

# *The* Defense

Imperative

# Table Of Content

Introduction	<b>03</b>
Regional Dynamics	<b>04</b>
Defence Policy & National Security Initiatives	<b>06</b>
Indigenous Defence & Technological Advancement	<b>08</b>
International Defence Relations & Engagements	<b>11</b>
Maritime Security & Coastal Operations	<b>12</b>
Honours & Gallantry	<b>14</b>
Trends & Outlook: The Month Ahead	<b>15</b>



# Introduction

In June 2025, the global defense landscape is rapidly evolving, shaped by intensifying conflicts and technological advancements. India's defense strategy, driven by the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, advances through the indigenous development of next-generation fighter aircraft and advanced missile systems. Regionally, tensions with Pakistan and China's expanding Indian Ocean presence accelerate India's military modernization, emphasizing AI, hypersonic technologies, and space-based surveillance. The escalating Israel-Iran conflict disrupts energy supplies and trade routes, compelling India to bolster its maritime security and diversify energy imports. Globally, heightened tensions in Eastern Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and the Middle East underscore the need for robust defense strategies. Amid persistent global rivalries and disruptive technological innovations, India balances modernization, regional stability, and its rising role as a key Indo-Pacific security provider.

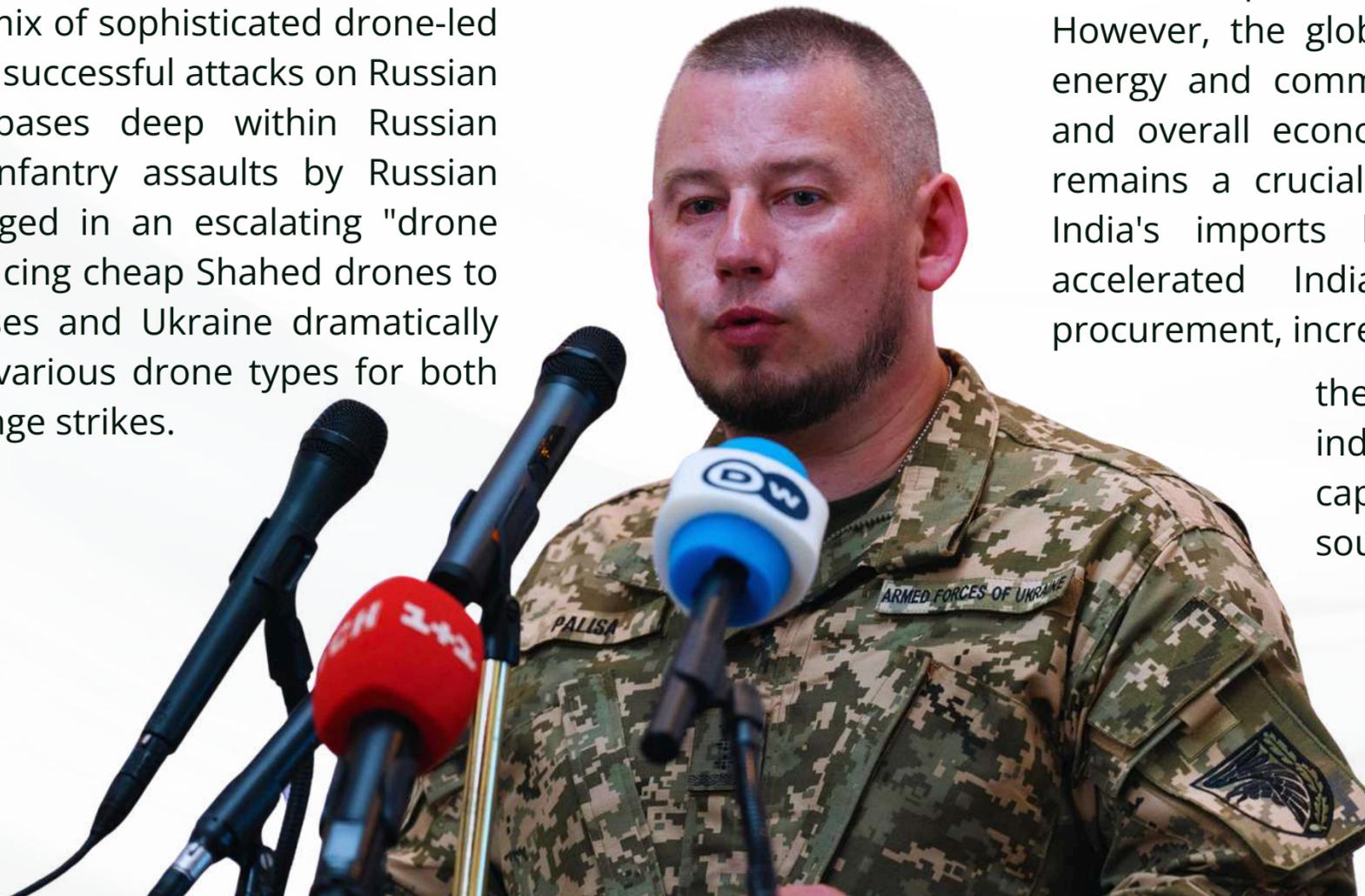


# Regional Dynamics

## RUSSIA- UKRAINE UNREST

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine remains a volatile and multifaceted struggle. Russia's anticipated offensive in eastern Ukraine, while not as overwhelming as expected, has seen significant troop reinforcements, with 111,000 Russian soldiers now near Pokrovsk in Donetsk, leading to over 50 daily clashes. Despite Russian territorial gains in some areas, Ukraine is mounting counterattacks and rapidly developing its domestic weapons industry. The battlefield is a mix of sophisticated drone-led operations, such as Ukraine's successful attacks on Russian strategic bombers and airbases deep within Russian territory, and more basic infantry assaults by Russian forces. Both sides are engaged in an escalating "drone war," with Russia mass-producing cheap Shahed drones to overwhelm Ukrainian defenses and Ukraine dramatically increasing its production of various drone types for both frontline combat and long-range strikes.

