Army Digital Transformation Strategy to create a more lethal, ready force

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The U.S. Army defends and serves the nation by land, sea and air, protecting the nation's most vital interests. Today that mission requires new, innovative capabilities to enable national security and defense strategies, primarily because the modern battlespace has adversaries waging information technology wars. Therefore, the Army's modernization strategy identified digital transformation as imperative to achieving its goal of a lethal and modern force by 2028. Keeping pace with rapid changes in technology now requires the Army to create more flexible institutional processes, legacy policies that keep up with new technologies — such as the cloud and artificial intelligence — and a workforce that is empowered to innovate at scale.

To position the Army to do this, Dr. Raj Iyer, the Army's chief information officer, is driving a comprehensive digital transformation strategy — the Army Digital Transformation Strategy.

"Going digital is a mindset, it's culture change," Iyer said. "It's about how we can fundamentally change how we operate as an Army through transformative digital technologies, empowering our workforce, and re-engineering our rigid institutional processes to be more agile."

Aligned with the Army Modernization Strategy, ADTS will create the conditions for a digital Army to deliver overmatch through joint multi-domain operations by using innovative and transformative technologies. This kind of digital transformation requires a holistic doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership, personnel and facilities approach that enables new digital technologies such as cloud, data and AI to fundamentally transform processes. This will enable an Army culture change that is agile, innovative and tech-savvy. As the Army's modernization strategy states, such an approach is critical to the Army maintaining digital overmatch against strategic competitor adversaries both in competition and conflict.

The Army Digital Transformation Strategy

The Army CIO established the ADTS to lead the Army through changes in technology, processes and overall culture, in response to the rapid evolution of digital and modernization programs. The strategy establishes the vision for how a digital transformation can help achieve Waypoint 2028, the Army's construct for victory in MDO. The strategy includes clear lines of effort tied to three objectives, identifies priorities for the Army to resource, and outlines an integrated master plan to synchronize and better integrate all ongoing activities to achieve the digital-age Army.

Several integral strategies in addition to the AMS, including the Department of Defense Digital Modernization Strategy and the Army Business Modernization Plan, provided significant direction for the ADTS and influenced the objectives, LOEs and overall priorities. The ADTS objectives were organized to indicate their alignment with the Army's strategic pillars: modernization and readiness; reform; and people and partnerships. Each objective, LOE, and future initiative will be outcome-driven and metrics-based to ensure that it is operationally effective in a resourced constrained future.

OBJECTIVE 1: Modernization and Readiness
A digitally-enabled, data-driven Army propelled by digital transformation
The Army's current digital initiatives are siloed across mission areas, inhibiting the interoperability needed to support MDO. In addition, the Army faces resource constraints, leading to conflicts with prioritizing resources for modernization over current-year operational readiness. This has led to costly maintenance of legacy systems that are not sustainable while simultaneously investing in priority modernization efforts like cloud computing. Similarly, the Army faces challenges to balancing resourcing IT service delivery and cybersecurity across the enterprise while also prioritizing modernization of the unified network.

Between 2021 and 2028, the goal is to converge current digital initiatives that support readiness and modernization into a single integrated plan and enable these initiatives at the enterprise-level so they are available to the total Army from the tactical edge to the enterprise core. Simultaneously, the Army must establish standardized service delivery processes, methods and tools — all fully leveraging the cloud as an enabler. This will enable an Army that seamlessly shares data and information for timely insights to the warfighter, commands and enterprise functions in direct support of Army readiness and modernization.

OBJECTIVE 2: Reform

Optimized and mission-aligned digital investments providing greater value to the Army

Operational excellence is an imperative for the Army in light of the tight fiscal reality. With the evolution of technology, commercial organizations are finding lower-cost, more efficient and innovative ways to run and invest in their enterprises. The Army seeks to maintain pace with evolving technologies, but this goal requires a re-evaluation of priorities, resourcing and investments. Current challenges include limited visibility into IT portfolios, inflexible and waterfall IT acquisition processes and ineffective IT investment accountability and oversight. These challenges prevent the Army from ensuring its resources and spending are best aligned to save costs, improve operations and ultimately harvest these savings to modernize the Army.

The ADTS seeks to optimize the Army's resources and enable confident investment decisions that are data-driven and objective while simultaneously ensuring direct alignment of these investments to Army priorities. With improved and more efficient institutional processes for acquisition and portfolio management, the Army can better align digital resources to current and future digital requirements.

OBJECTIVE 3: People and Partnerships

A tech-savvy, operationally effective digital workforce partnered with a robust network of allies, industry and academia

People drive success. The Army's people and relationships with allied partners are vital to achieving the goal to dominate in MDO. In today's digital transformation revolution, simply having the newest technology is not sufficient – the Army must possess the right digital skills to optimize and fully apply the technology through innovation. Similarly, having strong partner relationships is not enough – the Army needs proper channels, networks and systems to effectively collaborate and communicate.

The goal is to embrace the recognition that people drive the Army's success on and off the battlefield. Robust recruiting, training programs, digital career models and partnerships with academia and industry will build a digital-ready, adaptive and innovative workforce. In addition, sustained communications and interoperability with allied nations will ensure the Army optimizes the ability to collaborate in all domains.

What is Next?

The ADTS sets the stage for digital transformation and collaboration across the Army enterprise and around the world. Secretary of the Army Christine E. Wormuth stated that "The Army must be manned, trained, equipped and modernized to be ready to fight today, but also to meet the demands of an uncertain and unpredictable future." Coordinated, prioritized efforts supporting modernization, readiness, reform, and people and partnerships will make the vision of a digital Army of 2028 a reality. Building an Army mission-ready for the challenges of tomorrow requires adopting transformative technologies, efficient processes and a culture of continued education and innovation today. ■