BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN AUTHORITY AND EXECUTION IN TRANSFORMING THE WARFIGHTING ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

Colleen Murphy, Jeff Kwastel, and Sandi Marino

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SUMMARY

Numerous studies, policies, and legislative efforts have focused on making the Department of War's (DoW's) acquisition system faster and more focused on delivering warfighting capabilities at speed. The Administration and Congress have made it a priority to reform DoW's acquisition system to deliver faster, be less risk averse, and do better at harnessing leading edge commercial technology. The effectiveness of these reforms can be amplified by redesigning legacy processes and incentives that would otherwise reinforce a compliance-driven acquisition culture. In this paper, MITRE presents seven practical recommendations that can be rapidly implemented to drive the cultural change needed for this round of acquisition reform to succeed where previous efforts have fallen short:

1. Update auditing standards to incentivize risk taking.

2. Align acquisition and operational communities to encourage collaboration for better mission outcomes.

3. Empower leaders at all levels to drive cultural change.

4. Provide Major Capability Acquisition (MCA) programs more latitude to re-baseline in response to requirement changes.

5. Replace continuous analyses over comprehensive Analysis of Alternative studies to accelerate speed in MCA programs.

6. Streamline the Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA) to restore its effectiveness in enabling rapid capability delivery.

7. Equip programs with the tools and support needed to better tailor acquisition strategies.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. departments and agencies responsible for national security operate in a rapidly evolving threat environment where the ability to deliver advanced capabilities quickly and efficiently is critical to maintaining military superiority. It is well known that persistent challenges, such as lengthy acquisition timelines, inefficient processes, and limited or inconsistent use of new authorities, continue to undermine the Department of War's (DoW)'s ability to acquire and field cutting-edge technologies at speed. The time to develop new weapon systems still averages over a decade[1], leaving warfighters dependent on outdated technology in a rapidly changing landscape.

In the last decade, new authorities have been created to streamline acquisition and contracting processes.[2] Examples include the Middle Tier of Acquisition (MTA), Software Acquisition Pathway (SWP), expanded Other Transaction (OT) authority, and the Commercial Solutions Opening (CSO) solicitation processes. In addition, there have been ongoing calls to action for the acquisition workforce to lean forward and take risks by creatively leveraging its new authorities.

In 2025, the Administration and Congress focused significant attention on the better use of these authorities to reform the DoW's acquisition system. The Executive Order (EO) "Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base"[3], establishes "a first preference for commercial solutions, a general preference for Other Transactions Authority..." It also directs a series of process and workforce changes aimed at increasing the DoW's ability to more rapidly deliver capability to the warfighter and harness leading edge commercial technology. Other reform efforts from the Administration and Congress adopt similar objectives. Examples include the Secretary of War's "Directing Modern Software Acquisition to Maximize Lethality" Memorandum,[4] which aims to expand use of the SWP for all software development components of DoW business and weapon system programs; the Streamlining Procurement for Effective Execution and Delivery (SPEED) Act and the FY26 House Armed Services Committee National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA),[5] which proposes to overhaul the requirements process and eliminate obstacles to more broadly award OTs; and the FY26 Senate Armed Services Committee NDAA,[6] which proposes awarding production OTs with or without competitive procedures and increases the required use of CSOs. The disestablishment of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), and associated requirement validation processes,[7] while not directly a part of this paper, will also foster an environment of rapid change.

Historically, DoW's acquisition workforce has been slow to fully embrace new authorities and take the necessary risks to deliver capability more quickly.[8] This contention is supported by numerous Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports. The 2025 reforms are an important step forward. Our proposal is designed to help ensure their success by addressing the deeper process and cultural dynamics that often impede lasting change. By identifying and modifying the mechanisms that discourage the desired behaviors, we can accelerate how the acquisition workforce adapts and delivers on reform.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO REFORM EFFORTS

The acquisition workforce has been required to operate in a statutory and regulatory environment that is heavily compliance driven. For this reason, the acquisition workforce has become risk-averse, despite being given innovative acquisition authorities—this issue has been highlighted continuously by the GAO in assessments of DoW programs. Several of these reports have highlighted how previous changes to acquisition authorities and processes have not yielded expected performance improvements.[9] The SPEED Act echoed GAO's assessments. It described DoW's acquisition system as a bureaucracy suboptimized for agility or innovation and instead built to avoid failure.[10]

There have been senior leaders who have worked to foster a culture that encourages prudent risk-taking within the DoW acquisition workforce.[11] But the relatively short tenures of political appointees and senior military officers (usually a few years in duration) limit their ability to implement lasting cultural change. Thus, legal authorities and policies will be challenged to create lasting change without an acquisition workforce that is empowered to effectively execute them. As a result, addressing procedural barriers to progress within the acquisition culture becomes even more important.