This ongoing unrest has significant implications for India, which maintains a policy of "strategic autonomy" in its foreign relations. Economically, India has capitalized on the conflict by increasing its import of discounted Russian oil, with volumes reaching nearly 2 million barrels per day (mb/d) in April 2025, making Russia its primary oil supplier. However, the global instability also contributes to higher energy and commodity prices, impacting India's inflation and overall economy. In terms of defense, while Russia remains a crucial arms supplier, accounting for 36% of India's imports between 2020-2024, the conflict has accelerated India's drive to diversify its defense procurement, increasingly turning to Western partners like the US and France, and bolstering its indigenous defense manufacturing capabilities to reduce reliance on any single source.



## ISRAEL- IRAN CONFLICT

The rivalry between Israel and Iran has recently escalated into confrontations, significantly heightening tensions across the Middle East. This has moved beyond their long-standing proxy conflicts to include direct missile barrages and targeted strikes. Just recently, after a "12-day war" that saw Israeli airstrikes target Iranian nuclear and military sites, and Iran retaliate with hundreds of missiles and drones towards Israel, a fragile ceasefire, brokered with US involvement, seems to be holding. However, both sides remain deeply suspicious, with Iran expressing doubts about the truce's longevity and Israel claiming to have significantly degraded Iran's nuclear program and proxy networks like Hezbollah. The core of this rivalry stems from Israel's view of Iran's nuclear ambitions as an existential threat and Iran's historical support for groups opposing Israel.

This heightened instability in the Middle East poses significant challenges for India across various fronts. Economically, the most direct impact is on energy security and trade routes. A large portion of India's crude oil imports (around 60-65%) and a significant amount of its trade with Europe and the US pass through the volatile Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz. Any further escalation or disruption in these vital shipping lanes would lead to higher oil prices, increased shipping and insurance costs, and severe supply chain risks, impacting India's economy and potentially fueling inflation. Furthermore, India has substantial trade relations with both Iran and Israel, including agricultural exports to Iran and defense/technology imports from Israel, all of which are vulnerable to disruption, creating a complex balancing act for India's foreign policy.

