# Pentagon cancels JEDI contract and plans more advanced cloud-based warfare platform

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The US Department of Defense (DoD) announced on Tuesday the cancelation of its $10 billion, 10-year commercial contract solicitation called the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure (JEDI) along with plans to seek a more comprehensive request from the private sector for an advanced "cloud ecosystem" for "non-traditional warfighting domains."

In a press release entitled, "Future of the Joint Enterprise Defense Infrastructure Cloud Contract," the DoD said it had determined that due to "evolving requirements, increased cloud conversancy, and industry advances, the JEDI Cloud contract no longer meets its needs."

The DoD statement went on to say the department "continues to have unmet cloud capability gaps for enterprise-wide, commercial cloud services at all three classification levels that work at the tactical edge, at scale ..."

The original contract solicitation for JEDI was issued in early 2018. The project was defined as a single source offering to be awarded to one cloud computing services company that would assist the DoD in modernizing its IT infrastructure by consolidating the networks and data centers across all departments. At that time, it appeared that the contract would be awarded to Amazon because the company had won other major cloud computing bids with the US military-intelligence state.

However, before the arrangements with Amazon could be finalized, then-President Donald Trump intervened and forced the contract to be signed with Microsoft in October 2019. Amazon sued and, in February 2020, a judge imposed an injunction on the deal with Microsoft. The conflict over the JEDI contract remained unresolved when Biden was sworn in as president.

According to the *New York Times*, an unnamed Biden White House official said the administration "began a review that quickly concluded that the costly arguments over JEDI had been so lengthy that the system would be outdated as soon as it was deployed."

While the corporate media has focused in on the three-year battle between Amazon and Microsoft, as well as others such as Oracle, over the highly lucrative JEDI contract, the DoD press release says nothing about it. Instead, the Pentagon statement says that its cloud computing needs "have only advanced in recent years."

The DoD press statement quotes John Sherman, acting Pentagon Chief Information Officer, who said, "JEDI was developed at a time when the Department's needs were different" and "our cloud conversancy was less mature." Sherman goes on to say that "the evolution of the cloud ecosystem within DoD, and changes in user requirements to leverage multiple cloud environments to execute mission, our landscape has advanced and a new way-ahead is warranted to achieve dominance in both traditional and non-traditional warfighting domains."

With the development of computer and information systems moving rapidly—especially the speed of data transmission across wireless networks and the development of artificial intelligence and "neural" processing along with the practical implementation of robotics and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones)—the technical details in the JEDI contract are now completely out of date. The Pentagon has acknowledged that the growth of the Internet of Things (IoT)—the intelligent connection of every device and apparatus with the Internet—has exceeded the capability of the present infrastructure of the US military to process it.

In place of JEDI, the DoD is issuing a new request for proposals called the Joint Warfighter Cloud Capability (JWCC) which "will be a multi-cloud/multi-vendor Indefinite Delivery-Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contract." According to a Wikipedia description, IDIQ contracts only spending minimums and are used when the government, "cannot predetermine, above a specified

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minimum, the precise quantities of supplies or services that it will require during the contract period."

What this means is that the Pentagon considers the procurement of a centralized cloud computing platform across all departments of the US military so strategically important that it is prepared to enter an open-ended agreement with a group of private sector tech monopolies of an unknown duration and an unknown cost. The press release says that both Amazon and Microsoft will be included in the new solicitation.

The DoD statement references two specific initiatives that have contributed to the maturity of its "cloud conversancy" along with the development of the technology of the "cloud service providers" Amazon, Microsoft and others. It says that the cloud computing needs of the US military have advanced in recent years "with efforts such as Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Acceleration (ADA) initiative.

The JADC2 initiative has been in development for at least 18 months. A *DoD News* report from November 2020 states that JADC2 is "warfighting business" and is an effort by the Pentagon to "amalgamate sensors with shooters across all domains, commands and services." For example, the report says, "A threat could be sensed by an Air Force unmanned aerial vehicle but the best weapon against it could be a Navy missile fired from offshore" or "A call for fire from an infantry battalion could be answered by tube artillery, rocket artillery, naval gunfire, close-air support from any service or something else."

The *DoD News* report includes an interview with Marine Corps Lt. Gen. Dennis A. Crall, who runs the communications systems for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Crall says of JADC2, "Does it increase lethality? The answer should be yes. [JADC2] makes us more lethal. We're a warfighting organization. That's what this is designed to do."

The Artificial Intelligence and Data (ADA) initiative was announced by the Pentagon on June 22 of this year by Deputy Defense Secretary Kathleen Hicks. Speaking for ten minutes via video feed, Hicks emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence as a strategic concern for the US military: "A key part of an AI-ready department is a strong data foundation. Data enables the creation of algorithmic models, and, with the right data, we are able to take concepts and ideas and turn them into reality." In other words, the future of US imperialist warfare depends upon the mastery of these advanced technologies.

Hicks explained that the ADA initiative involves the creation of "operational data teams that will be dispatched to all 11 combatant commands." The teams will "rapidly work, catalog, manage and automate data feeds that inform decision making."

On Wednesday, the *Washington Post* published an article that said artificial intelligence in warfighting is not some future prospect because "missiles, guns and drones that think for themselves are already killing people in combat, and have been for years." The *Post* article describes a scene in June 2020 in which the US military sent a squadron of quadcopter drones with "cameras to scan the terrain and onboard computers to decide on their own what looks like a target," and attacked soldiers "loyal to the Libyan strongman Khalifa Hifter," and hunted them down as they fled.

Another war being fought with artificial intelligence-equipped drones is in Syria, where Turkey has been equipped with the same quadcopters to patrol the border. The *Post* report says the Turkish military has "drones that can autonomously patrol an area and automatically divebomb enemy radar signals." These drones are a smaller version of the remote-controlled unmanned aerial vehicles "used extensively by the U.S. military in Iraq, Afghanistan and other conflicts," but instead of humans using remote controls to launch missiles, the quadcopters have built-in munitions and fly into their targets and explode on impact.

A primary concern of the Pentagon is to maintain technological superiority over international rivals such as Russia and China. According to Peter Asaro, a professor at the New School in New York and a cofounder of the International Committee for Robot Arms Control, "The advanced militaries are pushing the envelope of these technologies. They will proliferate rapidly."

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