you, sir. That's a great way to wrap up a very,
6 very short discussion on allies and partners. Let's
7 shift gears now to incentives and aligning talent
8 incentives to drive tech adoption. So I'll turn it
9 over to Meagan to talk to us about the low hanging
10 fruit when it comes to incentives for talent. What
11 are we missing? What should we be focusing on?
12 Megan, over to you.

13 MS. METZGER: Fantastic. Thanks so
14 much for having us. So I'm going to talk about this
15 in three groups. I'm going to talk about the
16 innovative work force that we do have, the incentives
17 for them, the remaining work force that surrounds
18 them, and then the work force that we need to pull in.
19 So I'm starting with what I would call the folks that
20 are already in there, taking risk. They're doing more
21 innovative things.

22 First recommendation would be around
23 promotion pathways. So Will Roper talked about
24 codifying these tech savvy roles, helping create a
25 tech currency. But currently, the promotion for those

1 types of skill sets is not immediately obvious. So
2 when you look at incentives, a big motivation for
3 individuals is going to be autonomy and mastery. And
4 right now, some of these roles where they gain skills,
5 become innovative, learn tech -- the tech knowledge
6 they need, are then rotated into positions where they
7 cannot use that skill at all.

8 You know, so I joke that someone could
9 go to a software factory, learn to code, and the next
10 position might be collecting urinalysis samples. It
11 doesn't line up, so we need a better promotion path to
12 help them retain that mastery that they're gaining.
13 The other is, you know, around creating promotion and
14 aligning it to the outcomes and so you can drive
15 accountability into these roles.

16 So when we look at the promotion
17 pathways today, it's a lot on time, on schedule, on
18 budget, but not a lot of the outcomes that we want to
19 drive by driving innovation. So, you know, keeping
20 the war fighters safer. So really understanding the
21 outcomes and aligning how promotions are done against
22 outcomes for that.

23 The second, I'll talk about the work
24 force that has to surround them. A big challenge
25 right now is you might have a skill set like these

1 tech rules or these innovative individuals that are
2 more forward-leaning and the folks around them are not
3 sure how to enable them or weaponize them for what we
4 need them to do. So it's a really common theme to
5 say, "Hey, everyone's just risk adverse," and we point
6 our fingers, and I like to say, "With all due respect,
7 we built them this way."

8 So I think a recommendation would be
9 look at the training and the up scaling of all of
10 these careers that are in the critical path and really
11 audit to where are we building in such a risk aversion
12 along the way, how can we upscale them on the
13 technology to a level where they know enough to know
14 how to do their job differently, like contracting, for
15 example. The second one would also be focusing on our
16 senior leaders.

17 Senior leaders mostly did not come up
18 through the ranks thinking they were going to manage
19 major IT programs and now almost everything is an IT
20 program, and how you have to lead that and the
21 questions you have to ask has wildly changed. So
22 assessing how we upscale the work force that we have
23 that's required to enable those risk takers as
24 innovators and those technological skills will be very
25 necessary.

1 The third will be the talent that we
2 need to attract, and we need to retain. So some
3 recommendations -- I would have two main ones. One is
4 bridge the skill -- the pay gap to so that we can be
5 on par, attract talent that might not have come to the
6 organization otherwise, especially in those technical
7 pathways like data science and software development.
8 And then two, allow for these types of roles to more
9 easily and fluidly go back out into industry and come
10 back in so that they can keep their knowledge fresh,
11 learn and understand the commercial sector, and things
12 like DevOps that continue to evolve and change every
13 day, and bring that knowledge back in without such a
14 big bureaucratic red tape barrier in front of them.

15 So those my three -- I would say
16 they're low hanging fruit, but it doesn't mean that
17 they are easy but there's a lot of opportunity there.

18 MS. THEODOTOU: Thank you, Meagan.
19 That's a great -- a great way to help us think how to
20 align and focus on the different areas or categories,
21 if you will, of talent that you outlined. And I love
22 how you highlighted potential recommendations for
23 each.

24 So as we dig deeper, we know that we
25 have to incentivize risk taking to ensure that the

1 leaders across the organization are rewarded for
2 different approaches to traditional problems and you
3 alluded to that earlier, but how do we dig deeper into
4 ensuring that we train -- our talent would take
5 calculated risk, and in my mind, that requires leaders
6 that provide top cover and leaders that are also
7 trained to be able to have the right skills to be able
8 to cultivate innovation and foster a culture of change
9 and provide that necessary top cover. Let's hear your
10 thoughts of that as well.

11 MS. METZGER: Yeah, absolutely. I do
12 think there is a great opportunity at the leadership
13 level to one, help them understand how they're going
14 to need -- lead differently in a tech forward
15 environment; two, understand what skill sets and what
16 it looks like to take calculated risk so they can
17 provide a left lane and a right lane to allow them to
18 innovate within but not go so far that we are now in a
19 risky situation.

20 Now, with that, what on earth does risk
21 mean? I think there's a lot of retooling to help
22 understand how to reframe risk appropriately in a tech
23 driven world. So how it translates down to staff
24 might be risk of a protest in a contract but all you
25 did was shift the risk to the people with the most to

1 lose, which is the people on the front lines.

2 So when we look at how we're evaluating
3 leaders and what risk they're taking, helping leaders
4 learn how to recalculate -- reframe their risk so that
5 they are taking appropriate levels of risk but it's
6 not having an impact on the mission that we need. A
7 lot of times that connectivity between the risk
8 aversion and the mission outcome that they need is not
9 tied together.

10 So I know that's a very nebulous thing,
11 but I think there is a lot of training -- intentional
12 training -- around calculated risk, reframing risk,
13 and how to lead more innovative, forward leaning
14 talent differently so that we aren't being risk averse
15 but in the wrong places.

16 DR. THEODOTOU: And Michael Madrid, I
17 know you have some thoughts around that. For example,
18 one notion is to transform the frozen middle to this
19 force multipliers that that are actually the ones that
20 are unleashing innovation because they now have the
21 skills to be able to foster innovative risk taking.
22 Michael, what are your thoughts on that?

23 MR. MADRID: Well, Meagan and I
24 actually didn't have a lot of pre-coordination, but
25 you'll see a lot of themes that are common between our

1 thoughts. And there's probably three things I would
2 highlight. The first -- let me just go back to
3 something you mentioned, Marina.

4 You mentioned top cover. And in my
5 experience, top cover is necessary but insufficient.
6 All right? It's actually -- it's quite necessary and
7 quite helpful to have a senior leader like a five
8 alpha embrace an innovation program or recommend, you
9 know, a junior officer or enlisted person who has a
10 bright idea, but it has actually historically been
11 insufficient for that person to actually go out and
12 make change because the flag officers don't have the
13 time or -- and it's not their responsibility to kind
14 of hand hold that solution through, and so there are a
15 lot of people -- Marina, you referring to them as the
16 frozen middle -- that play a role in whether or not
17 those kinds of innovative solutions see the light of
18 day.

19 And so in thinking about sort of
20 incentives for people throughout the organization,
21 including the middle, there's three things that came
22 to my mind. The first is to just establish the golden
23 career path. Meagan and others have highlighted this
24 already. And allow those who do innovation
25 assignments or who kind of stray from the very typical

1 military career -- allow them to continue progressing
2 in their field if that's what they want to do.

3 And I think part of this is looking at
4 the metrics by which we measure our personnel and how
5 we evaluate them and think about what those evaluation
6 metrics incentivize or disincentivize. And there's
7 both positive and negative ways to incentivize and I
8 would actually put forth in our unit that people who
9 are naturally innovative or innovators don't need a
10 lot of positive reinforcement.

11 We've seen programs throughout the
12 years that offer cash bonuses for innovative ideas or
13 try to reward people for doing innovative things, but
14 I think if you have that bug, you are dying to go do
15 it yourself, and you actually just need things to get
16 out of your way. And so really, I think more about
17 the negative incentives. We need to avoid
18 unintentionally punishing those people who do
19 innovating things or limiting their career or limiting
20 their opportunities, because that's when either they
21 innovate and then they decide to get out, or they have
22 the impulse to innovate but they restrain that impulse
23 because they don't want to be outside the norm. So
24 that's the first thing is thinking about career paths.