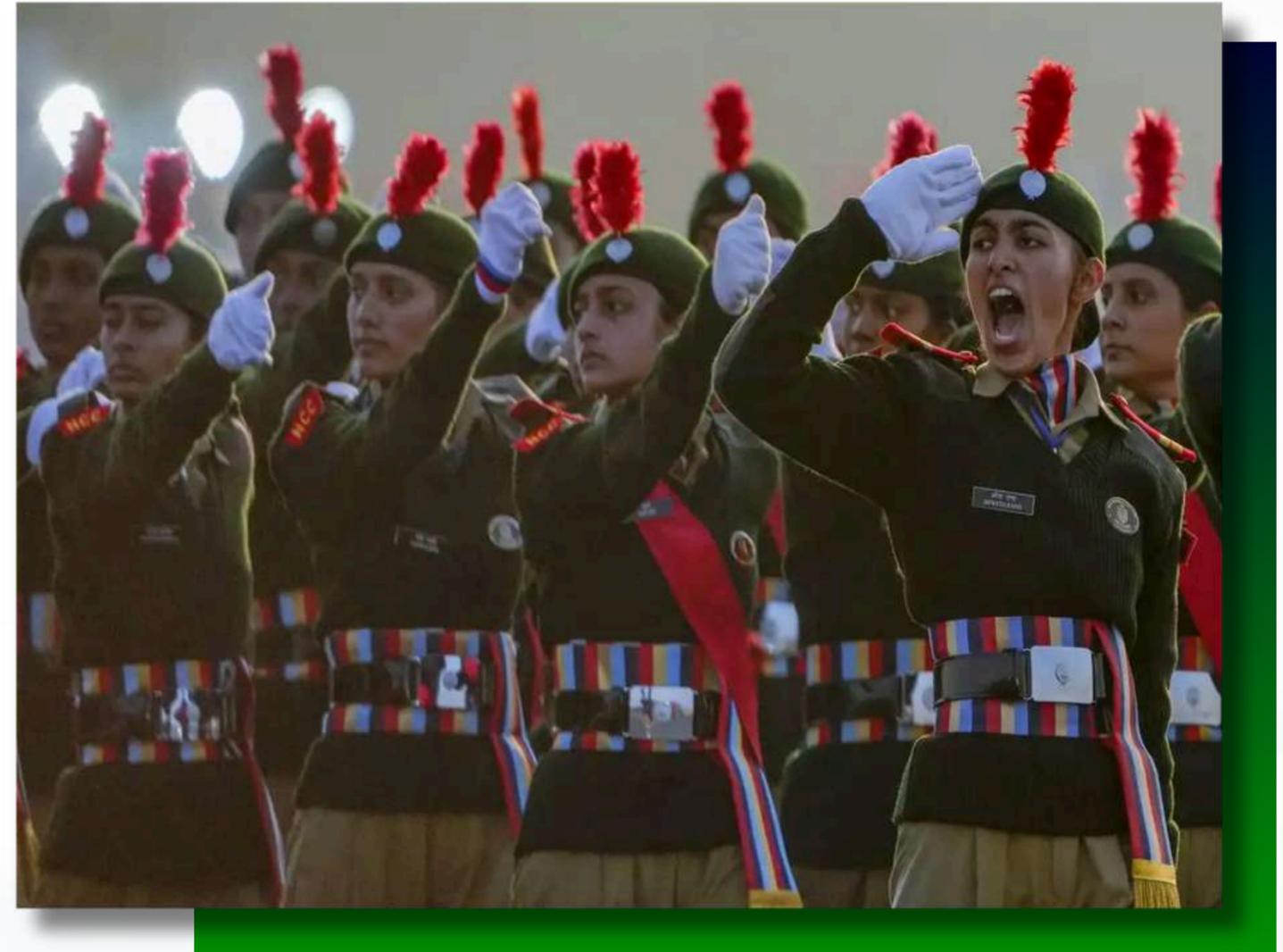


# Defence Policy & National Security Initiatives

## NCC TO EXPAND BY THREE LAKH CADETS

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth announced a significant expansion of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) by three lakh cadets across India at a conference in Bhopal on June 3, 2025. Several states have already agreed to this growth and pledged to quickly set up the necessary training facilities.

Shri Sanjay Seth underscored the NCC's crucial role in nation-building and youth development. He highlighted recent initiatives, including the induction of Ex-Servicemen as NCC instructors, which opens up new employment opportunities for veterans. He also praised the NCC's active participation in national campaigns such as Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Naya Savera Scheme, and Nasha Mukti Abhiyan. Additionally, the Raksha Rajya Mantri congratulated the NCC Mount Everest Expedition team for their successful summit on May 18, 2025, calling it a powerful display of cadet courage and resilience.



