

Post-Summit Summary

New North Ventures 2024 Boston Innovation Summit

[New North Ventures](#), in partnership with [The Cipher Brief](#), recently concluded its second annual [2024 Boston Innovation Summit](#). This event brought together industry leaders, innovators, and national security experts to explore the dynamic role of technology in enhancing global security and resilience. When we launched our inaugural event this time last year, it was inspired by a desire to continue expanding the ecosystem of individuals who understand and are passionate about committing intellect and resources to strengthen our nation, through dialogue, innovation and investment. The response was a strong demand signal that people are eager to engage on a meaningful level that goes beyond talk and complaints about what is broken, and seek knowledge and solutions. We were excited to build on the momentum at this year's event, which doubled in size and marked a significant milestone in the intersection of technology and national security.

VC Catalyst: Powering Dual-Tech Disruption

Speakers: Will Hurd (fmr Congressman) and Stephanie Bellistri (New North Ventures)

- The fireside chat focused on the evolution and intersection of technology, security, and government policy related to empowering the growth of emerging dual-use technology in support of current and emerging national security requirements.
- The speakers explored their mutual personal journeys from intelligence officers to entrepreneurship and ultimately landed in a space where they are both pioneering technological innovation that supports national security. The discussion revealed a clear fluidity between the public and private sectors, bringing mission-focused experience to advancing technology solutions.
- They discussed the critical public-private sector partnership that is required in safeguarding digital infrastructures against escalating threats. They also underscored the need for regulation around AI to ensure its safe and ethical use. The insights shared highlighted an immediate need for innovative solutions, and rapid technology adoption within government frameworks, to enhance that partnership.
- Another theme that emerged from this discussion is that collaboration is required between government and VCs to cultivate emerging dual-use technology companies to tackle complex security challenges. They advocated for a



proactive, solution-oriented approach that bridges the gap between technological capabilities and urgent security requirements.

The Shock and Awe of Deepfakes

Speaker: Ben Colman (CEO of Reality Defender)

- Reality Defender is a leading provider of deepfake detection. The talk shed light on the ease with which deep fakes can be rapidly created and disseminated. As an example, a deep fake audio track was created in minutes at the summit, using a US President's voice displaying the significant risk to individuals, corporations, and democracies.
 - Rapid Exponential Growth: In 2023, there was an exponential surge of deep fake attacks attributed to the accessibility and affordability of AI and computing resources, enabling a wider range of actors to engage in deep fake creation.
 - Impact on Society: Deep fakes have been utilized for a variety of malicious purposes, from financial fraud and impersonation of executives, to creating compromising images and videos of famous personalities. The ubiquity of personal data online makes it increasingly easy to generate convincing fakes undetectable to the human eye and ear.
 - Detection Challenges: Despite the advancement in detection tech, distinguishing between real and fake continues to be a challenge for the experts. Reality Defender's approach involves using a constellation of models to detect synthetic media across various modalities, including voice, images, and text.
 - Regulatory and Legislative Landscapes: There is a lack of comprehensive regulations in the US when compared to other countries such as Singapore, Taiwan and China, where stricter policies are in place requiring platforms to indicate generated content vs real content. Reality Defender has been involved in drafting the Audio Video Image Detection Act, aiming to mandate minimal indicators for AI-generated content, helping consumers discern real from fake.
- With Reality Defender leading the charge in combating the deep fake threat, Mr. Coleman's insights serve as an urgent call for a collaborative effort between the private and public sector to address the challenges posed by deep fakes. As generative AI continues to evolve and become more powerful, there is a critical need for both technological solutions and regulatory frameworks, to protect the integrity of information.


Cipher Brief Live Interview

Moderator: Suzanne Kelly (Cipher Brief)

Speakers: Kevin Higgins (retired CIA executive) and Ralph Goff (retired CIA executive)

- Panelists discussed the current global security landscape, the complexity of modern conflicts, the indispensable role of intelligence in shaping diplomacy, and the pressing need for collaborative efforts between the government and the private sector to navigate national security challenges.
- The necessity of high-stakes operations to ensure national security was emphasized. Discussions centered around the multifaceted nature of global conflicts, including kinetic and economic dimensions. Advancements in technology can play an essential role in identifying, disrupting and helping neutralize emerging threats and should be the cornerstone of USG initiatives.
- Starting on the analytic side and transitioning to operational roles, panelists discussed how their careers in the CIA shaped their global perspective and leadership philosophy. The speakers emphasized the significance of early career opportunities, crisis management experience, and the value of integrating technology with government efforts. Concern was expressed over the current global turmoil and challenges posed by the deepening cooperation among adversaries.
- The discussion provided insights into the following key areas:
 - Intelligence Diplomacy: The role that CIA Director Burns played during the Ukraine crisis was highlighted as an example of intel diplomacy; the importance of leveraging intelligence relationships to influence policy outcomes during times of conflict has been a useful tool over the past several decades.
 - Technological Complexities: Acknowledgement of the rapid advancements in technology and their implications for security, with a emphasis on the unpredictable consequences of emerging tech like AI, and the critical need for accurate cyber attribution
 - Global Hotspots: Concern was expressed over various global conflicts, with a particular focus on China's rising influence, the intricate dynamics of Russia's relationship with China and Iran, and the importance of addressing the challenges posed by these alliances
 - Future Focus Areas: Looking ahead, Africa and Central Asia as regions of interest due to their growth potential, geopolitical significance, and the opportunities and risks they present for Western investment and influence.

