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Defense Digital Service Delivers Biometric Prototype to Army
Partnering with Service Members to Drive Innovation

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WASHINGTON — July 21, 2020 — The Defense Digital Service (DDS) has produced a prototype that will provide service members at the tactical edge with an app that will allow them to use biometric technology to quickly identify friends and potential foes. The prototype, known as the Basic Optical Biometric Analysis (BOBA), upgrades the current biometric technology in use today to verify the identity of partner forces and supporting civilian personnel from the local area.

The BOBA prototype is an app designed for lightweight, portable devices such as cellphones for enhanced portability and accessibility. BOBA features a streamlined biometric enrollment experience, with new enrollments/entries or uploads being nearly immediately available across all networked BOBA devices, giving troops more biometric information in minutes. BOBA also includes a customizable, in-app onboarding tutorial video, allowing for troops to get started immediately.

In a partnership with the Army Cyber School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, four service members provided the majority of the engineering effort to build the software for BOBA with mentorship provided by senior DDS engineers and product managers. These soldiers were selected to participate in the Advanced Education Program for Cyber Engineers instead of participating in the traditional classroom-based officer development courses. As the soldiers move on to their initial duty assignments, they will take the lessons learned from building an operational customer-focused application into their developer organizations.

"This technology developed by DDS will be critical to keeping our Soldiers and partners safe while on their critical mission serving our country," said Tom Kelly, Deputy Undersecretary of the Army. "The Army values our partnership with DDS and is proud to acquire this technology via our biometrics program."

As a mobile app, BOBA significantly reduces the weight and cost of current biometric devices. Using the storage commonly available on cellular devices, more biometric data and records will be locally available. The modern user interface is built on common patterns found in commercial applications, making the app easy to use. As a cloud-based solution, the data transfer and syncing between devices is nearly seamless.

"Through numerous technical discoveries and user research, our team identified data silos and antiquated, unusable tools that were not field-tested to help our troops identify persons in the field rapidly and efficiently, leaving our soldiers at risk of attack," said DDS Director Brett Goldstein. "We know BOBA can literally save the lives of our troops."

Built entirely by DDS, the government owns the BOBA code.

"DDS has been a great partner and we are excited to transition BOBA's capabilities into the Project Manager DoD Biometrics portfolio. BOBA was developed and tested with user-friendly features to improve the way we support biometric enrollment. Currently, we are in the early stages of leveraging BOBA's technology, portability, and cloud-based architecture, and plan to extend its applicability in support of the National Defense Strategy spectrum," said Army Colonel Senodja Sundiata-Walker, Project Manager for Department of Defense Biometrics.

About Defense Digital Service

The Defense Digital Service was established by the Secretary of Defense in November 2015 as a SWAT team of nerds that provides the best in modern technical knowledge designed to bolster national defense. We are primarily based in the Pentagon, but we also have satellite offices in Augusta, Georgia and co-located at the Defense Innovation Unit in Mountain View, California. Our range of talent includes world-class software developers, designers, product managers, digital experts and bureaucracy hackers from both the private sector and within government. Learn more at https://dds.mil/.

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