## INDIA REFUSES TO SIGN THE JOINT DECLARATION AT THE SCO DEFENCE MINISTERS' MEETING

India recently declined to sign a joint declaration at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China. India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh, reportedly refused to endorse the document because it lacked any mention of cross-border terrorist activities. As SCO decisions require unanimous agreement, the meeting concluded without a joint communique.

Earlier, Minister Singh had called for unified global action against terrorism, radicalisation, and extremism, labeling them significant threats to regional peace. He asserted that peace and prosperity cannot coexist with terrorism. Citing the Pahalgam terror attack as an example, he stated that India had exercised its right to self-defence through Operation Sindoor to dismantle cross-border terror infrastructure, demonstrating that "epicentres of terrorism are no longer safe."

Singh urged SCO members to reject double standards and hold terror sponsors accountable, criticizing countries that use cross-border terrorism as a policy tool and shelter terrorists. He emphasized that the SCO should not hesitate to criticize such nations and that those who sponsor terrorism for their own gain must face consequences.



# Indigenous Defence & Technological Advancement

## DMSRDE DEVELOPS HIGH-PRESSURE POLYMERIC MEMBRANE FOR SEAWATER DESALINATION

The Defence Materials & Stores Research & Development Establishment (DMSRDE), Kanpur, a leading DRDO laboratory, has successfully created an indigenous high-pressure desalination membrane for seawater. This advanced polymeric membrane has undergone successful technical trials on an Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Offshore Patrolling Vehicle (OPV). Initial tests showed excellent safety and performance, achieving a 99% salt removal efficiency. This reduced seawater conductivity from 55,000  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$  to 395  $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$  at 60 bar, producing 18.5 tons of fresh water daily. This innovation is a major step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat for coastal regions.



## **MULTI-INFLUENCE GROUND MINE (MIGM) COMBAT TRIALS CONCLUDED**

The Multi-Influence Ground Mine (MIGM), an advanced underwater naval sea mine designed by the Naval Science & Technological Laboratory (NSTL), Visakhapatnam, has successfully completed its combat firing trials. Equipped with multiple sensors to detect, confirm, and detonate on surface ships or submarines, MIGM's advanced electronics utilize a multi-processor architecture for efficient power use. Developed with Indian industry partners, MIGM has passed User Associate trials and is nearing completion of User Evaluation Trials (UETs). The Indian Navy has initiated a request for proposal (AON) for its procurement. Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh lauded DRDO, the Indian Navy, and industry for this achievement, stating that the system will significantly boost the Indian Navy's undersea warfare capabilities.

## **DRDO CONDUCTS FIRST FLIGHT TRIALS OF STRATOSPHERIC AIRSHIP PLATFORM**

The Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE), Agra, a DRDO lab, successfully conducted the maiden flight trials of the Stratospheric Airship Platform from the Sheopur Trial Site in Madhya Pradesh on May 3, 2025. The airship ascended to approximately 17 km, carrying an instrumental payload. Dr. Samir V Kamat, Secretary, Department of Defence R&D & Chairman DRDO, congratulated the team, highlighting this prototype flight as a crucial step towards developing high-altitude, lighter-than-air platforms capable of extended airborne operations at stratospheric levels.



## NEW AUTOMOTIVE & WEAPON SYSTEM TESTING CENTRE INAUGURATED IN CHENNAI

On May 17, 2025, Dr. Samir V Kamat, Secretary DD R&D & Chairman DRDO, inaugurated the Automotive and Weapon System Testing Centre (AWTC) at Vellanoor, Avadi, during his visit to the Combat Vehicles Research & Development Estt. (CVRDE), Chennai. This cutting-edge AWTC boasts 26 different types of tracks, essential for testing the full automotive performance of tracked armoured fighting vehicles. The center will also support various training programs and boost capacity building and skill enhancement.



# International Defence Relations & Engagements

## DEFENCE SECRETARY LEADS INDIAN DELEGATION TO 9TH JOINT DEFENCE COMMITTEE MEETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh led the Indian delegation to the 9th Joint Defence Committee (JDC) meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, on June 23 & 24, 2025. The South African delegation was led by Acting Secretary for Defence, Dr. Thobekile Gamede. Discussions focused on areas of mutual interest and ways to strengthen India-South Africa relations. The Defence Secretary emphasized India's growing capabilities in defence manufacturing and exports. Notably, two newly signed agreements regarding submarine cooperation were exchanged, signaling deeper strategic ties.

