DIU & ATLA Present: U.S.-Japan Global Innovation Challenge

Overview:

The Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and the Japanese Ministry of Defense's Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency (ATLA) are executing a joint prize challenge focused on advancing biodefense solutions and AI-driven command and control and decision making. This event seeks to identify companies capable of developing cutting-edge technologies to enhance resilience against biological threats and disinformation and drive defense innovation. The bilateral challenge will culminate in a pitch event in March 2025 in Japan and is a key collaboration initiative under the Japan-U.S. Memorandum for Defense Innovation Cooperation.

A joint DIU-ATLA team of subject matter experts will evaluate applicants and select up to 5 companies per problem as finalists for participation in the Pitch Day in March 2025, to take place in Japan. Selected participants will have the opportunity to network among the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), Japanese Ministry of Defense (JMoD), defense industries, and non-traditional companies, including startups with dual-use technologies. A total of $300,000 U.S. Dollars in awards is available to the top performing company/companies.

Benefits of Participating:

$300,000 in awards to the top performing companies

Exposure to leaders across multiple branches of the DoD and JMoD

Potential for follow-on opportunities such as Other Transaction (OT) Agreements, Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs), and others

Potential for follow-on opportunities of contract with ATLA

[Apply Now (Link to Submission Form)](#)

Eligibility:

Early-mid stage companies (i.e., little to no DoD contracts, equal to or earlier than Series B); OR Non-traditional defense contractors, as defined in the [2023 DoD Other Transactions Guide](#)

Entity owned and operated in a non-covered foreign country, as defined in [48 CFR 225.772-1](#)

Ability to secure an active registration in Sam.gov if selected as a finalist (exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis)

Ability to demonstrate the solution's capabilities by March 2025

The following entities are not eligible to apply:

- Entities that are anti-social forces (groups or individuals that pursue economic benefit by making use of violence, force and/or fraudulent means)
- Entities that have any relationship or interaction, past or present, directly or indirectly, with anti-social forces in the form of transactions, payments of money, provision of benefits, or any other relationship or interaction
- Entities that have been appointed as an officer, employed as an employee, or involved in the management of an entity by a person who belongs to anti-social forces or has had interactions with anti-social forces

Notwithstanding the above, DIU or ATLA may cancel the eligibility or cancel all or part of the screening results at its discretion if DIU or ATLA deems the application inappropriate or if there is any violation or irregularity in the requirements, etc. related to this challenge.

Timeline (EST):

November 15, 2024: Public Announcement of Challenge

December 3, 2024: Launch Summit

December 17, 2024: Solicitation Release - Challenge.gov, NSIN Website, DIU Website

January 8, 2025: ["Ask Me Anything" Session](#), 7:30-8:30 pm EST

January 22, 2025: Solicitation Closes & Down-selection Begins

February 20, 2025: Down-selection Ends & Finalists Announced

February 26, 2025: Pitch Pre-Recording

March 18, 2025: Pitch Event

Problem Statements:

The challenge consists of two problem statements, each requiring distinct solutions. Participants may submit proposals to address either or both problem statements. Participants must submit a separate proposal for each problem statement.

1. Detection and Diagnosis of Biological Threats: It is necessary to provide biosurveillance analysts with the data science capabilities to promptly address crucial biosurveillance inquiries for decision-makers. This is complicated by the dynamic nature of emerging threats, where data informing responses to each threat varies considerably from previous instances.

2. Judging Information Accuracy & Counter Disinformation: Disinformation on social media is a critical challenge, threatening public trust, national security, and democratic processes. The emergence of generative AI has made it easier to create elaborate and sophisticated fake videos, images, and audio. So, it is important to aim to prevent the spread of false narratives by utilizing advanced technological tools and expertise from qualified companies specializing in identifying, analyzing, and countering deliberate disinformation campaigns on social media platforms. The winners of the innovation challenge will provide a product and/or services that enable the identification and mitigation of false information.

Judging Criteria:

Applications and Pitches for both problem statements will be judged on five criteria:

Technical Soundness & Innovation: Soundness, technical merit, innovation of proposed approach, and feasibility of the proposed solution.

Team Qualifications: Qualifications of proposed principals, support staff, and consultants.

Commercial Viability: Company has a technology solution that is viable in non-defense markets.

Quality of Application/Pitch: Company presents a clear and concise overview of its company and technology, demonstrates how its technology solves one or more of the defined problem areas, and effectively answers questions from strategic advisors during the Pitch round.

Operational Alignment: Proposed solution aligns with listed features and capabilities.