In addition, many of the tools that were designed to provide speed and flexibility have had additional requirements layered on them. These additional requirements have impeded their ability to be used as intended. The MTA pathway was created out of a need to streamline processes and enable rapid prototyping and fielding of capabilities.[12] But over time, additional requirements and legacy acquisition processes were imposed on the MTA pathway, making it, in many cases, seem as onerous to programs as the Major Capability Acquisition (MCA) pathway. These added burdens include additional/duplicative reporting, documentation, authorization, and funding requirements.[13] These additions were likely well-intentioned, but, the end result is that the MTA has become so complex and difficult to use that many programs now end up using the MCA pathway.[14] The MCA is comprised of a complex set of serial phases and events and takes years to study, analyze, and design a solution before gaining approval to actually develop, produce, and finally deliver a capability.[15]

The measures of acquisition program "success" are also a barrier. For example, acquisition programs are still almost entirely measured by adherence to cost, schedule, and performance baselines, with no recognition or incentive for risk taking. The fear of a Nunn McCurdy breach[16] or a poor rating during an audit or compliance review for not following established processes discourages innovation—even if the outcome is delivering capability more quickly to our warfighters.

Another persistent challenge is the separation between operational and acquisition communities. Traditional acquisition programs are largely devoid of operational user feedback once requirements are approved and program execution begins. This lack of user feedback creates cultural and procedural barriers that continue to impede reform initiatives focused on acquisition and contracting processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The DoW must address the disincentives that continue to hinder cultural change to complement new acquisition reform legislation, policies, and directives. Doing so will unlock the innovation and agility needed to deliver critical capabilities to the warfighter more effectively. The following recommendations offer practical, actionable ways for the Office of the Secretary of War, Acquisition and Sustainment (OSW(A&S)) and Component Acquisition Executives to shift the acquisition workforce from a compliance-driven culture to one that leans into smart risk-taking to deliver capabilities at the speed of need.

1. **Update auditing standards to incentivize risk taking.** DoW audits focus heavily on strict compliance. A fear of poor ratings then influences individual performance reviews and promotions. Those outcomes reinforce risk-averse behavior and a status quo culture of choosing the same well-worn, comfortable strategies rather than leaning forward and trying something new that may get a capability to the warfighter faster. Therefore, to the extent audits continue to be required, their criteria should be updated to recognize programs that use new and existing authorities, implement innovative processes, and prototype technical solutions for faster capability delivery. For example, the DoW Inspector General sets audit standards for DoW.[17] It could include program audit requirements in relevant guidance, to include DoDI 7600.02, Audit Policies, for audits to consider the use of innovative acquisition techniques. In addition, this guidance could explicitly require that audits ensure the relevancy of audit items to the Adaptive Acquisition Framework (AAF) pathway being utilized.[18] For example, audits of SWP programs should require reporting that reflects the iterative nature of the SWP.[19] Moreover, these audits could require feedback from the operational users to ensure acquisition programs are making decisions and investments in alignment with their needs.

2. **Align acquisition and operational communities to collaborate for better mission outcomes.** Collaboration between the acquisition and operational communities is critical to improving speed and innovation. But most acquisition programs currently lack ongoing engagement with operational users.[20] The SWP has demonstrated the ability of well-aligned user engagement mechanisms to drive collaboration and achieve mission effective outcomes. MITRE has previously discussed the criticality of better integrating warfighters into the acquisition process and used the SWP as an example.[21] Continuous user feedback aligns well in the SWP because of the continually iterative nature of software development, but that model will need to be adjusted for acquisition pathways that function differently than the SWP. For example, the MCA pathway is generally used for large, discreet requirements with a series of structured phases and milestone events. Milestone B provides a program authorization to enter the engineering and manufacturing phase and commit resources to contracts.[22] Utilizing continuous user feedback once a program is in the engineering and manufacturing development phase post-Milestone B could cause disruptions, for example, by requiring a program to constantly re-baseline.[23] Therefore, user engagements should be aligned with post-Milestone B events and processes to ensure the voice of the user is represented in ways that can be effectively utilized throughout the acquisition life cycle.[24]