## JOINT INDIA-AFRICA COMMEMORATIVE PILLAR UNVEILED BY RAKSHA RAJYA MANTRI AND KENYAN COUNTERPART

Raksha Rajya Mantri Shri Sanjay Seth, along with Ms. Roselinda Soipan Tuya, Cabinet Secretary for Defence of Kenya, jointly unveiled the India-Africa Commemorative Pillar at Mile 27, Taita Taveta County, Kenya, on June 23, 2025. This ceremony honored the bravery and ultimate sacrifice of unknown Indian and African soldiers who died during World War I in East Africa. The initiative, proposed by the High Commission of India in Kenya and funded by India's Ministry of Defence, reinforces the strong and growing India-Kenya defence partnership, built on mutual respect, shared values, and a common dedication to peace and global security.



# Maritime Security & Coastal Operations

## ICG RAMPS UP OPERATIONS AS BURNING CONTAINER VESSEL DRIFTS OFF KERALA COAST

On June 11, 2025, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) intensified its efforts to manage the burning Singaporean container vessel MV Wan Hai 503, which caught fire off the Kerala coast on June 9, 2025. ICG personnel successfully boarded the vessel, deploying five salvage team members and an aircrew diver to assist with towing operations. The vessel continues to drift south-east within India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), approximately 42 nautical miles from Beypore, Kerala, as the ICG works to contain the situation.

## ICG CHAIRS 137TH OFFSHORE SECURITY COORDINATION COMMITTEE (OSCC) MEETING

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) chaired the 137th meeting of the Offshore Security Coordination Committee (OSCC) in New Delhi on June 12, 2025. The meeting aimed to assess the readiness and effectiveness of security measures for India's offshore installations and improve joint response mechanisms. Special emphasis was placed on strengthening coordination among agencies to address new challenges and ensure the security of crucial energy infrastructure.



## INDIAN COAST GUARD CELEBRATES 11TH INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA WITH 'YOGA SANGAM' NATIONWIDE



The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) enthusiastically celebrated the 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY) on June 21, 2025, through its flagship initiative, 'Yoga Sangam'. Thousands of personnel and their families participated in over 60 locations along India's coastline and island territories. In line with the AYUSH Ministry's global theme 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health,' the ICG celebrations underscored a deep commitment to holistic well-being, discipline, and operational readiness.

# Honours & Gallantry

## **PRESIDENT CONFERS 30 PVSMS, 5 UYSMS & 57 AVSMS TO SERVICE PERSONNEL**

On June 4, 2025, President Smt Droupadi Murmu awarded 92 Distinguished Service Decorations to personnel from the Armed Forces, Indian Coast Guard (ICG), and Border Roads Organisation (BRO) during the Defence Investiture Ceremony 2025 (Phase-II) at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi. These prestigious awards include 30 Param Vishisht Seva Medals (PVSMs), five Uttam Yudh Seva Medals (UYSMs), and 57 Ati Vishisht Seva Medals (AVSMs), recognizing exceptionally distinguished service.

## **RAKSHA MANTRI HONOURS NCC EVEREST EXPEDITION TEAM**

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh on June 12, 2025, honored the National Cadet Corps (NCC) Mountaineering Expedition Team, a group of five girls and five boys, averaging 19 years old, who successfully climbed Mount Everest on May 18, 2025. Recognizing their immense courage, determination, and patriotism, led by Col Amit Bisht, the Raksha Mantri presented a cheque of Rs 10 lakh for their incredible feat achieved under extreme conditions without any injuries.