Desired Solution Attributes:

1. Detection and Diagnosis of Biological Threats

Timely, insightful, objective, and relevant health threat and biothreat information is required to inform national security decisions across the continuum of conflict. This will be achieved through the biosurveillance program underpinned by a novel fit-for-purpose analytic capability enabling federated data collection, ingestion, processing, analysis, and insight production. The technical solution when used by the biosurveillance analysts should enable rapid development and dissemination of strategic, anticipatory, and current operations analysis for risk mitigation from health and biothreats.

To generate leadership-decision support and analytic products, this challenge seeks a dynamic cross-domain cloud-based information technology capability, enabled by artificial intelligence and machine learning, to make sense of big data and create analytic bandwidth for user-driven analysis and automation of routine processes across public health, biodefense, environmental, and intelligence data.

To support the biosurveillance program, this challenge seeks a system with the ability to adaptively license, ingest, structure, and correlate primary and secondary data sources at-scale to build a dynamic intelligence picture. The system should primarily be focused on streamlining and automating anticipatory analysis for biological and health-related questions, while simultaneously providing situational awareness for all levels of command. The system should be highly adaptable and support ad-hoc requests for information. This system is <u>not</u> intended to be an early warning algorithm; rather, it is intended to be the platform, infrastructure, and data visualization for use by biosurveillance analysts (human-computer interface) to generate early warning. The technical solutions will integrate with a range of existing or new capabilities, including the Combined Joint All Domain Command and Control (CJADC2) initiative. Additionally, the solution should be capable of integrating with pre-existing, controlled data sources, pulling or pushing information as necessary to ensure interoperability.

The solution should successfully demonstrate the following:

- Demonstrate adaptive ingest capabilities, sense making at-scale, anomaly detection on primary data feeds amplified by metadata, AI methods for data structuring and semantic reasoning, fusion, and data processing, to enable all-source analytics.

- Demonstrate the ability to use tools for adaptive ingest of data provided by many entities, including interagency and international partners.

- Demonstrate use of geospatial and temporal techniques to associate foundational feeds with well-structured data.

- Demonstrate situational awareness and leadership decision support tools and information products, iterating from manual curation to automated collection and fusion to development, validation, deployment, and monitoring.

- Create, connect, structure, and correlate data feeds, getting data from sensors and sources across domains, partners, allies, and platforms, using industry-standard communication protocols.

- Enable (or provide) data scientists, software engineers, to join mission experts on teams with the ability to receive and triage key questions, execute data analysis, deploy and monitor automated services.

- Remain modular and adaptable through open architecture software designs, data rights and formats, and application program interfaces (APIs), ultimately ensuring consistent and reliable sustainment, maintenance, and innovation for all digital tools.

- Demonstrate the ability to assess changing conditions, and work with customers from warfighters to policymakers to understand their key questions and respond with sophisticated solutions, while identifying opportunities for innovation (e.g., challenging long-standing assumptions and boundaries in health data analytics).

- Demonstrate the capability to enable rapid answers to key intelligence questions for leadership decision support.

- Demonstrate a mature understanding of using and creating application program interfaces to communicate with outside software platforms.

Multiple agreement awards are anticipated, and a single company is not expected to provide a solution that covers all solution areas. Preference will be given to product mixes that include solutions with evidence of similar deployments. Teaming arrangements may be facilitated among submissions offering complimentary capabilities to achieve desired effect. Companies

are also welcome to present their own teaming arrangements in their solution briefs. If technology solutions are proprietary, performing companies will be expected to establish business to business safeguards that permit information sharing amongst teaming members in pursuit of solutions. Academic research proposals are not desired.

*Note to offerors: It is anticipated human subjects research may be required in performance of any subsequent agreement(s). Therefore, offerors should be aware that compliance with 32 CFR 219, DoDI 3216.02 will be mandatory, as applicable.

2. Judging Information Accuracy & Counter Disinformation

The goal of this innovation challenge is to enhance the capability to identify and counter disinformation on social media, thereby protecting public trust and the integrity of information. Proposals should focus on providing a clear path to achieving this outcome through technological innovation and strategic implementation.

By responding to this solicitation, companies confirm their understanding of the problem statement. We look forward to reviewing proposals that demonstrate innovative solutions tailored to these critical objectives.

The solution should successfully demonstrate the following:

- Employ artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), and other advanced technologies to identify false information and malicious influence campaigns.

- Demonstrate the ability to evaluate effects of disinformation campaigns to specific vectors i.e. campaign types, techniques, regions, and actors types (originators, disseminators, etc), among other identifiable characteristics.

- Provide explainable metrics that assess and communicate performance of the detection and attribution techniques and approaches implemented to both technical and non-technical users.