25 The second thing would be around

1 celebrating stories of smart risk taking, even when it
2 doesn't work out well, and I think this is one of
3 those things that aligns really well with what Meagan
4 was talking about -- defining where failing is
5 acceptable and in fact necessary for learning and for
6 moving with speed and in those arenas where failures
7 is okay actually celebrate that because people need to
8 see examples of taking a risk and not losing your job
9 or having your career ended because you took a risk
10 and it didn't work out.

11 We have to combat the notion that quote
12 unquote nobody ever got fired for picking Northrop
13 Grumman; right? And so the third thing I would say is
14 also exposing people to what good risk-taking
15 environments look like, so whether it's the frozen
16 middle or anywhere in the stack of the organization,
17 show them what good looks like. We have experimented
18 in the duty of various tours with industry, tours with
19 startups, embedding people with venture capitalists
20 who do smart risk taking all the time as their day
21 job.

22 You may be familiar with the defense
23 ventures program and it's an incredible shame that
24 that program ended recently and AFWERX didn't renew
25 the contract when there's an incredible body of people

1 who have gone through that program, returned to
2 services, and the data they say they're more likely to
3 stay in the DOD longer having had that experience. It
4 doesn't accelerate their exit from the DOD but rather
5 they go see what good looks like at organization from
6 Amazon to Androl and all sorts of organizations in
7 between and then investors who do risk taking every
8 day.

9 So show people what good looks like,
10 celebrate the failures when they're acceptable, and
11 think about what the career path looks like.

12 DR. THEODOTOU: Thanks, Michael.
13 That -- that actually high lights -- you talked about
14 rewarding and recognizing innovators, whether they're
15 winning or whether they're failing and making that we
16 establish metrics to do that.

17 And that brings us to our final
18 question that I'd like to ask Ian to address, which is
19 how do we know -- how do we know we're being
20 successful? What are some of the metrics that we can
21 incorporate to make sure that in the short term and
22 the longer term, we are measuring success and continue
23 to it rate so that we can continue improving and
24 scaling? Over to you, Ian.

25 MR. EISHEN: No, I really appreciate

1 the question and I appreciate the defense innovation
2 board's time today. I think one thing we have to do
3 when we talk about incentives, we have to separate the
4 organization from the innovators themselves. And so
5 what is the measure of success for the organization?

6 Well, I think the fact that a
7 fellowship program that kind of offered really fast
8 dynamic fellowships to people to bring them back into
9 service as opposed to something like skill bridge
10 where -- which is a great program, by the way -- where
11 you do this work, you learn this industry, and then
12 you go out and use that during your transition. It's
13 much different to bring that knowledge and network
14 back to your unit.

15 And so we have this major offering that
16 got canceled and I think that's a view of the metric
17 of success of the organization to take something that
18 was working and is part of the new NDAA language, part
19 of everything that's coming out of the national
20 defense strategy and the National Defense
21 Authorization Act, and yet it died. And it died due
22 to organizational plaque, probably.

23 There's lots of different stories about
24 why, but I think we have to make sure we
25 separate -- is the organization as a whole, and that

1 could be at the OSD level. You know, something like
2 this could turn into a micro sect of fellows program.
3 But you need to house something at a level that has
4 the right authority and budget to make sure that it
5 continues.

6 We separate that from the metrics of
7 success for the innovator. We've got a lot of
8 founders in this room, we have a lot of innovative
9 people on the call talking about this today, and if we
10 think about it, the metrics of success for an
11 innovator is not did your idea succeed, because you
12 have to understand that 95 percent of your ideas fail.
13 And as long as you learn from those ideas, that's one
14 metric and the velocity of ideas and the velocity of
15 which you're able to bring those ideas and learn from
16 them is a huge metric of success.

17 It's also a metric of success not just
18 for the innovator but back to the organization because
19 if I'm able to continually bring multiple ideas up in
20 this organization, succeed, fail, good ideas, bad
21 ideas -- it doesn't matter -- as long as I'm able to
22 bring them forward, it means that I've got a culture
23 and I've got an organizational structure that allows
24 that to happen.

25 And then I'd reframe everything that,

1 you know, my team has said today -- the fact that we
2 don't -- money is great, as long as you have enough to
3 not worry about your family. After that, it's just
4 being able to do great things and use the thing that
5 you're good at to help the overall organization.
6 That's why our people serve, whether that's active
7 duty, reserves, guard, or civilian force, but they're
8 here to serve and so let's let them do what they're
9 good at.

10 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you so much, Ian.
11 So this -- in this section, we heard about -- we heard
12 from Meagan, talking about upscaling and rescaling our
13 talent and focusing on our talent.

14 We heard from Michael Madrid that top
15 cover is necessary but not sufficient, and then we
16 also heard from Ian on how we should be thinking about
17 separating the metrics of success for the organization
18 and make them outcomes-driven for the war fighter and
19 for the individual.

20 So we'll pause here and open it up for
21 questions. Mike -- Mr. Chair -- over to you to kick
22 the Q&A for this section --

23 MR. BLOOMBERG: Well, I think we've
24 heard a lot today that will help inform our current
25 studies.

1 Sue Gordon, do you have anything you
2 want to say?

3 MS. GORDON: Yeah, just one quick one.
4 I love so many of these ideas. I love the upscaling
5 including senior leaders to be able to understand
6 technology because generally what I experience is they
7 view new technology as additive risk and sometimes
8 it's not additive risk and that's hard to discern, so
9 it just kind of stops there.

10 But I would encourage you to -- I love
11 the topic of risk. I think it is a complex one and I
12 think it's complex for innovators because someone who
13 builds something thinks that risk is their thing not
14 working, and an operator often views risk as losing
15 the opportunity to do something again. So you might
16 want to think about this risk in a bidirectional way.

17 Maybe there's something that goes to
18 the innovators to have more exposure to a different
19 kind of risk equation that sometimes is what seizes
20 the system from putting it in. But I love where
21 you're going, you all.

22 MR. BLOOMBERG: Sue, I'd also be remiss
23 if I didn't say our thoughts are with you. And Sue
24 lost her husband about 30 days ago and you're nice to
25 come and participate and thank you for everything

1 you've done for this country and everything that he
2 did for this country. So we're a better a country
3 because of --

4 MS. GORDON: Well, thanks. My Jim was
5 truly one of the great innovators in our community and
6 it's because he never believed that anything should
7 stop good outcome from happening, so --

8 MR. BLOOMBERG: Well, you're certainly
9 keeping that going.

10 MS. GORDON: Good deal. Thanks.

11 MR. BLOOMBERG: For everyone watching
12 online, mark your calendars. Wednesday, April 17th is
13 when the board will hold our next public meeting and
14 we're looking forward to it. Until then, all the
15 best. Marina, over to you.

16 DR. THEODOTOU: Thank you, Mike. Great
17 conversation. So we have a few minutes left and I
18 wanted to highlight that we did receive a few
19 comments. They have been posted in our -- on our web
20 page. And I just wanted to highlight that the
21 comments we received actually resonate with the
22 discussion today -- a lot around talent management and
23 how can we maintain the competitive in not only the
24 talent we have today but also the talent we need to
25 bring in, so that allude to some of the comments that

1 Megan was making.

2 We have comments about the adoption of
3 new technologies and that pace and how do we
4 accelerate that pace, which is very much at the crux
5 of what we're looking at in the incentive study, and
6 also an idea about -- borrowed from the Australian
7 defense forces about doing a 12-month enlistment
8 during the gap year for graduates -- high school
9 graduates before going to college.

10 So some interesting ideas. We
11 encourage the citizens and everyone within the DOD
12 national security network to continue sharing your
13 thoughts and insights. We -- the DIB is listening,
14 and so we look forward to receiving those. And next,
15 we're almost at the very end of our session here
16 today. Mike, did you have any additional thoughts you
17 wanted to share looking ahead?

18 MR. BLOOMBERG: Only that Mike Mullen
19 can add a lot, but I just wanted to say that we are
20 very lucky to be able to serve and help the country
21 and help our military. Our security, our future is in
22 their hands, and they are ill-appreciated,
23 unfortunately. But those of us that have watched them
24 understand the sacrifices they and their families make
25 so that we, every day, can go about our business.

1 Mike Mullen, you want to add anything?

2 ADMIRAL MULLEN: No. I don't
3 think -- I couldn't have said it any better, Mike. I
4 appreciate the ideas. The difficulty here is how do
5 you translate great ideas into, you know, operational
6 effect tied to that mission. And it is a huge
7 challenge but that's the motivation for all of us here
8 is to try to figure out how to support those that are
9 making our country more safe.