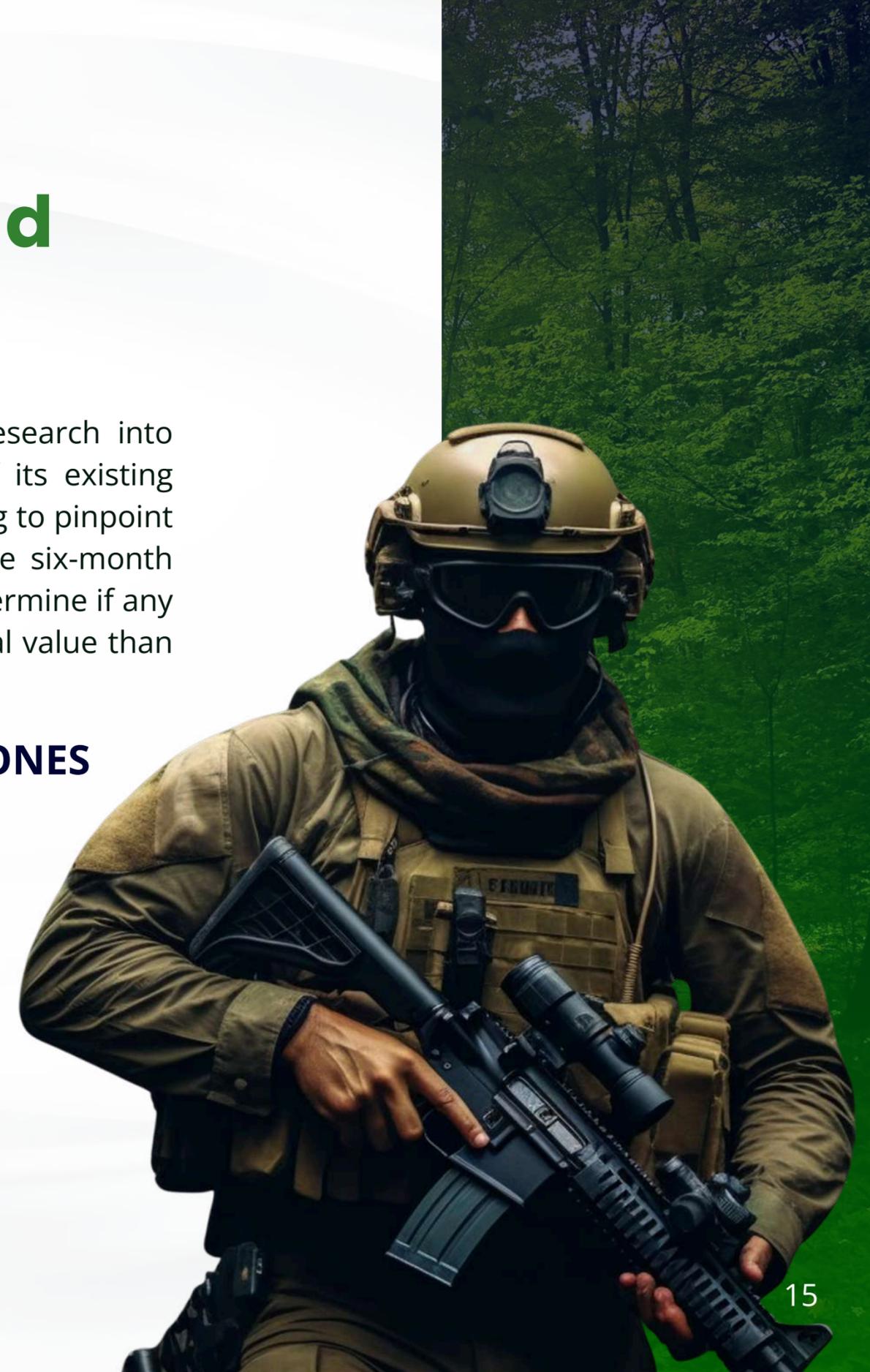
# Trends & Outlook: The Month Ahead

## **DARPA EXPLORES FUTURE OF QUANTUM COMPUTERS**

The Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) is significantly increasing its research into quantum computing through its Quantum Benchmarking Initiative (QBI), an expansion of its existing US2QC program. DARPA has chosen nearly 20 companies to participate in this initiative, aiming to pinpoint which approaches can yield an industrially useful quantum computer by 2033. This intense six-month period will require participants to detail their quantum computing concepts. The goal is to determine if any method can produce a "utility-scale" quantum computer—one that offers more computational value than its cost—within the next decade.

## **SPECIAL OPERATORS ASSESS AUTONOMOUS RECONNAISSANCE DRONES**

Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) is engaging with industry to integrate autonomy into its Adaptive Airborne Enterprise (AAE) initiative. AAE envisions an interconnected system of small, expendable, autonomous aerial platforms for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), supported by resilient data paths and a common control architecture. A recent evaluation with SOFWERX is reviewing over 60 industry proposals for potential autonomous capabilities, seeking "highly specialized autonomy solutions" that can be easily added to existing software-defined kits. The command stresses the need for crucial technologies like automation, secure communications, advanced navigation and sensing, and versatile payload integration to maintain a tactical edge in a volatile world.