- Generate real-time reports analyzing the scope, spread, and impact of detected disinformation. Reports should include data visualization and trend analysis.

- Develop and recommend strategies to counter detected disinformation campaigns, including creating accurate counter-narratives.

- Continuously monitor social media channels and other digital platforms for emerging disinformation campaigns.

- Ensure compliance with data privacy and security standards, maintaining the confidentiality of monitored content and user information.

Pitch Deck Submission Requirements:

Teams will submit a pitch deck outlining their technology capabilities that addresses the features listed above. Pitch decks should meet the following format requirements:

- Sized 16:9 (1920x1080 pixels)
- Horizontal presentation
- PDF file
- Maximum 10 slides
- Written in English*

*Applications must be written in English but presenting in Japanese or English is allowable at the Pitch Event.

About [ATLA](#)

The Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency (ATLA) of Japan is dedicated to advancing national defense capabilities through cutting-edge technological innovation and strategic acquisition practices. Our mission is to enhance Japan's defense readiness by fostering collaboration with international partners, driving research and development in critical defense technologies, and ensuring the effective and efficient procurement of advanced systems. By integrating technological advancements and logistical expertise, ATLA aims to fortify Japan's security posture and contribute to global defense initiatives.

About [DISTI](#)

Defense Innovation Science & Technology Institute (DISTI) was established in 2024, tasked with implementing various activities lead to defense innovation in cooperation with organizations/personnel outside of Japan Ministry of Defense: research various technologies with potential, challenge to a breakthrough overturning conventional accepted idea, apply

technologies to practical use speedily, and furthermore, create epoch-making operational concepts which differ from conventional ones.

About Defense Innovation Unit

The Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) strengthens national security by accelerating the adoption of commercial technology in the Department of Defense and bolstering our allied and national security innovation bases. DIU partners with organizations across the DoD to rapidly prototype and field dual-use capabilities that solve operational challenges at speed and scale. With offices in Silicon Valley, Boston, Austin, Chicago and Washington, DC, DIU is the Department's gateway to leading technology companies across the country.

About National Security Innovation Network

The National Security Innovation Network (NSIN) is a component of the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) program office. We are set up to collaborate with a wide variety of innovators to include universities, researchers, students, entrepreneurs and start-ups. We create opportunities for collaboration across communities and connect those that might not traditionally work in national security. Together, we help drive national security innovation and develop technologies that directly support the individuals responsible for protecting our country.

Intellectual Property Considerations:

Applicants retain ownership of existing Intellectual Property (IP) submitted under this Challenge and agree that their submissions are their original work. Applicants are presumed to have sufficient rights to submit the submission. For any submission made to the Challenge, you grant DIU and ATLA a limited license to use this IP for testing and evaluation for efforts specifically related to the Challenge. DIU and/or ATLA will negotiate with individual competitors in the event additional usage, integration, or development is contemplated. Results of the challenge, including awardees' name and pitch titles, have the possibility to be published.

Other Transaction Authority:

This Challenge public announcement is an open call to small businesses and non-traditional defense contractors seeking innovative, commercial technologies proposed to create new solutions or potential new capabilities fulfilling requirements, closing capability gaps, or providing potential technological advancements, technologies fueled by commercial or strategic investment, but also concept demonstrations, pilots, and agile development activities improving commercial technologies, existing Government-owned capabilities, or concepts for broad Defense application(s). As such, the U.S. Government reserves the right to award a contract or an Other Transaction for any purpose, to include a prototype or research, under this public announcement. The Federal Government is not responsible for any monies expended by the applicant before award and is under no obligation to pursue such Other Transactions.

Satisfying Competition Requirements:

This DIU Challenge Open Call Announcement is considered to have potential for further efforts that may be accomplished via FAR-based contracting instruments, Other Transaction Authority (OTA) for Prototype Projects 10 USC 4022 and Research 10 USC 4021, and/or Prizes for advanced technology achievements 10 USC 4025. The public open call announcement made on the NSIN website is considered to satisfy the reasonable effort to obtain competition in accordance with 10 USC 4025(b) and 10 USC 4022 (b)(2). Accordingly, FAR-based actions will follow announcement procedures per FAR 5.201(b). Applicants must comply with relevant laws and regulations of Japan where the challenge is held and also of the country where the company is owned.

The Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency, the Defense Innovation Unit and the National Security Innovation Network reserve the right to cancel, suspend, and/or modify the Challenge, or any part of it, for any reason, at the Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics Agency, the Defense Innovation Unit and the National Security Innovation Network's sole discretion.

The government of Japan is not responsible for any monies expended by the applicant and is under no obligation to pursue contracts.