3. **Empower leaders at all levels to drive cultural change.** Leaders should be empowered and incentivized at all levels to foster and maintain a culture focused on delivering capability to the warfighter at speed. While compliance will always be an element of the DoW's acquisition system, it cannot continue to be the primary driver of decision making. Members of the acquisition workforce should be evaluated and rewarded for

their ability to produce better outcomes in terms of delivering quality capabilities to the end user more quickly. Annual reviews for all members of the acquisition workforce should include at least one performance criteria that evaluates how well he or she leveraged strategies, processes, and techniques to deliver quality capability solutions more quickly to the field. For example, most DoW civilian performance appraisals, to include those for civilian members of the acquisition workforce, are managed through the DoD Performance Management and Appraisal Program (DPMAP).[25] This system includes a requirement to align performance plans with organizational goals.[26] One of those goals should be to utilize acquisition authorities to speed quality capability delivery to the warfighter. This goal should, in turn, drive a performance evaluation criterion that requires evaluating the member on how well he or she accomplished this objective. In addition, annual reviews for acquisition workforce leaders should include at least one performance criteria that evaluates how well the individual helped facilitate improvement in the workforce's ability to accelerate schedules and deliver quality capability more quickly.

4. **Provide MCA programs more latitude to re-baseline in response to requirement changes.** There is a need to distinguish requirement-driven growth from management-driven growth in reporting and breach determinations. Programs using the MCA should not be locked into baselines when operational needs change or evolve. Instead, programs should be provided with allowances for cost, schedule, and performance deviations to facilitate strategic adjustments that align with operational needs, without fear of negative consequences. For example, programs should be encouraged to adopt iterative, tailored, or hybrid acquisition approaches, with adjustments made in collaboration with the operational community. This recommendation does not mean baselines become meaningless. Instead, programs should be afforded latitude to adjust to the operational communities' requirements without being penalized or forced to re-baseline the entire program—a process that can significantly impact schedule and delivery. Decision Authorities should be allowed to delegate this authority down as low as they deem appropriate. Congress should also revisit Nunn-McCurdy statutory language in 10 U.S.C. § 4371[27] and Selected Acquisition Reports language in 10 U.S.C. § 4351[28] for major defense acquisition programs to allow for calculations to consider baseline deviations driven by a change in operational needs rather than program mismanagement. This effort should be focused on changes made after Milestone B.[29]

5. **Replace continuous analyses over comprehensive Analysis of Alternative studies to accelerate speed in MCA Programs.** The Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) studies are an analytical comparison of the operational effectiveness, suitability, and life cycle costs of alternatives that satisfy established capability needs to select a preferred material solution. Major DoW acquisition programs invest significant time and resources considering and evaluating multiple options as part of the AoA study. This study is required to obtain approval to begin executing a program. These analyses can take up to 13 months for major programs, and even longer in some cases.[30] These analyses can provide valuable insights, but the April 2025 Executive Order[31] directs programs to prioritize commercial-first solutions and places greater emphasis on attritable assets. For capabilities or solutions that require regular updates or replacements, programs should move away from traditional AoA studies. In these cases, the time saved is more valuable than the insights gained from lengthy, comprehensive analyses.

6. **Streamline the MTA to restore its effectiveness in enabling rapid capability delivery.** OSW should right-size non-statutory oversight that has accumulated over time and align execution with iterative, user-focused practices. In addition, OSW and the Services should consolidate overlapping reports and sunset non-statutory documentation unless explicitly justified. Moreover, MTA execution should be improved by incentivizing its use as a tool to improve delivery of capabilities, especially for MCA programs encountering challenges. This improvement includes pushing down decision authority on use of the pathway for everything except programs that meet the Acquisition Category (ACAT) I threshold to component and service acquisition executives—similar to the MCA pathway. In addition, policies should be revised[32] to incorporate more iterative processes and user feedback, as recommended by the GAO and successfully demonstrated in the SWP.

7. **Equip programs with the tools and support to better tailor acquisition strategies.** Tailoring is one of the tenants of the AAF,[33] but programs often default to legacy processes because it is the path of least resistance for approval.