## **MARINE CORPS RESUPPLY DRONE TO GET NEW AUTONOMY SYSTEM**

Near Earth Autonomy, a Pittsburgh-based company, has been awarded a contract to equip the Marine Corps' Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System (TRV-150) with its Firefly miniaturized autonomy system. This upgrade aims to improve the Marine Corps' logistics in challenging environments. The Firefly system, weighing only about two pounds, will enable the TRV-150 (a Group 3 drone capable of carrying 120 pounds of cargo) to navigate unpredictable flight conditions, detect obstacles like trees, buildings, wires, or even vehicles and unsuitable landing areas, and make autonomous adjustments. It will also allow for the detection of other aircraft, safe landings in confined spaces, and GPS-independent flight. This aligns with the Marine Corps' broader 15-year aviation plan and Project Eagle modernization strategy, which heavily emphasizes sustainment through advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to optimize aircraft maintenance, enhance supply chain efficiency, and facilitate more dispersed and expeditionary operations.

## **PENTAGON FOCUSES ON MATERIALS INNOVATION AND AI FOR MANUFACTURING**

The U.S. military is addressing its over-reliance on foreign critical materials by prioritizing investments in future manufacturing. Officials are emphasizing the need to boost U.S. materials innovation and leverage artificial intelligence (AI). The objective is to minimize and eliminate dependence on foreign sources, especially for rare earth elements, by accelerating the development and discovery of new materials or new uses for existing ones. AI and autonomy are seen as vital tools to shorten development cycles and speed up the deployment of critical capabilities, particularly in resolving supply chain vulnerabilities. The Pentagon also highlights the importance of robust data collection and efficient data analysis for AI applications, along with seamless data-sharing with allies. The overarching goal is to achieve transformative changes in manufacturing to ensure warfighters receive critical capabilities quickly and at scale.



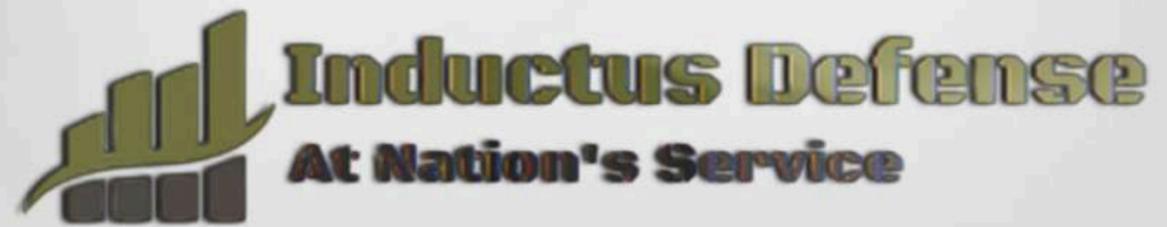
## **SPACE PROGRAMS AND GOLDEN DOME COULD BOLSTER U.S.- JAPAN PARTNERSHIP**

The U.S. and Japan are reaffirming their strong partnership in space, which could be further strengthened by initiatives like President Donald Trump's Golden Dome initiative. This initiative proposes developing a next-generation homeland missile defense system. Officials stress the critical role of space domain awareness in missile defense and identify missile warning and defense as key areas for future U.S.-Japan collaboration. The Golden Dome initiative offers a significant opportunity for cooperation between governments and industries, leveraging new commercial technologies. Seamless and continuous information sharing is considered vital for joint missile defense capabilities, especially in addressing hypersonic threats. Both nations emphasize the importance of alliances and partnerships in deterring China in the Indo-Pacific, with Japan being recognized as a stable and capable partner in the space domain.

## **AUKUS NATIONS PRIORITIZE DELIVERABLE TECHNOLOGIES OVER R&D**

The trilateral security partnership of Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, known as AUKUS, is shifting its focus from developing new technologies to collaborating on specific, deliverable defence projects. Formed in 2021 to strengthen each government's ability to support security interests, promote information and technology sharing, and integrate defence industrial bases, AUKUS is now prioritizing tangible technologies to address China's technological advancements in the Pacific. Joint training exercises are also scheduled for this summer.





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