10 DR. THEODOTOU: How about Charles --

11 MR. BLOOMBERG: Marina?

12 DR. THEODOTOU: Yes. I was wondering
13 if Charles had any additional thoughts he wanted to
14 share. Charles?

15 MR. PHILLIPS: Yeah. I was just going
16 to add that I was down last week at the Pentagon
17 Dr. Seal [ph] and Dr. Hume [ph] as well. We are
18 making progress on working with our allies and
19 partners and they gave me many examples over a hundred
20 programs of where we've discovered technology at an
21 ally and brought it to the U.S. and manufactured it
22 here and vice versa.

23 What we're missing is scale, though,
24 because that's been driven by them personally, and so
25 it needs to be more programmatic, but I was surprised

1 at how much it happens. There's some, you know, kind
2 of embedded barriers that you might expect
3 around -- or the requirements that we have, and they
4 have similar requirements, regulations in their
5 countries -- maybe those two things can come together.

6 But there's a lot going on but it all
7 boils down to trust, so where we started the
8 discussion around people on the ground and the ally
9 being comfortable turning technology over and
10 discussing it -- if you have people on the ground
11 there, which is how this happened, and therefore they
12 build those relationships, people start to share their
13 ideas, see what they're working on.

14 And we've done it with our close
15 allies, obviously. That's where you start, with the
16 UK and Canada and Australia, but if we can have more
17 people on the ground to our earlier discussions, it
18 seems like that things like that would happen beyond
19 just the relationships and the culture. You actually
20 get to all sorts of technology and data sharing as
21 well.

22 DR. THEOTODOU: Thank you, Charles.
23 And with that, we are actually coming to a close for
24 today's meeting. We greatly appreciate the Defense
25 Entrepreneurs Forum for joining us today. We

1 appreciate your time and comments and insights. We
2 hope that these are going to be valuable to inform our
3 board members insights on the current studies. And
4 with that, I'll turn it back over to you, Mike, for
5 your closing comments.

6 MR. BLOOMBERG: Had my closing comments
7 and --

8 DR. THEODOTOU: Okay.

9 MR. BLOOMBERG: I think it's time for
10 us to get back to work.

11 DR. THEODOTOU: All right. Thanks,
12 everyone, and we'll see you soon. Take care.

13 (Whereupon, the meeting concluded at
14 4:50 p.m.)

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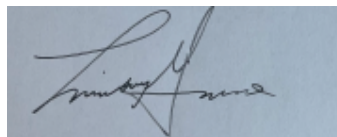
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CERTIFICATE

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1	25:11	added 11:15	aligns 29:3
12 36:7	accelerate 30:4	additional	allied 5:4
15 7:7	36:4	36:16 37:13	allies 5:8 7:10
17th 35:12	acceptable	additive 34:7,8	7:18,24 10:14
2	29:5 30:10	address 15:18	12:5,18 17:14
20005 1:9	accomplish	30:18	19:11 21:6
2022 8:5	11:11,14	addressing	37:18 38:15
2024 1:5 3:22	accountability	11:9	allow 3:9,16
21 3:22	22:15	admiral 2:13	24:8 25:17
24 16:24	accountable	5:14 12:15,16	27:24 28:1
27139 41:14	11:3	14:17 20:17,20	allows 32:23
28166 40:16	acculturated	21:2 37:2	allude 35:25
3	13:5	admire 15:14	alluded 25:3
30 7:6 34:24	accurate 40:9	adopted 10:6	ally 8:22 37:21
3:59 1:6	41:5	17:1	38:8
4	acquisition	adoption 5:13	alpha 27:8
45 6:11	8:17	6:3 21:8 36:2	amazon 30:6
4:50 39:14	acquisitions	advance 4:2	amount 11:15
5	9:20 16:6	advances 9:10	13:22 14:12
5 1:5	act 3:19,20	adverse 23:5	androl 30:6
6	31:21	advise 12:8	announced
6461948 1:15	action 10:6	advised 10:15	3:21
9	40:12,16 41:8	advisory 3:18	answer 4:6
95 32:12	41:12	3:19,19	16:10 21:3
a	active 33:6	afwerx 29:24	answering 7:12
ability 16:10	actually 6:23	agency 3:11	answers 7:13
20:6 40:10	7:22 12:20	agenda 3:23	aos 9:14
41:7	14:3 15:21	ago 6:24 34:24	appreciate
able 25:7,7	26:19,24 27:6	agree 13:11	30:25 31:1
26:21 32:15,19	27:10,11 28:8	14:6	37:4 38:24
32:21 33:4	28:15 29:7	agreements 5:9	39:1
34:5 36:20	30:13 35:21	ahead 36:17	appreciated
absolutely 13:7	38:19,23	ai 11:16	36:22
13:16 16:2,13	adaptation	aims 8:23	approach
	15:11	align 6:2 24:20	11:23
	add 36:19 37:1	aligning 21:7	approaches
	37:16	22:14,21	25:2

