

Paul Solomon
3307 Meadow Oak Drive
Westlake Village, CA 91361
Paul.solomon@pb-ev.com

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The Honorable Emil Michael
Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Research and Engineering (USD(R&E))
The Pentagon, Washington, DC 20301

Subj: War Data Platform, Digital Acquisition, and Digital Engineering

Dear Hon. (USD(R&E) Emil Michael:

This letter augments my letter dated August 19, 2025, subj: Advana, Maven Smart Systems, and Digital Engineering (DE). Please expand the scope of the War Data Platform (WDP) to address constraints and challenges identified in digital acquisition use cases and recommendations in the Rand Research Report, *Evaluating Digital Modernization Enhancing Analytical and Decision Support in Department of Defense Acquisition Management*, dated January 20, 2026, as follows:

Use Case 1: Capability Portfolio Management (CPM)

Excerpts:

DoDD 7045.20 defines CPM as an approach to prioritize requirements and allocate resources at the enterprise portfolio level. This is accomplished through robust analytic methods, which are enabled by digital acquisition. Per the directive, CPM will do the following:

Drive strategic alignment across planning, requirements, technology, acquisition, sustainment, programming, budgeting, and execution.

Be data driven.

The directive includes multiple references to digital engineering and mission engineering or mission integration throughout, thus emphasizing the data-driven and mission area orientation aspects of CPM. It gives CDAO authority for providing data standard guidance.

Lack of data transparency. This includes acquisition data for small programs (acquisition category [ACAT] II–IV), constraints and external factors affecting concepts of operations or technology, requirements and budget-related data. In general, there is a lack of a central and standardized database or repository that stakeholders agree is the *authoritative source* for that set of data. Some of these data may exist at different organizations, but they are not visible and accessible to all CPM stakeholders.

Misaligned processes (acquisition, technology development, requirements, budget) among stakeholder communities (OUSD[A&S], OUSD[R&E], Joint Staff, Comptroller). This misalignment includes the goals, timing (cycles and milestones or events), and stakeholder interests associated with those processes.

Incompatible, inconsistent, or unaligned data governance, management, and analytics. These include data policies setting collection, processing, and storage requirements; assumptions associated with those functions; and analytic methods. As a result, there is no standardization across data from different processes and organizations, no authoritative source of truth, and no institutional mechanism to coordinate across organizations. This factor also makes integration and automation across organizational and functional boundaries difficult.

CPM connects acquisition data to mission effects. It uses acquisition data (cost, schedule, performance) in a different context, requires data not normally integrated or aligned with typical acquisition program data, and requires a degree of data sharing across organizational and functional boundaries that is not typical of historical practices.

Use Case 2: Digital Engineering

DE is “a means of using and integrating digital models and underlying data to support the development, test and evaluation, and sustainment of a system.”

Digital artifacts, such as digital twins and digital threads, will make this continuity across life-cycle phases possible. Configuration management and organization of these digital artifacts are critical to making this continuity possible.

Digital acquisition and DE are distinct but deeply interconnected efforts. Both efforts aim to accelerate acquisition timelines and improve the quality of the fielded system through the use of data and analytics. However, while DE focuses mostly on the technical domain of system design, production, and sustainment, digital acquisition encompasses the wider programmatic and decisionmaking aspects of these systems. Digital acquisition and DE are mutually dependent. Digital acquisition enables DE by establishing the digital environments, tools, and governance required to conduct effective DE. These environments create the infrastructure with which to house and accommodate DE artifacts. In turn, DE supports digital acquisition by generating model-based technical data with which to inform programmatic, cost, and scheduling decisions. Data generated by DE also provide early insights into potential areas of technical risk. In their most mature state, digital acquisition and DE work in tandem to rapidly deliver reduced cycle times and increased capability.

The Rand Report also identified the following Common Themes: Potential Benefits, Constraints, and Enablers:

The potential benefit of these use cases is to improve acquisition outcomes, including both speed to capability and improved decisionmaking. Speeding time to fielded capability is an increasing imperative due to the pace at which U.S. adversaries are fielding weapon systems. ...Much of the focus of digital acquisition and its use cases is to decrease this time to a more competitive level. Getting fielded capabilities to the warfighter more quickly will enable dominance on the battlefield. In addition to achieving capabilities more quickly, another focus of digital acquisition and its use cases is to improve decisionmaking. Enabling leadership to more effectively track the progress of ongoing acquisition programs will improve how future decisions are made, potentially enabling better (i.e., more-informed) decisions to be made faster. Likewise, moving away from paper-based reviews and toward more-dynamic, model-driven reviews will give decisionmakers the tools to better understand the decision landscape and the trade-offs that result.

To execute the use cases discussed in this report, common enablers are required. For starters, data sources that are digitally formatted and easily accessible are imperative. Data need to be consistently reported and traceable, with digital tools producing repeatable results. All program office functions— program managers, analysts, engineers, logisticians, and maintainers—must trust the data that they are analyzing. Data repositories that lack the trust of their users will not be used and will sink resources. Data must be governed by comprehensive data standards that are used DoD-wide.

The Rand Report included the following recommendation.

Data governance.

Data are the foundation of digital acquisition. DoD needs to build on the progress already made in governing, managing, and analyzing acquisition-related data. Full implementation of data standards across the enterprise needs to be enforced, and additional standards established as needed.

As with digital acquisition strategy, a single organization within OUSD(A&S) should have this responsibility and requisite authority for acquisition data.

Feinberg Memo

Dep. Sec. of War Feinberg issued the memo, subj: Transforming Advana to Accelerate Artificial Intelligence and Enhance Auditability, date January 9, 2026, to effect this critical transformation of Advana. The memo state that War Data Platform (WDP) program team, focused on expanding the core data integration layer of Advana to provide standardized data access that streamlines secure, rapid development and integration of agentic AI and other applications Department-wide. It also stated that the WDP Application Services program team focus on rationalizing all other existing (non-audit related) Advana application environments.

Conclusion

As stated above:

1. CPM will do the following:

Drive strategic alignment across planning, requirements, technology, acquisition, sustainment, programming, budgeting, and execution.

Be data driven.

2. A single organization within OUSD(A&S) should have this responsibility and requisite authority for acquisition data.

For success of CPM and the data acquisition strategy, I recommend that the WDP program team's focus on expanding the core data integration layer of Advana include additional responsibility to connect acquisition data to mission effects. It should not be the responsibility of the WDP Application Services program team.

Advana should be used for digital acquisition in addition to operational/mission use. At a recent HASC subcommittee hearing, Mr. Cameron Stanley, CDAO stated "WDP serves as the "single source of truth" for warfighting and intelligence." I recommend that WDP, with Advana, also serve as the "single source of truth" for digital acquisition.

Yours truly,



Paul J. Solomon

CC:

Hon. Ken Calvert, Chairman, Defense Appropriations Subcommittee

Hon. Dep. Sec. Stephen Feinberg

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