To encourage innovation, programs should be provided with tools, guidance, and support to tailor their acquisition strategies and develop hybrid approaches that leverage the best available solutions. For example, many programs would benefit from assistance with combining the SWP and MTA pathways. These types of hybrid approaches can be tremendous program enablers that create synergies and streamline processes.[34] However, successfully implementing hybrid approaches requires DoW leaders to encourage the risk-taking and resource investment needed for effective tailoring. To reinforce this mindset, programs should be required to justify why they are not tailoring their acquisition strategies, whether or not they pursue hybrid pathways. Shifting the emphasis to tailoring as a rule, rather than by exception, will help streamline acquisitions and accelerate capability delivery. This recommendation also dovetails with a previous MITRE recommendation for DoW to create a "digital acquisition policy sandbox" to allow policy makers and programs to understand the upstream and downstream impacts of statutory, policy, and regulatory changes to acquisition requirements.[35]

CONCLUSION

Acquisition reform must incorporate incentives that drive changes to legacy processes and, ultimately, transform DoW acquisition workforce culture. These changes are critical for improving DoW's acquisition practices. New and existing authorities have laid the groundwork for meaningful acquisition reform. Building on this progress requires empowering a culture that embraces innovation and accelerates delivery to the warfighter. The actionable recommendations outlined in this paper are grounded in recent policy, analysis, and proposed legislation. Together, they offer a path to shift focus from compliance to capability delivery, enabling the rapid and effective delivery of mission-critical capabilities.

REFERENCES

1   GAO 25-108528: "DOD Acquisition Reform: Persistent Challenges Require New Iterative Approaches to Delivering Capability with Speed (2025)". https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-108528.pdf (accessed Sep 8, 2025).

2   *See e.g.* the Adaptive Acquisition Framework's (AAF's) listing of statutory policies and authorities at https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/aaf-pathways/ (accessed Sep 2, 2025). In addition, there have been a flurry of recent directives to better leverage these authorities. *See e.g.* https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/4114775/modern-software-acquisition-to-speed-delivery-boost-warfighter-lethality/ (accessed Sep 2, 2025) detailing the release of the SecWar guidance on expanded use of the AAF's Software Acquisition Pathway and the Apr 9, 2025, Executive Order (EO) entitled "Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base"; available at: https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/modernizing-defense-acquisitions-and-spurring-innovation-in-the-defense-industrial-base/) (accessed Sep 2, 2025).

3   Executive Order: Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base (April 2025), available at https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/modernizing-defense-acquisitions- and-spurring-innovation-in-the-defense-industrial-base/; and the Fiscal Year 2026 Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) NDAA, available at https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-119s2296rs/pdf/BILLS-119s2296rs.pdf (accessed Sep 5, 2025).

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5   House Armed Services Committee. (2024). SPEED Act Overview https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/speed_act_overview.pdf and markup of the FY26 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), available at https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/chairmans_mark.pdf (accessed Sep 16, 2025).

6   *See* https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BILLS-119s2296rs/pdf/BILLS-119s2296rs.pdf (accessed Sep 5, 2025)

7   *See e.g.* Obis, Anastasis, "DoD Dismantles Decades-Old JCIDS in Joint Requirements Process Overhaul." Federal News Network, August 25, 2025. https://federalnewsnetwork.com/defense-news/2025/08/DoW-dismantles-decades-old-jcids-in-joint-requirements-process-overhaul/ (accessed Sep 26, 2025).

8   *See e.g.* GAO 25-108528 DOD Acquisition Reform: Persistent Challenges Require New Iterative Approaches to Delivering Capability with Speed (2025). https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-108528.pdf (finding the Adaptive Acquisition Framework had yet to deliver measurable improvements in program execution and that acquisition programs are largely entrenched in traditional, linear, development approaches that hinder responsiveness and undercut the intent of accelerated pathways like the MTA); GAO-25-107569 Weapon Systems Annual Assessment: DoD Leaders Should Ensure that Newer Programs are Structured for Speed and Innovation (2025)

9   Id. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-107569.pdf (finding the DoD continued to struggle to deliver timely and effective innovative solutions to the warfighter and that there was an increased amount of time for major defense acquisition programs to deliver initial capabilities); and GAO-24-106831 "Weapon Systems Annual Assessment: DoD is Not Yet Well-Positioned to Field Systems with Speed" (2024), available at: https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106831.pdf (citing DoD's lack of iterative processes as a key source of delays).

