

Department of Defense Launches the Defense Venture Catalyst Initiative to Speed Discovery of Emerging Commercial Technologies

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) today announced the start of the Defense Venture Catalyst Initiative (DeVenCI). The objectives of DeVenCI are to speed DoD adoption of promising new commercial technologies and to encourage broader commercial support of the DoD supply chain. Unlike investment-oriented efforts to engage the private sector, such as Central Intelligence Agency's In-Q-Tel, DeVenCI does not fund the development of new technologies or businesses. Instead, it operates as a catalyst initiative whose goal is to improve communications between innovators and users.

DeVenCI has its roots in the DoD response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Recognizing that preventing future attacks would depend critically on our ability to build broader and deeper threat detection capabilities, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld led a search for innovative ways to increase the DoD contribution to the global war on terrorism. One of the high priority items identified was the need for faster, more agile incorporation of emerging commercial technologies into military systems. The DoD launched an experimental initiative in November 2001 to improve DoD access to emerging technologies. This experimental effort focused on how emerging information technology could support the war on terrorism. The experiment was successful, providing 15 technology and concept insertions that contributed directly to fighting terrorism, security, and information capabilities. Based on these successes, DeVenCI became fully operational in mid 2006, and the scope of DeVenCI was expanded to include assessment of a much broader range of technologies.

DeVenCI will rely on workshops, technology expositions, industry outreach, and web portals to accomplish its goal of improving communications between the DoD and companies with emerging commercial technologies. DeVenCI will evaluate a broad range of technology areas relevant to the DoD and will create focused technology sector initiatives to illuminate emerging technology solutions to DoD users. A goal of DeVenCI is to move management of each selected technology sector closer to one or more major DoD users. The first technology sector initiative is information technology, and early candidates for future technology sectors include biotechnology, energy, materials/nanotechnology, and space.

The technology sector initiative for Information Technology (IT) is managed by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Networks & Information Integration/Department of Defense Chief Information Officer (ASD(NII)/DoD CIO). The IT initiative will identify and speed the transfer of information technologies that can help the DoD move towards a network-centered model of warfighting and improve support for the DoD's Global Information Grid.