DARPA Marks Its 60th Anniversary

A child of the Cold War, DARPA embarks on its seventh decade of defining and redefining the boundaries of technological capability to further the cause of national security

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On this day in 1958, four months after the Soviet Union boosted the intensity of the Cold War by launching humanity's first satellite, then Secretary of Defense Neil McElroy established the Advanced Research Projects Agency with this mandate: "to provide within the Department of Defense an agency for the direction and performance of certain advanced research and development projects." In carrying out that open-ended mission for the past 60 years, the Agency has become widely known as a driver of technological developments that have girded national security (stealth, precision munitions, and unmanned aerial vehicles) and that sometimes have transformed daily civilian life (the internet, miniaturized GPS, and emerging fleets of driverless vehicles).

"As we at DARPA move into our seventh decade of anticipating the technological curves that matter to national security, we will take strength from the thousands of forward-looking men and women who preceded us at the Agency," said Dr. Steven Walker, DARPA's 21st Director, during a small celebration today for DARPA staff at the Agency's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. "It will be our calling in the coming years to catalyze innovation throughout the technoscape, whether in longstanding technological traditions like electronics, propulsion, and materials science or in emerging trajectories such as artificial intelligence, neurotechnology, biological technologies, and, of course, all of those not-yet-imagined territories."

To mark its anniversary, DARPA is also hosting an evening gathering of current and former DARPA program managers and directors, along with others in the DARPA family. Attendees, as well as those outside the event, will glimpse for the first time a new interactive timeline (http://www.darpa.mil/Timeline/index.html) depicting many of the Agency's major accomplishments. In addition, since October, DARPA's media team has been chronicling moments of the Agency's history on DARPA's Twitter and Facebook pages and will continue do so throughout 2018.

The capstone event of DARPA's 60th year will unfold in early September at a many-faceted symposium dubbed D60: Breakthrough Technology | Past, Present, Future. The institutional goals of the event (http://www.darpa.mil/about-us/d60-about) are to strengthen and expand DARPA's innovation ecosystem (which includes academia, industry and government partners), inform stakeholders about DARPA's vision and priorities, and learn from the Agency's ongoing record of achievements and experience in the challenges of rendering not-yet technology into here-now technology. General registration for the event opens on April 16, 2018. Taking place from September 5-7 at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center at the National Harbor in Oxon Hill, MD, the D60 symposium will feature:

- **Plenary Sessions** – These six sessions will be hosted respectively by each of the agency's six technical offices and each will feature a major office highlight
- **Technical Office Sessions** – Learn more about each office's technological thrust areas, the great work the offices are doing, and what they are looking to do next
- **Technical Breakout Sessions** – These mini-symposia on a wide range of national security, technological, institutional, societal, and other relevant topics will feature a variety of panelists including DARPA program managers, DARPA alumnae, and industry partners
- **Program Demonstrations/Exhibits** – This interactive experience will highlight major program achievements of each of DARPA's technical offices
- **DARPA Riser Presentations** – Poster sessions by the next generation of innovators
- **Historical Displays and Artifacts** – Highlights from DARPA's storied past

"To ensure that our warfighters can win any fight now and in the future, Secretary Mattis and Deputy Secretary Shanahan have prioritized modernization," Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, Ms. Ellen Lord, said today during a 60th Anniversary ceremony at the Agency's headquarters in Arlington, Virginia. "DARPA—with its mission to make pivotal investments in breakthrough technologies for national security—is integral to this modernization charge."

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