10   House Armed Services Committee SPEED Act Overview (2024), available at https://armedservices.house.gov/uploadedfiles/speed_act_overview.pdf (accessed Sep 16, 2025).

11   Take the examples of Dr. Will Roper (Former Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics) and James "Hondo" Guertz (Former Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, & Acquisition and Acquisition Executive, U.S. Special Operations Command). In his three years with the Air Force, Dr. Roper sought to accelerate acquisition timelines and embrace disruptive innovation by expanding opportunities for commercial companies. Honorable Guertz consistently provided leadership that enabled acquisition programs to innovate and adapt to deliver quickly.[11] Both leaders not only encouraged but enabled programs to do business differently with the priority of getting capability to warfighters. They accepted risk at their levels and allowed programs to experiment without fear. *See e.g.,* AIAA Will Roper, 2025, available at: https://aiaa.org/people/will-roper/ and War on the Rocks, "It's Time to Build the Digital Century Series" (2025), available at https://warontherocks.com/2025/03/its-time-to-build-the-digital-century-series/ (accessed Sep 5, 2025); National Defense, "When Hondo Talks, People Should Listen" (2021), available at: https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2021/3/10/when-hondo-talks-people-should-listen (accessed Sep 5, 2025).

12   Pete Modigliani and Matt MacGregor "How to Properly Execute an MTA Program" July 12, 2023. https://defenseacquisition.substack.com/p/how-to-mta (accessed Sep 12, 2025).

13   *See e.g.* LaPlante, William, "Middle Tier of Acquisition Start Date Definition and Revised Procedures." Memorandum to Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, October 20, 2022. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment; https://aaf.dau.edu/storage/2025/02/Middle-Tier-of-Acquisition-Program-Start-Date-Definition-and-Revised-Procedures-10202022.pdf; GAO Report, 23-105008: "Middle-Tier Defense Acquisitions, Rapid Prototyping and Fielding Requires Changes to Oversight and Development Approaches, (Feb2023), available at: https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-105008.pdf (accessed Sep 15, 2025); Pete Modigliani and Matt MacGregor, "Implementing the Adaptive Acquisition Framework" Defense Acquisition Substack, January 17, 2024, available at https://defenseacquisition.substack.com/p/how-not-to-implement-the-adaptive (accessed Sep 12, 2025); and "Oversight or overkill? DoD faces new congressional order to detail Mid-Tier Acquisitions," Breaking Defense, February 6, 2023. https://breakingdefense.com/2023/02/oversight-or-overkill-DoW-faces-new-congressional-order-to-detail-mid-tier-acquisitions/ (accessed Sep 12, 2025).

14   *See* Major Capability Acquisition Pathway, available at https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/mca/ (accessed Sep 12, 2025).

15   Id.

16   A Nun-McCurdy Breach requires certain types of program managers to maintain cost estimates of acquisition costs and report increases over certain thresholds. DAU Glossary—Nunn McCurdy Breach. *See* https://www.dau.edu/glossary/nunn-mccurdy-breach (accessed Sep 11, 2025).

17   DoDI 7600.02, *Audit Policies*, Sections 1.1, 1.2, and 2.1 (October 31, 2023), available at https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/dodi/760002p.pdf (accessed Oct 8, 2025).

18   *Id.*

19   *See e.g.* https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/software/ (accessed Sep 5, 2025).

20   For additional analysis on this topic, please see the MITRE white paper, "Making the Defense Acquisition System More Warfighter Centric", available at https://aida.mitre.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Making-DAS-More-Warfighter-Centric.pdf.

21   *See e.g.* AAF SWP User Engagement guidance available at: https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/software/active-user-engagement/ (accessed Sep 23, 2025). In addition, *see e.g.* GAO Report, "DoD Acquisition Reform. Military Departments Should Take Steps to Facilitate Speed and Innovation" (Dec 2024), available at https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-107003.pdf (accessed Sep 23, 2025).

22   Major Capability Acquisition Pathway, available at https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/mca/ (accessed Sep 5, 2025).

23   It thus seems likely that programs would avoid getting meaningful user feedback out of concern that the program could be significantly disrupted at any time.

24   Users should be well aligned pre-Milestone (MS) B since a preliminary design is required before entering a MS B decision.

25   *See* https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/policy/performance/dodperformancemanagementappraisal (accessed Oct 8, 2025).