<p>appropriate 26:5 appropriately 25:22 april 35:12 architect 11:5 area 20:9 areas 24:20 arenas 29:6 argue 19:16 arms 17:8 ascertain 13:23 asian 9:1 asked 5:1 6:11 6:12 asking 10:19 aspects 13:10 aspen 14:11 assessing 23:22 assignments 27:25 assist 10:15 associate 8:19 atmospherics 8:8 attend 3:9 7:5 attendees 2:2 attorney 40:14 41:10 attract 24:2,5 audience 4:12 audio 40:8 41:3 audit 23:11 austin 4:25 australia 38:16 australian 36:6 authoritariani... 8:2</p>	<p>authority 32:4 authorization 31:21 authorizing 18:25 autonomy 22:3 averse 26:14 aversion 23:11 26:8 avoid 28:17 awareness 8:12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">b</p> <p>back 9:5 15:9 16:22,23 19:25 24:9,10,13 27:2 31:8,14 32:18 39:4,10 backdrop 8:2 backseat 8:10 backsliding 8:1 bad 32:20 bar 13:8 barnes 19:20 barrier 12:17 24:14 barriers 5:9,10 13:18 38:2 based 16:8 18:15 bat 14:1 believed 35:6 best 7:25 12:7 12:10 16:10 35:15 40:10 41:6 better 5:24 6:1 22:11 35:2</p>	<p>37:3 beyond 38:18 bidirectional 34:16 big 13:8,8 15:14 22:2,24 24:14 biggest 11:9 billets 14:3 bit 7:23 bloomberg 2:3 4:9,10 15:16 17:3 18:23 33:23 34:22 35:8,11 36:18 37:11 39:6,9 board 1:1 2:3 2:11,12,13,14 2:15,16 3:4,7 3:13,15,17,18 4:1,4,6,8 5:5 6:12 12:14 20:1 35:13 39:3 board's 4:13 4:24 31:2 body 29:25 boils 38:7 bombs 19:20 bonuses 28:12 borrowed 36:6 bouncing 19:20 branch 5:23 bridge 24:4 31:9 bright 27:10 bring 15:9 24:13 31:8,13</p>	<p>32:15,19,22 35:25 brings 20:20 30:17 broad 7:19 brought 16:23 18:8 37:21 budget 22:18 32:4 budgets 16:8 bug 28:14 build 38:12 building 11:8 19:20 23:11 builds 34:13 built 10:9 23:7 bunker 19:21 bureaucratic 24:14 business 10:22 15:3 36:25 businesses 10:6 buster 19:21</p> <p style="text-align: center;">c</p> <p>c 2:1 3:1 calculated 25:5 25:16 26:12 calendars 35:12 call 21:19 32:9 canada 38:16 canceled 31:16 capacity 8:6 capitalists 29:19 care 39:12</p>
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<p>career 15:6 27:23 28:1,19 28:24 29:9 30:11 careers 23:10 carr 41:2,15 case 4:12 cases 20:8 cash 28:12 categories 24:20 celebrate 29:7 30:10 celebrating 29:1 central 15:4 17:11 certain 14:12 certainly 35:8 certificate 40:1 41:1 certify 40:4 41:2 chains 19:24 chair 4:8 33:21 challenge 15:14,15 22:24 37:7 challenges 4:19 6:10 11:1,10 change 12:1 24:12 25:8 27:12 changed 9:24 16:23 23:21 changes 3:23 channel 11:18</p>	<p>charles 2:14 5:5 37:10,13 37:14 38:22 chime 6:13 citizens 36:11 civilian 14:15 16:24 33:7 civilians 14:9 clear 5:18 clearance 11:1 clearly 16:12 close 38:14,23 closing 39:5,6 code 22:9 codify 18:21 codifying 21:24 collaborate 5:11 collect 5:21 collected 4:3 collecting 22:10 college 36:9 colleges 12:21 columbia 40:19 combat 29:11 combined 17:8 come 12:19,20 23:17 24:5,9 34:25 38:5 comes 21:10 comfortable 38:9 coming 13:5 14:9 15:25 31:19 38:23 commands 12:22</p>	<p>comment 20:18 comments 3:17 4:1,2,5 6:14 35:19,21,25 36:2 39:1,5,6 commercial 24:11 committee 3:19 common 5:7 23:4 26:25 community 12:4 35:5 companies 17:18 company 10:16 competition 8:3 competitive 8:10 35:23 complex 34:11 34:12 comradery 8:7 concluded 39:13 confederacy 17:7 conflict 18:2,13 congress 18:25 connection 15:8 connectivity 26:7 connects 6:20 consider 18:25 context 14:8 continually 32:19</p>	<p>continue 24:12 28:1 30:22,23 36:12 continues 32:5 contract 25:24 29:25 contracting 5:22 16:3 23:14 convene 3:15 convenings 8:24 conversation 7:6 35:17 coordinating 5:6,16 coordination 26:24 corps 8:11,22 10:12 cost 20:10 counsel 40:11 40:14 41:7,10 countered 19:16 counterpart 14:14 countries 12:10 15:10,12 38:5 country 13:7 14:20 35:1,2,2 36:20 37:9 course 11:16 11:19 19:7 cover 25:6,9 27:4,5 33:15 craziness 18:24</p>
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<p>create 15:8 20:23 21:24 creating 22:13 critical 13:7 20:12 23:10 cross 8:7 crux 36:4 culled 4:3 cultivate 25:8 cultural 8:8,12 8:20 11:6 12:11,17 13:18 13:20 15:11 culturally 10:17 culture 25:8 32:22 38:19 cultures 14:13 currency 17:20 18:8 21:25 current 4:24 9:23 15:19 33:24 39:3 currently 21:25 cut 12:25 cycle 20:7,8 cycles 8:18 16:20 18:21</p>	<p>29:20 30:8 36:25 days 34:24 dc 1:9 deal 35:10 decide 28:21 deeper 24:24 25:3 def 7:24 8:23 10:20 11:3 defense 1:1 3:3 3:6,11,12 4:4,8 4:14 6:8,17,19 6:22 7:25 14:8 14:14 29:22 31:1,20,20 36:7 38:24 defense's 8:4 defining 29:4 delighted 6:17 6:25 democracy 8:1 department 4:15 5:19,22 8:4 department's 5:13 depth 8:12 described 14:19 designated 3:6 despite 20:21 detailed 6:6 deterrence 8:5 10:16 20:23 developed 19:21</p>	<p>developers 18:17 development 8:18 18:3 19:12 24:7 devops 18:17 24:12 dib 9:5,8 10:20 11:3,4,4 36:13 died 31:21,21 difference 14:18 different 5:25 9:15 10:8 16:19 17:21 24:20 25:2 31:13,23 34:18 differently 4:21 23:14 25:14 26:14 difficult 13:23 20:24 difficulty 37:4 dig 24:24 25:3 digital 40:8 41:3 direct 10:6 directly 4:23 director 2:4 3:5 disagree 12:24 14:17 discern 34:8 discovered 37:20 discretionary 3:17 discuss 9:3</p>	<p>discussing 38:10 discussion 21:6 35:22 38:8 discussions 38:17 disincentivize 28:6 disrupting 8:17 distance 13:24 distribution 16:7 district 40:19 dod 8:19,23 9:7 9:18 10:12 11:19 13:4,19 30:3,4 36:11 doing 4:16 17:19 20:5,13 21:20 28:13 36:7 dollar 16:24 dollars 10:4 15:25 16:6 domestic 19:3 doors 16:22 dr 3:2,5 6:16 11:7 12:13 20:15,19 21:4 26:16 30:12 33:10 35:16 37:10,12,17,17 38:22 39:8,11 drastically 16:19 drawing 19:25 drive 21:8 22:14,19</p>
d			
<p>d 3:1 dangerous 4:18 data 24:7 30:2 38:20 day 14:21 19:18 20:5,5 24:13 27:18</p>			

<p>driven 25:23 33:18 37:24 driving 22:19 drone 16:21 drones 9:23 dry 19:25 due 23:6 31:21 duly 40:5 duty 29:18 33:7 dying 28:14 dynamic 31:8</p>	<p>embrace 27:8 empathy 8:12 employed 40:11,14 41:8 41:11 employee 40:13 41:10 empower 4:17 empowers 6:20 enable 23:3,23 encourage 34:10 36:11 ended 29:9,24 engaged 10:3 enlisted 8:11 8:23 9:18 10:12 11:25 17:15,16 27:9 enlistment 36:7 ensure 6:10 9:9 24:25 ensuring 25:4 entire 10:2 entrepreneurial 16:1,25 17:9 entrepreneurs 6:8,17,20,22 10:5 38:25 environment 25:15 environments 9:14,20 10:8 12:5 16:19 29:15 environs 10:23 equation 34:19 equipment 19:18</p>	<p>es 40:4 escalating 4:19 especially 8:2 17:14 24:6 establish 10:13 27:22 30:16 established 16:9 estimation 11:21 evaluate 28:5 evaluating 26:2 evaluation 28:5 evanna 2:5 7:1 7:11,17 9:4,5 9:16 10:24 11:12 event 3:12,14 everybody 3:13 everyone's 23:5 evolutions 16:21 evolve 24:12 evolved 9:9 example 9:9,21 9:22 15:20 17:13 23:15 26:17 examples 15:17 29:8 37:19 exchange 11:6 exchanges 8:20 8:24 exclusive 12:20 executive 2:4 3:5 14:11</p>	<p>exist 5:9 8:7,22 existing 12:11 exit 30:4 expect 12:6 38:2 expedite 9:10 experience 14:14 27:5 30:3 34:6 experimented 29:17 expert 3:11 expertise 6:19 experts 4:23 17:17 exposed 14:15 exposing 29:14 exposure 9:18 10:13 12:1,4 34:18 external 5:23 eyes 13:13</p>
<p>e</p>			<p>f</p>
<p>e 2:1,1 3:1,1 earlier 12:4 25:3 38:17 early 6:23 earth 25:20 easily 24:9 easy 24:17 echelons 17:21 ecosystem 6:21 ecosystems 12:12 educated 18:5 effect 37:6 effective 20:10 efforts 17:9 18:9 19:4 eishen 2:8 7:1 30:25 either 28:20 element 11:21 elements 9:19 embedded 38:2 embedding 29:19</p>			<p>face 4:18 9:24 11:2 facilitate 15:24 fact 16:17 20:21 29:5 31:6 33:1 factors 8:9 factory 22:9 fail 15:18 32:12 32:20 failed 15:18 failing 29:4 30:15</p>

