DEFENCE
TRANSFORMATION

AI on the Front Line
The leading AI Initiatives in the UK MoD

Defence iQ

Introduction

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has recognised the growing strategic importance of artificial intelligence (AI) in military operations. In response, it published the Defence Artificial Intelligence Strategy in 2022 - laying the groundwork to scale up AI adoption, strengthen partnerships and lead in ethical, responsible and operational AI use across defence.

As emerging technologies continue to shape the future battlespace, the MoD is investing in scalable solutions that will provide real-time advantage across domains.

This report explores three leading UK Defence AI initiatives: the Defence AI Centre (DAIC), Project THEIA and DASA AI Challenges.

For deeper insights into how digital innovation is transforming defence capability, join us at Defence Transformation taking place across 3 – 4 December 2025, in London.

Defence AI Centre (DAIC)

Established in 2022 following the publication of the UK's Defence Artificial Intelligence Strategy, the Defence AI Centre (DAIC) serves as the MoD's central unit for scaling AI capabilities across Defence. Its formation marked a decisive step towards embedding AI at the heart of military advantage - supporting faster decision-making, operational readiness, and technological edge.

"Our vision is that, in terms of AI, we will be the world's most effective, efficient, trusted and influential Defence organisation for our size."
- UK Ministry of Defence, Defence Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2022)

The DAIC is tasked with delivering AI policy and governance, promoting responsible AI use and ensuring alignment with broader Defence and national objectives. It plays a vital role in coordinating data strategy, creating ethical frameworks and championing skills development to build internal AI fluency.

A cornerstone of DAIC's approach is collaborative engagement. The DAIC Industry Engagement Playbook sets out how the centre works with industry partners - particularly SMEs and non-traditional suppliers - to accelerate innovation and adopt AI solutions at scale. This open, inclusive model reflects the UK's ambition to harness the full spectrum of national capability. In 2025, DAIC reinforced this commitment by hosting the 'Connect' industry day, aimed at strengthening supplier engagement and building shared understanding across the defence AI ecosystem.

On the international stage, DAIC contributes to allied collaboration through programmes such as NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) and partnerships within the Five Eyes community. As outlined in the Integrated Review Refresh 2023, this multinational coordination is critical to achieving secure, interoperable and is ethically governed AI across defence alliances.

Project THEIA

Project THEIA is the British Army's flagship AI-enabled initiative, developed to revolutionise decision-making on the battlefield and support the wider Future Soldier transformation programme. Introduced in 2021, THEIA aims to create a digital backbone for the Army - one that integrates data across platforms to enhance situational awareness, streamline command and control, and drive faster, more informed operational decisions.

"The Army will continue its digitalisation through Project THEIA as part of the modernisation of our capabilities in order to transform the British Army so that it is fit to fight in the 21st century."
- Major General JJ Cole OBE, CIO and Director of Information, British Army

At its core, THEIA leverages artificial intelligence and machine learning to fuse data from multiple sources, enabling predictive analysis that gives commanders a clearer view of the battlespace. This capability is essential for enabling multi-domain integration, where land, air, sea, cyber and space assets can operate seamlessly together.

THEIA is also a critical enabler of the Future Soldier vision and remains central to the Army's Digital and Data Plan (2023–2025), which outlines the transformation of the British Army into a more agile, threat-focused and data-driven force. According to the Army, THEIA's infrastructure will support "decisions made at the speed of relevance", allowing data to be treated as a strategic asset.

As of the latest updates, the Army continues to invest in developing and testing the digital systems underpinning THEIA. These include sensor networks, cloud-based data environments and AI-assisted decision-support tools - laying the groundwork for a fully connected, AI-ready Army.

DASA and DSTL: Accelerating AI Innovation

The Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) and the UKs Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) play critical roles in advancing artificial intelligence and many other key technologies across defence.

DASA runs themed funding competitions to stimulate early-stage research and development from startups, SMEs, academia and non-traditional suppliers. These short-term challenges focus on emerging technologies with operational potential, including AI-enabled logistics, decision support, autonomy and cyber defence.

One notable example is the Artificial Intelligence for Defence Innovation Focus Area (IFA028), launched in 2023. It invites proposals that use AI to overcome barriers in military applications, from human-machine teaming to machine-speed decision-making. Another challenge, the Autonomous Resilient Cyber Defence (ARCD) programme, seeks intelligent agents capable of detecting and responding to cyber threats in real time without human intervention.

Working alongside DASA, DSTL conducts in-house and collaborative research to explore the deeper science behind AI in defence. Its projects span data fusion, ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance), autonomous systems and trusted AI. DSTL often takes forward concepts seeded through DASA funding or provides technical input on feasibility and testing.

In 2024, DASA refreshed its strategy to strengthen early engagement with industry and accelerate the transition of novel ideas into deployable capabilities.

DASA and DSTL form a vital part of the UK's defence innovation ecosystem, accelerating promising ideas and helping mature them into viable capabilities. While their efforts are typically short-term or exploratory, they lay important groundwork for future operational integration of AI across Defence.

How these AI Programmes Strengthen UK Defence

Together, these initiatives represent a comprehensive approach by the UK Ministry of Defence to harness artificial intelligence as a crucial strategic resource. Prioritising AI adoption means the MoD is not merely responding to technological change; it is proactively positioning the UK's armed forces to gain decisive operational advantages, achieve greater multi-domain integration, and remain interoperable with global allies.

As AI continues to advance, maintaining momentum, investing in partnerships, and addressing ethical challenges will become increasingly vital. Ultimately, the MoD's ongoing commitment ensures the UK remains a leader - not just in AI technology - but in shaping the future of defence capability. For stakeholders across defence, understanding and engaging with these initiatives today is critical to preparing for tomorrow's battlespace.

Be Part of

DEFENCE TRANSFORMATION

As the UK MoD continues to accelerate AI integration across defence, there's no better time to engage with the leaders shaping this transformation. Join senior military officials, industry innovators, and technology experts at **Defence Transformation 2025, taking place 3 – 4 December in London.**

Explore how emerging technologies - from AI to data-driven command systems - are redefining operational capability and multi-domain integration.

Website   **Speakers**   **Agenda**

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