



The Honorable Dr. Will Roper

Distinguished Professor, Georgia Tech

Senior Advisor, McKinsey and Company

Former Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for AT&L

The Honorable Dr. Will Roper is currently a Distinguished Professor at Georgia Tech's Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, where he teaches at the intersection of technology and national security. He is also a Senior Advisor at McKinsey and Company, a Board member of seven technology startups and investment firms, and an Honorary Group Captain in the U.K. Royal Air Force. He even recently completed a brief tour as CEO of a Silicon-Valley drone startup.

Prior to this, Will served as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics for three years. In this role, he led all research, development, procurement, and logistics for both the U.S. Air Force and Space Force: an annual budget totaling \$60 billion. But he is best known for accelerating acquisition timelines and fostering disruptive innovation inside the government.

While at the Air Force, Will took large strides opening defense opportunities to commercial companies, spearheading initiatives like AFWERX and Pitch Days that connected 2,300 tech companies with military contracts. He also led Department-wide technology transformation for software, artificial intelligence, and digital engineering and initiated new programs for hypersonic weapons, autonomous drones, advanced satellites and rockets, and a militarized internet of things, all while overseeing the day-to-day logistics of 5,300 military aircraft and satellites. But in addition to technology, Will was equally passionate about competing for talent, updating 50-year-old body standards for all Air Force aircraft to increase accessibility for women and people of color to pursue military flight careers.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Roper was the founding Director of the Pentagon's Strategic Capabilities Office (SCO), growing this once-classified innovation office to \$1.6 billion annually. Solving some of the military's most pressing problems, he transitioned over three fourths of SCO's prototypes into military programs while serving as the Principal Staff Assistant for Innovation to the Secretary of Defense. He also led the Steering Committee for the 2018 National Security Strategy that pivoted the Pentagon's top focus to China and Russia.

He began his career at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory as the chief futurist for the Missile Defense Agency (MDA). During his fifteen years of national security service, Will received MDA's highest contractor award and the Defense Department's and Air Force's highest awards for distinguished public service.

Will holds a bachelor's and master's in physics from Georgia Tech and doctorate in mathematics from Oxford University, where he studied string theory as a Rhodes Scholar.