<p>failure 16:16 failures 29:6 30:10 fair 6:4 familiar 4:12 7:4 29:22 families 36:24 family 14:20 33:3 fantastic 21:13 far 20:16 25:18 fast 31:7 faster 5:14 february 3:22 federal 3:6,19 3:21,24 feel 6:13 12:2 17:7 fellow 12:19 fellows 32:2 fellowship 10:21 11:8,9 11:10 31:7 fellowships 11:22 31:8 field 16:23 28:2 fielded 16:22 fielding 8:18 16:20 fight 15:13 fighter 9:11 33:18 fighters 19:2 22:20 figure 37:8 figuring 20:2 filled 14:3</p>	<p>final 30:17 financially 40:15 41:11 find 14:2 20:10 finders 23:6 fired 29:12 first 5:3 6:7 7:11,12 18:9 21:22 27:2,22 28:24 firsthand 6:9 five 6:24 27:7 flag 27:12 floor 12:14 flown 10:4 flows 16:18 fluidly 24:9 focus 11:15 13:13 18:9,15 24:20 focuses 5:3,12 focusing 21:11 23:15 33:13 folks 21:19 23:2 follow 20:14 fond 6:22 force 21:16,17 21:18 22:24 23:22 26:19 33:7 forces 8:22 36:7 foregoing 40:3 40:4 41:4 forth 28:8 forum 6:9,18 6:20,23 38:25</p>	<p>forward 23:2 25:14 26:13 32:22 35:14 36:14 foster 8:21 25:8 26:21 fostering 8:7 founders 32:8 fpv 9:23 free 6:13 fresh 24:10 front 17:6 24:14 26:1 frontline 17:1 frozen 26:18 27:16 29:15 fruit 21:10 24:16 fulfill 8:23 function 12:12 funding 19:8 further 8:1 20:7 40:13 41:9 future 20:14 36:21</p>	<p>gears 21:7 generally 34:6 getting 12:3,25 give 15:17,20 glad 6:7 global 15:1 go 14:23 15:7 15:10,10,13 18:3,16 19:1 20:24 22:9 24:9 25:18 27:2,11 28:14 30:5 31:12 36:25 goal 14:3 goes 13:22 15:2 15:2 34:17 going 7:9,10 10:20,21,22,25 11:2 13:18 14:15 18:24 19:25 21:14,15 22:3 23:18 25:13 34:21 35:9 36:9 37:15 38:6 39:2 golden 27:22 good 13:15 18:14 21:4 29:14,17 30:5 30:9 32:20 33:5,9 35:7,10 goodwill 16:8 gordon 2:16 34:1,3 35:4,10 government 3:20 16:3</p>
		g	
		<p>g 3:1 gain 10:12 11:25 12:4 22:4 gaining 22:12 game 9:15 gap 8:24 24:4 36:8 garner 8:12</p>	

<p>17:11 graduate 12:21 graduates 36:8 36:9 great 8:3 18:7 19:19 20:16 21:5 24:19,19 25:12 31:10 33:2,4 35:5,16 37:5 greater 18:1 greatly 38:24 ground 9:16 10:7,18 13:21 19:2,6 38:8,10 38:17 group 6:12 groups 8:15 10:4 16:1,2,2 16:25 21:15 grumman 29:13 guard 33:7 guest 2:5,7,8,9 2:10 guevara 1:14 40:2,17</p>	<p>hanging 21:9 24:16 happen 3:14 32:24 38:18 happened 38:11 happening 9:13 15:21 35:7 happens 38:1 happy 21:1 hard 34:8 head 13:17 hear 4:23 6:9 6:10,18 9:22 25:9 heard 33:11,11 33:14,16,24 heidi 4:25 help 4:17,24 5:2 18:20 19:1 19:14 20:2,9 22:12 24:19 25:13,21 33:5 33:24 36:20,21 helped 15:24 helpful 27:7 helping 21:24 26:3 hereto 40:15 41:11 hey 20:17 23:5 high 30:13 36:8 highlight 27:2 35:18,20 highlighted 24:22 27:23</p>	<p>historically 12:17 27:10 history 14:12 19:17 hit 13:17 16:8 hold 11:3 17:13 27:14 35:13 honored 4:16 hope 39:2 hopefully 14:4 hours 16:24 house 32:3 hu 2:5 7:1,20 14:7 huge 14:25 32:16 37:6 human 8:9 11:21,21 hume 37:17 hundred 37:19 hundreds 10:3 15:24 husband 34:24</p>	<p>identify 5:6 16:17 ii 19:19 immediately 22:1 impact 10:5 16:1 26:6 imperative 10:11 11:17,19 12:2 18:17 important 10:2 improve 5:10 improvements 11:18 improving 30:23 impulse 28:22 28:22 incentive 36:5 incentives 5:25 6:2 21:7,8,10 21:16 22:2 27:20 28:17 31:3 incentivize 5:18 24:25 28:6,7 includes 10:24 including 9:1 27:21 34:5 incorporate 30:21 incredible 9:9 29:23,25 incredibly 8:15 independent 3:18 4:13</p>
<p>h</p>		<p>i</p>	
<p>half 7:22 halls 5:16 hand 18:3,4 27:14 hands 9:11 14:13 36:22 handshakes 16:9</p>		<p>ian 2:8 7:1 30:18,24 33:10 33:16 idea 18:14 27:10 32:11 36:6 ideas 17:23 28:12 32:12,13 32:14,15,19,20 32:21 34:4 36:10 37:4,5 38:13</p>	

<p>individual 11:4 33:19</p> <p>individuals 5:19 10:14 22:3 23:1</p> <p>indoctrinated 9:7</p> <p>industry 5:24 24:9 29:18 31:11</p> <p>inform 4:24 33:24 39:2</p> <p>informal 8:15 8:24</p> <p>inherent 8:13</p> <p>initiatives 8:6</p> <p>innovate 7:10 7:18 25:18 28:21,22</p> <p>innovating 5:4 28:19</p> <p>innovation 1:1 3:4,7,13 4:4,8 5:17 9:6 10:7 16:11 18:16 22:19 25:8 26:20 27:8,24 31:1</p> <p>innovations 11:19 19:19</p> <p>innovative 21:16,21 22:5 23:1 26:13,21 27:17 28:9,12 28:13 32:8</p> <p>innovator 32:7 32:11,18</p>	<p>innovators 6:21 20:1 23:24 28:9 30:14 31:4 34:12,18 35:5</p> <p>inside 17:19</p> <p>insight 18:1</p> <p>insights 5:21 6:19 36:13 39:1,3</p> <p>inspires 6:20</p> <p>insufficient 27:5,11</p> <p>intelligence 8:8</p> <p>intended 8:20</p> <p>intentional 26:11</p> <p>interested 40:15 41:12</p> <p>interesting 10:1 36:10</p> <p>international 8:25 10:23</p> <p>interoperable 18:13</p> <p>investors 30:7</p> <p>invited 3:25</p> <p>inviting 4:22</p> <p>involved 3:14 6:1,23 12:3 16:25</p> <p>issues 11:2</p> <p>iteration 18:20</p> <p>iterative 16:21</p> <p style="text-align: center;">j</p> <p>january 4:22</p>	<p>jen 2:6</p> <p>jesse 2:10 6:25 9:3 11:7 12:16 20:22</p> <p>jim 35:4</p> <p>job 1:15 4:13 4:15 23:14 29:8,21</p> <p>jobs 4:18</p> <p>joining 3:3 38:25</p> <p>joke 22:8</p> <p>junior 8:11,22 9:17 10:11 11:25 15:7 17:15,16,22,25 27:9</p> <p style="text-align: center;">k</p> <p>keep 7:14 24:10</p> <p>keeping 22:19 35:9</p> <p>kick 7:11 33:21</p> <p>kind 14:22 15:3,8 18:3 27:13,25 31:7 34:9,19 38:1</p> <p>kinds 27:17</p> <p>kinetic 8:16</p> <p>know 9:24 11:17 13:3,25 13:25 14:2,11 15:23 16:1,5 16:21 22:8,13 22:19 23:13,13 24:24 26:10,17 27:9 30:19,19</p>	<p>32:1 33:1 37:5 38:1</p> <p>knowledge 22:5 24:10,13 31:13 40:10 41:6</p> <p>knows 5:15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">l</p> <p>labs 5:22</p> <p>lack 17:10</p> <p>lane 25:17,17</p> <p>language 31:18</p> <p>large 14:1</p> <p>largely 10:22</p> <p>launch 14:4</p> <p>lead 7:11 23:20 25:14 26:13</p> <p>leader 27:7</p> <p>leaders 4:15 23:16,17 25:1 25:5,6 26:3,3 34:5</p> <p>leadership 25:12</p> <p>leading 17:22</p> <p>lean 17:25</p> <p>leaning 23:2 26:13</p> <p>learn 13:22 19:9 22:5,9 24:11 26:4 31:11 32:13,15</p> <p>learning 29:5</p> <p>left 25:17 35:17</p> <p>lens 18:15</p> <p>lesson 19:9,23 20:3</p>
--	--	--	--