Lighting Round - Six Startup Pitches

Company	CEO	Description
	Mike Wishart	Open source semiconductor design platform allowing end users to become chip designers.
	Steve Chang	Veteran transition accelerator connecting veterans and private companies seeking top talent.
	Dexter Ang	Developer of a wearable tech designed to create a gesture-controlled ecosystems using patented electroneurography
	Maks Czuperski	App that detects and maps intrusive cyber threats in the wild, acting as a 'Waze for cyberspace'.
	John Fuisz	Behavioral dynamics platform that measures subconscious motivators and empowers brands, products and ideas.
	Ian Allen	Platform that shares news and culture without the ideological baggage. Focused on restoring media trust.

Investing in National Security

Moderator: Gray Chynoweth (NavalX)

Speakers: Aneel Alvarez (DIU), Stephen Marcus (Riot Ventures)

- **Changing Attitudes Towards Defense Sector Investment:** There's a notable shift in how the defense sector is perceived by investors. Previously, the sector was overlooked due to the dominance of large contractors and a lack of technological innovation. Now, there's a growing interest in funding dual-use startups.

- **Role of Innovation and Emerging Technologies:** The discussion emphasized the importance of innovation and the integration of new technologies in the defense sector. Startups are being seen as crucial players in bringing advanced technological solutions to defense challenges.
- **Challenges in Defense Procurement Processes:** The panelists acknowledged the complexities of the defense procurement system. They discussed the need for more streamlined processes to facilitate easier entry for startups into the defense market.
- **Opportunities and Strategies for Startups:** The conversation also covered the strategies that startups can employ to navigate the defense sector. This includes understanding the specific needs of the defense market and leveraging the available contract vehicles and funding opportunities.

Follow the Money: How Finance & Cyber Are Connected

Moderator: Jeremy Hitchcock (New North Ventures)

Speakers: Andy Boyd (CIA CCI, retired), Ethan Bronstein (TRM Labs) Nicola Staub (Cybera)

- **Transition from Public to Private Sector:** Panelists discussed their transitions from government work in intelligence and law enforcement to the private sector. They highlighted how private enterprises are addressing challenges in cybercrime, which is often more flexible and innovative compared to the public sector.
- **Increasing Online Fraud and Scams:** The group emphasized the surge in online fraud and scams, especially social engineering attacks. The participants noted that despite the growing awareness and media coverage, these crimes are still escalating, and law enforcement often lags behind the perpetrators in terms of technology and response.
- **Role of Cryptocurrency in Crime:** There was an emphasis on the role of cryptocurrencies in cybercrime. It was noted that \$3 billion in crypto was stolen last year, highlighting the need for better tracking and regulation. The discussion also covered the use of crypto by nation-states to evade sanctions and conduct other illicit activities.
- **Importance of International Collaboration and Intelligence Sharing:** The panelists stressed the need for better international collaboration and intelligence sharing to combat cybercrime effectively. They suggested that an integrated approach, combining intelligence with financial tracking, could significantly reduce these crimes.



- Future of Cybersecurity and Financial Crimes: Panelists discussed the potential impact of advancements in AI and blockchain technology, as well as the importance of legislation and policy in addressing these challenges.

Cognitive Warfare: Industry Transformations

Moderator: Dawn Meyerriecks (CIA, ret)

Speakers: Ian Allen (Civil Films), Amanda von Goetz (Fermata Discovery), Aaron Brown (Founder, Former Intel)

- Narrative and Disinformation: The panelists emphasized the impact of narrative and disinformation in modern warfare. The concept of cognitive warfare involves influencing public perception and belief systems, often leveraging AI to disseminate information at scale.
- Role of AI in Cognitive Warfare: AI's role in cognitive warfare is significant, particularly in the context of overwhelming human cognition with information. AI's ability to rapidly process and disseminate information makes it a powerful tool in shaping narratives and influencing public opinion.
- Challenges of Information Overload and Verification: The panelists discussed the difficulties in distinguishing between true and false information due to information overload. The current environment of uncertainty and mistrust highlights the need for reliable sources and tools to verify information.
- Solutions and Approaches: The discussion also touched on potential solutions to counter cognitive warfare and misinformation. These include leveraging AI for defense, creating more effective communication strategies, and promoting public awareness and education about misinformation and disinformation. One way to combat disinformation is to provide a better product, which requires collaboration between thought-leaders, innovators and investors.

Call to Action

We stand at a pivotal juncture in the evolution of national security and technological advancement. The discussions, innovations and partnerships present us with an unparalleled opportunity to shape a future that is secure and resilient. To the entrepreneurs, government executives, individuals in academia and all attendees who have contributed to the 2024 Innovation Summit, we hope you continue to explore, collaborate and build. Your expertise, vision, and commitment to action are the keystones in leveraging technology to fortify our national security and economic resilience.



About New North Ventures

New North Ventures is an early-stage fund investing in companies that create an asymmetric, venture-scale advantage amid a global power competition for technological leadership. NNV invests in founders who understand how to navigate global risk to unlock unique value and accelerate innovation. Subscribe to the NNV Securing our Future [Podcast](#) and [Newsletter](#) to stay up to date.