

# Amazon, Microsoft and Google compete for Pentagon Cloud warfighter project

Will Morrow  
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Amazon, Microsoft and Google are competing to secure a multi-billion-dollar Department of Defense contract to build and oversee the US military's Cloud computing infrastructure, which will be used to control every aspect of the Pentagon's global operations.

The Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) project will transfer the large number of separate data control centers currently being run by the Pentagon into a centralized Cloud network that will be administered by one of the technology giants. The contract is reported to be worth up to \$10 billion over the next decade. The winning bidder is expected to be announced in September.

The company that secures the contract will be completely integrated into all of the US military's fighting operations. According to *Nextgov*, Brigadier General David Krumm, the deputy director for requirements for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, described JEDI as a "global fabric" that will connect the headquarters with active combat forces, from an F-35 fighter jet pilot to a Pacific submarine captain to an Army platoon leader. "This is going to make a difference like few things have to get information to our warfighters," Krumm said.

The Department of Defense hosted an industry conference on the project on March 7 in Arlington, Virginia, attended by technology companies, including representatives from Amazon and Microsoft. Krumm told the audience that JEDI would "change the way that this nation, its soldiers, its sailors, its Marines and its airmen fight and win our nation's wars."

The Cloud network will be required to hold data at all security classification levels, meaning security officials with top secret security clearances will be working at the facilities.

On May 16, *Bloomberg Government* published

images of the advertisements produced by Amazon and Microsoft on electronic billboards in the Pentagon railway station about how their companies' technology could support the military in battle.

Microsoft's ad featured an image of a special operations soldier and the caption, "The cloud gets actionable insight while the action is still unfolding." An Amazon Web Services ad included the statement, "Time to launch: months minutes," to underscore that the cloud infrastructure will help coordinate missile launches.

The JEDI program was first announced in September 2017, a month after Trump's Defence Secretary James Mattis carried out a tour of Silicon Valley boardrooms. Mattis met with Google's Founder Sergey Brin and CEO Sundar Pichai, as well as executives at Facebook and Amazon, to discuss further integrating their technologies into the US armed forces.

The *Defense One* website reported on April 12 that "Brin in particular was eager to showcase how much Google was learning every day about AI and cloud implementation," citing an anonymous senior Defense Department official. Mattis "returned to Washington, D.C., convinced that the US military had to move much of its data to a commercial cloud provider—not just to manage files, email, and paperwork but to push mission-critical information to front-line operators," the article noted.

Significantly, the article notes that while Amazon and Microsoft have publicly expressed their desire to secure the contract, Google has "kept its own interest ... out of the press. Company leaders have even hidden the pursuit from its own workers, according to Google employees *Defense One* reached."

Google's integration into the military's operations has triggered widespread opposition among its

employees. A letter published in April written to Google's CEO Pichai and signed by more than 3,000 Google workers, demanded that the company cease its collaboration with the Pentagon.

The letter was a response to Google admitting in March that it is providing the military with artificial intelligence software that can be used to detect objects in video surveillance footage, under what is called Project Maven. This technology can be directly used to develop automatic targeting for the US drone murder operations in the Middle East and North Africa.

The *Defense One* article stated that "Maven is more than either Google or the Defense Department has admitted publicly, according to the senior defense official who called it a 'pathfinder' project, a starting point for future collaboration between the Pentagon and Google."

Media reports indicate that the company most likely to secure the JEDI contract is Amazon. The company is considered to have an edge because it is already operating a Cloud network for the US intelligence agencies, under a \$600 million contract reached in 2013.

Since September 2016, Amazon has been providing facial recognition technology called Rekognition to police forces and private intelligence contractors. Rekognition is able to process video footage from police body cameras, surveillance cameras and CCTV to "identify persons of interest against a collection of millions of faces in real-time, enabling timely and accurate crime prevention" (see: "Amazon providing facial recognition technology to police agencies for mass surveillance").

The distinction between the technology corporations and the state has become almost entirely blurred as they become ever-more integrated into the military-intelligence apparatus. This takes place as Washington is working to outpace its major geostrategic rivals, above all China and Russia, in the arena of advanced warfare technology and artificial intelligence, in preparation for a catastrophic war that would inevitably involve the use of nuclear weapons.

As they integrate themselves into the American military build-up, the technology giants are collaborating in mass political censorship of left-wing and anti-war websites, above all the *World Socialist Web Site*, in order to suppress mass opposition to war.

Since April 2017, Google has altered its search result algorithms in order to censor the WSWS and other left-wing and anti-war websites.

*The author also recommends:*

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