<p>level 23:13 25:13 32:1,3 levels 26:5 levin 2:10 6:25 9:4 11:12 13:16 15:20 21:1 light 27:17 lights 30:13 likely 8:14 19:17 30:2 limiting 28:19 28:19 line 22:11 lines 17:6 26:1 list 2:2 listen 12:16 listening 14:24 36:13 literally 14:19 15:23,24 little 4:21 7:21 7:23 8:6 19:4 live 3:8 living 14:19,20 14:20 lloyd 4:25 local 10:5 logistics 9:19 long 32:13,21 33:2 longer 30:3,22 look 5:8 7:4 22:2,16 23:9 26:2 29:15 36:14 looked 17:17</p>	<p>looking 11:11 11:14 28:3 35:14 36:5,17 looks 25:16 29:17 30:5,9 30:11 loose 12:25 lose 26:1 losing 19:8 29:8 34:14 lost 34:24 lot 9:17,21 11:24 22:17,18 24:17 25:21 26:7,11,24,25 27:15 28:10 32:7,8 33:24 35:22 36:19 38:6 lots 31:23 love 10:19 11:3 11:4 24:21 34:4,4,10,20 low 21:9 24:16 lucky 36:20 lynchpin 8:4</p>	<p>27:12 30:21 31:24 32:4 33:18 36:24 making 3:14 18:16 30:15 36:1 37:9,18 manage 23:18 management 35:22 mandate 17:11 maneuver 17:8 manufactured 37:21 manufacturing 11:16 march 1:5 marina 1:4 2:4 3:5 4:10 6:12 6:15 20:17 27:3,15 35:15 37:11 mark 35:12 massive 13:20 mastery 22:3 22:12 matter 7:14 32:21 matters 18:1 meagan 2:9 21:9 24:18 26:23 27:23 29:3 33:12 meagen 6:25 mean 12:17,20 15:3,13 24:16 25:21 means 32:22</p>	<p>measure 28:4 31:5 measuring 30:22 media 3:11 meeting 1:1 3:4 3:8,10,20 4:3 4:20,21 6:6 35:13 38:24 39:13 meeting's 3:23 megan 21:12 36:1 member 2:3,11 2:12,13,14,15 2:16 5:5 members 3:9 5:23 6:8,13,18 7:16 11:5 12:15 39:3 men 4:17 mention 7:2 mentioned 6:18 9:6,16 10:24 15:23 27:3,4 mesh 14:10,10 metric 31:16 32:14,16,17 metrics 28:4,6 30:16,20 32:6 32:10 33:17 metzger 2:9 7:1 21:13 25:11 michael 2:3,7 2:13 7:1 26:16 26:22 30:12 33:14</p>
	m		
	<p>mac 2:15 madrid 2:7 7:1 26:16,23 33:14 main 24:3 maintain 35:23 major 23:19 31:15 make 5:13 10:10 15:6 18:8 20:11</p>		

<p>micro 32:2 middle 26:18 27:16,21 29:16 mike 4:8,9 5:14 6:16,18 33:21 35:16 36:16,18 37:1,3 39:4 mile 16:7 militaries 17:25 military 13:4 28:1 36:21 millions 10:3 15:25 16:5,6 mind 25:5 27:22 minute 7:21 minutes 6:11 7:6,7,13,15,16 35:17 missing 21:11 37:23 mission 4:13 26:6,8 37:6 mode 19:13 moderate 6:12 moderated 1:4 money 15:25 16:7,18 19:1 33:2 month 6:7 20:7 36:7 months 10:21 14:4 morgan 41:2 41:15 motivation 22:2 37:7</p>	<p>moving 29:6 mullen 2:13 5:15 12:15,16 14:17 20:17,20 21:2 36:18 37:1,2 multilateral 5:9 multiple 32:19 multipliers 26:19 mutual 7:25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">n</p> <hr/> <p>n 2:1 3:1 nail 13:17 name 3:4 nation 18:10 national 6:21 8:5,7 12:3 31:19,20 36:12 nations 5:5 20:14 naturally 28:9 navigating 5:15 ndaa 31:18 nebulous 26:10 necessary 23:25 25:9 27:5,6 29:5 33:15 necessity 17:4 need 5:18 7:13 7:23 13:12,25 16:13 21:2,18 22:6,11 23:4 24:2,2 25:14</p>	<p>26:6,8 28:9,15 28:17 29:7 32:3 35:24 needs 37:25 negative 28:7 28:17 neither 40:11 41:7 network 31:13 36:12 never 19:17 35:6 new 5:13 6:3 11:22,23 20:2 31:18 34:7 36:3 nice 34:24 night 14:21 nonprofit 6:8 norm 28:23 normal 15:11 normally 8:18 northrop 29:12 notary 40:18 note 14:23 notice 3:21,24 notion 26:18 29:11 nuanced 8:13 nuances 12:11 number 9:8 10:25 11:1 numbers 12:21 13:1 14:1</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">o</p> <hr/> <p>o 3:1</p>	<p>obvious 22:1 obviously 38:15 occurs 18:2 of's 13:2,2 offer 28:12 offered 31:7 offering 31:15 officer 3:6 8:22 10:11 27:9 40:2 officers 5:22 8:11 9:18 11:25 12:3 15:7 17:15,16 17:22,25 18:1 27:12 okay 29:7 39:8 old 20:3 ones 17:18 24:3 26:19 online 4:11 35:12 open 12:14 33:20 operating 3:18 10:14 12:5,9 operation 8:14 operational 8:13 16:8 37:5 operationally 13:21 operations 8:16 9:19 18:3 operator 34:14 operators 18:18</p>
---	--	---	--

<p>opportunities 9:17 11:10,24 28:20</p> <p>opportunity 18:7 24:17 25:12 34:15</p> <p>opposed 19:24 31:9</p> <p>optimize 7:17</p> <p>optimizing 7:9</p> <p>organization 24:6 25:1 27:20 29:16 30:5 31:4,5,17 31:25 32:18,20 33:5,17</p> <p>organizational 31:22 32:23</p> <p>organizations 30:6</p> <p>osd 32:1</p> <p>outcome 26:8 35:7 40:16 41:12</p> <p>outcomes 22:14,18,21,22 33:18</p> <p>outlined 8:5 24:21</p> <p>outside 28:23</p> <p>overall 33:5</p>	<p>painful 5:14</p> <p>palatable 20:11</p> <p>par 24:5</p> <p>parodies 17:9</p> <p>part 17:4,24 28:3 31:18,18</p> <p>participate 34:25</p> <p>particular 15:7</p> <p>parties 6:1 40:12,14 41:8 41:11</p> <p>partner 8:22 18:11</p> <p>partnered 10:5</p> <p>partners 5:24 7:10,18 8:25 12:19 17:14 19:11 21:6 37:19</p> <p>partnership 5:4</p> <p>partnerships 8:3</p> <p>path 22:11 23:10 27:23 30:11</p> <p>paths 28:24</p> <p>pathways 21:23 22:17 24:7</p> <p>pause 12:14 33:20</p> <p>pay 24:4</p> <p>pennies 16:24</p> <p>pentagon 4:22 5:16 19:11 20:3 37:16</p>	<p>people 7:14 12:3 13:5 14:2 18:19 19:2 25:25 26:1 27:15,20 28:8 28:13,18 29:7 29:14,19,25 30:9 31:8 32:9 33:6 38:8,10 38:12,17</p> <p>percent 32:12</p> <p>permissions 13:19</p> <p>person 27:9,11</p> <p>personally 6:22 37:24</p> <p>personnel 8:23 10:12 28:4</p> <p>perspective 10:16 13:14</p> <p>perspectives 6:9</p> <p>ph 37:17,17</p> <p>philippines 9:2 10:25</p> <p>phillips 2:14 5:5 37:15</p> <p>philosophy 14:12</p> <p>pi 13:2</p> <p>picking 29:12</p> <p>piece 14:25</p> <p>pieces 14:23</p> <p>place 16:12 19:10</p> <p>places 26:15</p> <p>plaque 31:22</p>	<p>play 27:16</p> <p>please 3:16</p> <p>plenty 6:5</p> <p>plug 12:10</p> <p>plus 14:13</p> <p>point 23:5</p> <p>political 19:3</p> <p>politically 20:11</p> <p>position 12:7 22:10</p> <p>positions 22:6</p> <p>positive 28:7 28:10</p> <p>possessed 19:18</p> <p>possible 17:8</p> <p>posted 3:21,23 4:4 35:19</p> <p>posture 7:25</p> <p>potential 24:22</p> <p>power 8:3</p> <p>pray 18:2</p> <p>pre 26:24</p> <p>prepared 18:5 41:3</p> <p>prevail 20:12</p> <p>prevent 8:1</p> <p>previous 4:21</p> <p>primes 16:3</p> <p>prior 40:5</p> <p>private 9:10 11:17 16:1</p> <p>probably 6:24 27:1 31:22</p> <p>problems 25:2</p> <p>procedural 3:17</p>
p			
<p>p 2:1,1 3:1</p> <p>p.m. 1:6 39:14</p> <p>pace 36:3,4</p> <p>page 35:20</p>			

