Subject: Re: AI Commission - Status Update

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From: Yll Bajraktari (b)(6)

To: Eric Schmidt, Robert Work, Safra Catz, Steve Chien, Mignon Clyburn, Darby, Chris, Ken Ford, Griffiths, José Marie, Eric Horvitz, Andy Jassy, (b)(6), Gilman Louie, William Mark, (b)(6), Jason Matheny, Katharina Mcfarland, Andrew Moore

CC: Michael L CIV OSD OSD Gable, NSCA Sta Member, (b)(6), NSCA Staff Member, (b)(6), NSCAI Staff Member, (b)(6)

Dear Commissioners,

As I mentioned in my note to you on Monday, please find below the article published by the Inside Defense based on the interview with Mr. Work.

Best, Ylli

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New commission to address national security elements of White House AI strategy
Inside Defense, April 8, 2019 | Justin Doubleday

A new commission is set to issue recommendations this year on how the U.S. national security apparatus should approach artificial intelligence, including a focus on how the government can work with industry to compete with China's "civil-military fusion" concept, according to the co-chair of the group.

The National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence, established by the Fiscal Year 2019 National Defense Authorization Act, features executives from leading technology companies, former government leaders and several academics. The commission is co-chaired by Eric Schmidt, the former chief executive at Google, and former Deputy Defense Secretary Bob Work.

In an April 2 interview with Inside Defense, Work said the commission aims to "plug itself" into the national security elements of the White House's recently released AI strategy.

"We are fitting inside that effort, focused on the national security side," Work said. "There will be some instances where our work overlaps, for example, in workforce. There will be a little bit of overlap there. But we're going to be working with the White House to make sure that we're not double tapping. If they're working on a particular national initiative, then we will support [it]. We won't try to compete."

Work said the group is also closely aligning itself with the AI caucuses in Congress, too.

"We will be making explicit recommendations to Congress and the White House on, one, things that will complement what the White House is already doing, and two, things that could go into legislation that would hasten it," he said.

The commission's first report is due by the end of August, although Work said the deadline is "flexible," as the government shutdown earlier this year delayed the group's establishment and initial activities.

The group includes executives from Google, Microsoft, Amazon and Oracle. Work said their contributions will be especially important as the commission determines how the U.S. government can better partner with the private sector, where much of the innovation in AI and machine learning is happening.

"They are very, very aware of the commercial activity that's going on in this area, and have ideas on how the Department of Defense can tap into them," he said.

The Pentagon's relationship with commercial technology firms has been a flash point over the past year, as employees at some technology firms have protested working with the military. The debate has also centered around whether DOD's buying practices are too slow and cumbersome for the commercial sector in fast-paced places like Silicon Valley.

The commission will attempt to define the "public-private partnerships" the United States needs to compete with nations like China, Work said. He pointed to Beijing's strategy of "civil-military fusion," under which the government can access any advances in AI and machine learning made by Chinese businesses and universities, and vice versa.

"The United States has no desire to duplicate that type of centralized effort," Work said. "But it has an enormous interest in having public-private partnerships that allow us to work together, and so having people from the commercial sector on the commission will help us think through this very, very important subject."

During the commission's first meeting last month, members agreed to split into four working groups. The first group will focus on AI research and development ongoing across universities, as well as at the Defense Department and in other places across the national security community, according to Work.

"It's really about what is the research the Department of Defense and the national security community needs to make sure that we stay ahead in the competition," he said.

The second, and largest, working group is focused on the national security applications of AI and related technologies, Work said, looking across areas like predictive maintenance, robotic process automation and autonomous weapons.

"We'll be trying to determine what more can be done to hasten AI applications throughout the department," he said.

A third working group is examining workforce issues at the Pentagon and across the national security apparatus, while the fourth group will study how the United States approaches international competition, including legal frameworks and potential cooperation with allies.

The group's first meeting also featured briefings from the intelligence community, DOD and the Commerce Department. The DOD briefing was led by Lt. Gen. Jack Shanahan, director of the Pentagon's new Joint AI Center, while the Commerce Department's presentation focused on how the government is approaching export controls for AI and machine learning, according to Work.

The intelligence community's briefing was "a pretty rudimentary one," he said, as some of the commissioners lack security clearances. Work said the commission will likely get clearances for all the members so the group can do a "deep dive" in its next session and include a classified annex in its final report.

The commission plans to hold plenary sessions involving the whole group every other month, while the working groups will meet and study their specific issues in between the larger meetings, according to Work.

By the third plenary session, sometime in mid-summer, he expects the commission will have a better idea of where the United States sits in the AI competition with China, Russia and the rest of the world. But the issue is a very "nuanced competition" compared to the Cold War, for example, when U.S. planners could count the number of tanks, missiles and other conventional capabilities the Soviet Union was fielding, he added.

"All of these AI technologies are essentially invisible to us," Work said. "We won't know how good a potential competitor's AI is until we're actually confronted by it."