

Navy, Marine Officials: AI Will Augment – Not Replace – Humans



Rear Adm. David Hahn, chief of naval research, and Jennifer Edgin, the U.S. Marines Corps' assistant deputy commandant for information, were the guests on a webcast April 16 for the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition on the two sea services' possible uses for artificial intelligence.

ARLINGTON, Va. – U.S. Navy and Marine Corps officials close to the effort to develop artificial intelligence in machines say the technology is advancing rapidly and will be used where it can add value.

Discussing AI in an April 16 webcast of the Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition were Rear Adm. David Hahn, chief of naval research, and Jennifer Edgin, the Marines' assistant deputy commandant for information. They said AI has an "incredible capability" and will have a "huge role to play" in warfighting.

To register and then watch this Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition webinar live online, click [here](#).

Hahn said that AI can help sort the enormous amounts of data available to the warfighter and perform many tasks that previously were performed by humans.

"Things advance faster when artificial intelligence is applied," Hahn said.

He stressed, however, that AI will not replace humans, but will augment them.

"I don't think you should look at it as replacing [humans], he said. "I think you should look at it as a value add. That

value add will come in speed of decision, or the efficiency of the operation, or the effectiveness of that decision or that event. I think that this [AI] is a force multiplier for the humans who are engaged in these activities.

“It’s up to us to find the combinations of artificial intelligence and other technologies like autonomy to apply the appropriate ways to naval warfare,” he said. “I don’t think it’s a one-for-one, and we’re not going to trade out a human for a machine. We’re going to make the whole team better with this human-machine teaming concept.”

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Hahn stressed that AI and autonomy are not the same, but where they intersect, AI can add value to autonomy.

“Autonomy is going to move along a pathway, and when machine learning or some other method of artificial intelligence can add to that autonomy to accomplish a mission, then there will be an intersection,” he said. If it adds value to the mission, then it will make sense to do it.”

Humans are still required for many types of decisions and the services are working on the issues that arise with the use of AI.

“That conversation is maturing,” Hahn said.

The admiral said that he sees a “democratization” of the tools of AI, in which it becomes the domain not just of academia but will eventually spread to general use by the military and the public. A disadvantage of that democratization is that the AI in use will be available to adversaries, and AI that can be used for beneficial purposes also can be used for nefarious purposes.

AI “is an incredible capability that we in the Marine Corps seek to harness,” Edgin said. “Our philosophy is how do we want to pair Marines with machines to be more effective on the battlefield. We don’t want Marines to be spending their time putting a whole bunch of data into a spreadsheet. We want Marines to be able to make judgement decisions. We want them to use that Level 4 fusion capability that we have as humans to develop courses of action to lead at the small-unit level.”

“One of the most beneficial tools we have today is actually the individual Marine,” she added. “What we try to do is unleash their potential to identify technologies, identify problems, and then quickly implement a solution.

“If there is one truth in AI, there will always be something new and exciting that can potentially provide benefits to us.”