<p>proceed 4:20 proceeding 41:4 proceedings 40:3,5,6,9 41:6 process 16:11 18:22 19:3 procurement 16:6 17:11 19:13 program 11:9 11:11 12:18 14:4 23:20 27:8 29:23,24 30:1 31:7,10 32:2 programmatic 37:25 programs 9:8 23:19 28:11 37:20 progress 37:18 progressing 28:1 project 11:3 promising 6:3 promotion 21:23,25 22:11 22:13,16 promotions 22:21 protest 25:24 provide 4:13 6:5 25:6,9,17 provided 16:18 providing 3:11 proxy 9:14</p>	<p>public 1:1 3:4,9 3:16,25 4:20 4:23 6:6 35:13 40:18 pull 14:7 21:18 punishing 28:18 put 28:8 putting 34:20</p> <p style="text-align: center;">q</p> <p>q&a 6:12 33:22 qualified 40:7 question 4:6 6:13 7:12,19 15:16 16:10 20:22 21:3 30:18 31:1 questions 6:14 7:16 12:15 23:21 33:21 quick 20:18 34:3 quickly 5:3 9:12 18:16 quite 20:1 27:6 27:7 quote 29:11</p> <p style="text-align: center;">r</p> <p>r 2:1 3:1 radically 10:8 raised 13:9 ranks 23:18 rapid 18:20 rapport 8:21 10:13 16:9 rate 30:23</p>	<p>rather 30:4 read 14:13 realities 8:13 really 10:17,22 15:2 20:4,9 22:20 23:4,10 28:16 29:3 30:25 31:7 recalculate 26:4 receive 35:18 received 4:1 35:21 receiving 36:14 recently 29:24 recognizing 30:14 recommend 27:8 recommenda... 21:22 23:8 recommenda... 4:14 24:3,22 record 9:8 40:9 41:5 recorded 3:9 40:6 recording 40:8 41:4 red 24:14 reduced 40:7 referring 27:15 reframe 25:22 26:4 32:25 reframing 26:12 regard 15:5</p>	<p>regimented 16:12 register 3:21 register's 3:24 regulations 38:4 reinforcement 28:10 related 40:11 41:7 relationship 14:25 relationships 8:21 10:23 15:4,9 38:12 38:19 relative 40:13 41:10 relearn 20:4 relevant 8:10 rely 10:22 remain 8:10 remaining 21:17 reminder 4:5 7:12 remiss 7:2 16:15 34:22 remove 5:10 renew 29:24 reported 1:14 require 15:22 required 16:14 23:23 requirement 13:3 requirements 38:3,4</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>requires 25:5 requisite 13:19 rescaling 33:12 research 5:22 reserves 33:7 resonate 35:21 resourced 8:15 respect 17:14 23:6 respective 12:10,12 respond 7:14 responded 19:16 responsibility 27:13 restrain 28:22 retain 22:12 24:2 retired 5:14 retooling 25:21 returned 30:1 revolutionary 11:23 reward 28:13 rewarded 25:1 rewarding 30:14 right 5:17 6:3 7:24 10:10 11:14 14:2,8 19:10 22:4,25 25:7,17 27:6 29:13 32:4 39:11 risk 21:20 23:5 23:11,23 24:25 25:5,16,20,22</p>	<p>25:24,25 26:3 26:4,5,7,12,12 26:14,21 29:1 29:8,9,14,20 30:7 34:7,8,11 34:13,14,16,19 risks 5:17,20 risky 25:19 role 27:16 roles 21:24 22:4,15 24:8 room 32:8 roper 2:12 17:4 19:5 21:23 rotated 22:6 rules 23:1 russia 19:1,15 russia's 20:13 ryan 2:11</p>	<p>school 15:3,8 36:8 schools 12:22 science 24:7 seal 37:17 second 5:12 22:23 23:15 28:25 secretary 4:14 4:25 sect 32:2 section 33:11 33:22 sector 9:10 11:18 24:11 security 6:21 8:5 11:1 12:4 36:12,21 see 7:24 11:9 13:13,14 14:10 17:1 26:25 27:17 29:8 30:5 38:13 39:12 seeing 16:20 seems 38:18 seen 8:3 13:20 15:23 16:5 17:20 28:11 seizes 34:19 seminar 14:11 senior 4:15 17:25 23:16,17 27:7 34:5 sense 20:20 separate 31:3 31:25 32:6</p>	<p>separating 33:17 seriously 6:4 serve 33:6,8 36:20 service 5:23 31:9 services 12:25 30:2 session 3:16 4:6 36:15 set 5:2 7:22 22:25 sets 22:1 25:15 setting 16:16 several 4:2 6:8 shame 29:23 share 3:16 36:17 37:14 38:12 sharing 36:12 38:20 shift 13:20 21:7 25:25 shoes 13:6 short 21:6 30:21 show 29:17 30:9 shyu 5:1 signature 40:16 41:14 significant 3:22 similar 38:4 simply 16:4 singapore 9:1 10:24 13:2</p>
	<p>s</p>		
	<p>s 2:1 3:1 sacrifices 36:24 sadly 15:12 safe 37:9 safer 22:20 samples 22:10 savvy 18:19 21:24 saying 16:13 scale 37:23 scaled 17:24 18:22 scaling 23:9 30:24 scene 7:23 schedule 22:17</p>		

<p>sir 13:16 20:19 21:5</p> <p>situation 9:23 25:19</p> <p>six 6:24 7:15 10:20 14:3,4</p> <p>skill 22:1,7,25 24:4 25:15 31:9</p> <p>skills 22:4 23:24 25:7 26:21 40:10 41:6</p> <p>smart 29:1,20</p> <p>social 8:13 10:4 15:25</p> <p>society 8:14 10:2 12:9</p> <p>sociocultural 9:19</p> <p>socioeconomic 8:9</p> <p>software 16:22 22:9 24:7</p> <p>solution 9:3 27:14</p> <p>solutions 20:10 27:17</p> <p>somebody 15:17</p> <p>soon 39:12</p> <p>sort 15:2 27:19</p> <p>sorts 30:6 38:20</p> <p>sounds 18:21</p> <p>sovada 2:6</p> <p>speak 18:20,20</p>	<p>speaker 2:5,7,8 2:9,10 7:3</p> <p>specifically 8:25</p> <p>speed 6:2 29:6</p> <p>spiel 7:21</p> <p>split 7:7</p> <p>spoken 19:6</p> <p>sprung 17:10</p> <p>squeeze 19:24</p> <p>stack 29:16</p> <p>staff 3:13 25:23</p> <p>stages 6:24</p> <p>stand 10:21</p> <p>standardize 18:11</p> <p>standpoint 15:7</p> <p>start 7:9 14:2,5 38:12,15</p> <p>started 15:5 38:7</p> <p>starting 21:19</p> <p>startups 29:19</p> <p>states 5:4</p> <p>stay 30:3</p> <p>stop 19:1,1 35:7</p> <p>stops 34:9</p> <p>stories 29:1 31:23</p> <p>strategies 5:7</p> <p>strategy 8:4,6 31:20</p> <p>stray 27:25</p> <p>streamed 3:8</p> <p>strengthen 7:25</p>	<p>strengths 5:7</p> <p>structure 11:5 32:23</p> <p>structuring 11:2</p> <p>studied 11:20</p> <p>studies 4:24 5:3 6:6 7:8 33:25 39:3</p> <p>study 5:6,12,16 10:2 36:5</p> <p>submit 3:25</p> <p>subtractive 15:6</p> <p>succeed 32:11 32:20</p> <p>success 30:22 31:5,17 32:7 32:10,16,17 33:17</p> <p>successful 30:20</p> <p>sue 2:16 34:1 34:22,23</p> <p>sufficient 33:15</p> <p>summarize 5:2</p> <p>sunshine 3:20</p> <p>supply 8:17 19:24</p> <p>supplying 20:11</p> <p>support 3:12 3:12 10:9,15 11:5 12:8 16:18 19:4,4,8 37:8</p> <p>supporting 8:16</p>	<p>supportive 16:4</p> <p>sure 23:3 30:21 31:24 32:4</p> <p>surprised 37:25</p> <p>surround 22:24</p> <p>surrounds 21:17</p> <p>swann 2:11</p> <p>sworn 40:5</p> <p>system 15:19 15:22 17:2 34:20</p> <p>systematized 16:11</p> <p>systemic 12:1</p> <p>systems 10:9 20:2</p>
			t
			<p>table 5:2</p> <p>tackling 6:10</p> <p>taiwan 9:1 10:24 13:2 20:25</p> <p>take 5:19 11:12 11:13 20:22,23 25:4,16 31:17 39:12</p> <p>taken 8:10 40:3 40:12 41:9</p> <p>takers 23:23</p> <p>talent 21:7,10 24:1,5,21 25:4 26:14 33:13,13 35:22,24,24</p>