26 *See* "Department of Defense—Performance Management and Appraisal Program Toolkit", Appendix A, "Aligning Employee Performance Plans With Organizational Goals", available at https://www.dcpas.osd.mil/sites/default/files/2021-04/DPMAP_Toolkit.pdf (accessed Oct 8, 2025).

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28 10 U.S. Code § 4351—Selected Acquisition Reports, available at: https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/4351 (accessed Sep 5, 2025).

29 The Milestone B decision authorizes a program to enter the Engineering and Manufacturing Development phase and commit the required investment resources to support the award of phase contracts. *See* https://aaf.dau.edu/aaf/mca/milestone-b/ (accessed Sep 12, 2025).

30 *See e.g.* Brian B, Joseph, Deputy Director for Data Analytics, OUSD(A&S), "Assessment of Analysis of Alternative Studies in the Department of Defense as Compared to Best Practices", July 13, 2021 (finding that the median time in the DoD to conduct AoAs from 2016-2021 was 13 months)., available at: https://www.acq.OSD.mil/asda/dpc/api/docs/assessment%20of%20analysis%20of%20alternative%20studies%20in%20the%20department%20of%20defense%20as%20compared%20to%20best.pdf (accessed Sep 15, 2025).

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32 In particular, Department of Defense. Operation of the Middle Tier of Acquisition, DoDI 5000.80, December 30, 2019 (Change 1 Effective November 25, 2024), available at https://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/DD/issuances/DoDI/500080p.PDF?ver=QsDA5aJ20jnMMxhx1z5mJQ%3d%3d (accessed Sep 15, 2025).

33 "DoD's new Adaptive Acquisition Framework takes new approach to tailoring procurement strategies" (Mar 16, 2021), available at https://federalnewsnetwork.com/on-dod/2021/03/dods-new-adaptive-acquisition-framework-takes-new-approach-to-tailoring-procurement-strategies/ (accessed Oct 20, 2025).

34 For example, the GAO found that the military departments did not provide programs with a full structure for iterative development of cyber-physical capabilities outside of the SWP; particularly in the Urgent Capability Acquisition (UCA), MTA, and MCA pathways or provide programs. They also failed to provide programs with practical examples of how to execute iterative development cycles in these other pathways. GAO Report, "DoW Acquisition Reform. Military Departments Should Take Steps to Facilitate Speed and Innovation" (Dec 2024), available at: https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-107003.pdf (accessed Sep 2, 2025). In contrast, programs that do tailor their strategies, and appropriately use hybrid approaches can drive acquisitions that deliver good results at speed. *See e.g.* https://aaf.dau.edu/storage/2022/09/MTA-SWP-Vignette_RCV_July2022.pdf (accessed Sep 2, 2025).

35 *See* "The Defense Acquisition System Digital Acquisition Policy Sandbox" by Debra Zides and Jeff Kwastel (Aug 11, 2025), available at https://www.mitre.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/PR-25-01688-1-Defense-Acquisition-System-Digital-Policy-Sandbox.pdf.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Colleen Murphy is a Contracting and Acquisition Subject Matter Expert at The MITRE Corporation with 20 years of experience. Since joining MITRE in 2013, Colleen has supported projects across Defense and civilian agencies such as developing DoW's Adaptive Acquisition Framework and Contracting Cone, as well as exploring innovative acquisition and contracting solutions and techniques to accelerate capability delivery and engage non-traditional innovators. She is a founding member of MITRE's Acquisition in the Digital Age (AiDA) platform.

Jeff Kwastel is a Principal Enterprise Engineer for Acquisition Studies and Analyses at MITRE. He focuses on using commercial and agile acquisition methods to rapidly field innovative warfighting capabilities. He has served as an officer in the U.S. Judge Advocate General's Corps, white collar crime prosecutor, and acquisition and information technology counsel for the U.S. Air Force and U.S. International Development Finance Corporation. He holds a B.A. from the University of Michigan and J.D. from the University of Georgia.

Sandi Marino is a certified Project Management Professional with 30 years of experience in the Department of War. She brings extensive expertise to her role at MITRE, where she leads initiatives to implement agile methodologies and innovative practices aimed at transforming defense acquisition processes. As a former civil servant and retired Air Force acquisition officer, Sandi has a broad range of acquisition and program management experience across diverse portfolios including aerospace; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; munitions; special operations; and nuclear programs, as well as roles on the Air Staff and OSW(A&S).

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