<p>talk 21:9,14,15 22:23 31:3 talked 21:23 30:13 talking 7:23 12:18,24 13:4 29:4 32:9 33:12 tape 24:14 team 3:13 33:1 teams 5:19 18:12 tech 6:3 8:17 11:15 16:20,21 17:23 18:8,19 18:20 21:8,24 21:25 22:5,5 23:1 25:14,22 technical 17:17 18:1 24:6 technological 9:10 23:24 technologies 9:24 36:3 technology 5:7 5:13 16:22 17:20 19:15 23:13 34:6,7 37:20 38:9,20 tedxdau 7:3,4 template 20:13 term 30:21,22 terms 8:7 13:9 terrain 11:22 tested 16:23 testifying 40:5 thank 3:3,10 6:16 7:20 9:4,5</p>	<p>11:6,7 12:13 17:3 20:15 21:5 24:18 33:10 34:25 35:16 38:22 thanks 4:10,11 21:13 30:12 35:4,10 39:11 theater 9:1 theaters 8:14 theme 23:4 themes 26:25 theodotou 1:4 2:4 3:2,5 6:16 11:7 12:13 20:15,19 21:4 24:18 26:16 30:12 33:10 35:16 37:10,12 39:8,11 theotodou 38:22 thing 5:15 26:10 28:24,25 29:13 31:2 33:4 34:13 things 9:15,20 11:16 12:6,7 13:12,23 15:17 15:21 17:19 21:21 24:11 27:1,21 28:13 28:15,19 29:3 33:4 38:5,18 think 6:4 12:23 13:6,11,16 14:1 16:9,16 17:8,12,23</p>	<p>18:7,10,14 19:3,9,23 20:7 20:8,12,16 23:8 24:19 25:12,21 26:11 28:3,5,14,16 29:2 30:11 31:2,6,16,24 32:10 33:23 34:11,12,16 37:3 39:9 thinking 23:18 27:19 28:24 33:16 thinks 34:13 third 24:1 29:13 thornberry 2:15 thoughts 25:10 26:17,22 27:1 34:23 36:13,16 37:13 three 7:13,15 18:18 21:15 24:15 27:1,21 tied 26:9 37:6 time 4:22 7:7 22:17 27:13 29:20 31:2 39:1,9 timelines 5:25 6:2 times 26:7 timothy 1:14 40:2,17 today 3:14 6:7 6:17,25 22:17</p>	<p>31:2 32:9 33:1 33:24 35:22,24 36:16 38:25 today's 3:3,8 3:20 4:2 7:5 38:24 together 18:18 26:9 38:5 took 14:23 29:9 top 25:6,9 27:4 27:5 33:14 topic 34:11 total 7:16 touched 15:24 tours 29:18,18 traditional 25:2 train 12:22 25:4 trained 18:4 25:7 training 17:24 18:9 23:9 26:11,12 transcriber 41:1 transcript 41:3 41:5 transcriptionist 40:8 transform 26:18 transition 31:12 translate 37:5 translates 25:23</p>
--	--	--	---

<p>transpiring 9:16,20 10:18</p> <p>tremendous 11:15 13:18,21</p> <p>tried 15:17</p> <p>triggered 14:24</p> <p>troops 20:21</p> <p>true 8:21 40:9 41:5</p> <p>truly 35:5</p> <p>trust 38:7</p> <p>try 7:5,14 10:20 18:11 28:13 37:8</p> <p>trying 13:9 19:14,24</p> <p>tuesday 1:5</p> <p>tuning 4:11</p> <p>turn 4:7 9:2 21:8 32:2 39:4</p> <p>turning 38:9</p> <p>two 4:24 5:3,15 18:17 24:3,8 25:15 38:5</p> <p>type 12:1</p> <p>types 22:1 24:8</p> <p>typewriting 40:7</p> <p>typical 27:25</p> <p>typically 12:19 13:1 15:12 18:19</p>	<p>ukraine 9:21 9:22 15:21 17:5,12,15 18:16 19:1,10 20:4,12,20</p> <p>ukraine's 19:12</p> <p>ukrainian 19:7</p> <p>under 3:18</p> <p>undersecretary 4:25</p> <p>understand 5:25 10:17 13:10,17 14:9 24:11 25:13,15 25:22 32:12 34:5 36:24</p> <p>understanding 12:9 14:22 22:20</p> <p>undertake 5:1</p> <p>unfortunately 36:23</p> <p>uniform 4:17</p> <p>unintentionally 28:18</p> <p>unit 28:8 31:14</p> <p>united 5:4</p> <p>units 10:6 17:1 17:6,19 18:9 18:12,19 19:5 19:7</p> <p>unleashing 26:20</p> <p>unquote 29:12</p> <p>update 6:6</p> <p>upscale 23:12 23:22</p>	<p>upscaling 33:12 34:4</p> <p>urgency 20:21</p> <p>urinalysis 22:10</p> <p>use 22:7 31:12 33:4</p> <p>used 16:20</p> <p>using 9:22</p> <p style="text-align: center;">v</p> <p>valuable 39:2</p> <p>various 9:14 29:18</p> <p>vastly 8:16</p> <p>velocity 32:14 32:14</p> <p>venture 16:2 29:19</p> <p>ventures 29:23</p> <p>versa 37:22</p> <p>versed 10:17</p> <p>versus 15:22</p> <p>vice 37:22</p> <p>view 3:10 31:16 34:7</p> <p>views 34:14</p> <p>virtually 3:10</p> <p>visceral 10:13 12:9</p> <p>volume 13:3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">w</p> <p>wallis 19:20</p> <p>want 9:2 11:12 12:7 14:7,21 18:11 22:18 28:2,23 34:2 34:16 37:1</p>	<p>wanted 16:4 35:18,20 36:17 36:19 37:13</p> <p>war 9:11,24 12:21 19:2,8 19:14,17,19,22 20:11,13,25 22:20 33:18</p> <p>washington 1:9</p> <p>watched 36:23</p> <p>watching 4:11 35:11</p> <p>way 5:24 7:17 7:25 10:7 12:6 15:5 16:17 21:4,5 23:7,12 24:19 28:16 31:10 34:16</p> <p>ways 13:22 28:7</p> <p>we've 9:9 10:8 12:19 13:20 15:23 16:5 28:11 32:7 33:23 37:20 38:14</p> <p>weaponize 23:3</p> <p>web 35:19</p> <p>website 4:5</p> <p>wednesday 35:12</p> <p>week 20:8 37:16</p> <p>welcome 3:2 6:7,17,25</p> <p>west 19:8</p> <p>western 9:7</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">u</p> <p>u.s. 8:4 17:7,13 20:2 37:21</p> <p>uk 38:16</p>			

<p>wildly 23:21 win 19:14 20:3 winning 30:15 witness 40:4 women 4:17 won 19:17 wondering 37:12 work 5:10 6:5 7:24 10:21 18:10 21:16,17 21:18 22:23 23:22 29:2,10 31:11 39:10 working 8:15 8:21 17:18 18:18 19:9 31:18 34:14 37:18 38:13 world 4:19 9:14 19:19 25:23 worried 19:7 worry 33:3 wrap 21:5 written 4:1,2 wrong 10:10 26:15</p>	<p>younger 8:11 12:2 ypo 10:4 14:24 15:23</p>
	z
	<p>zero 7:5 16:7</p>
y	
<p>yeah 14:7,17 25:11 34:3 37:15 year 36:8 years 6:24 28:12 yesterday's 19:15</p>	