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Five U.S. Startups Selected to Advance Air Force Command and Control Through Griffiss Institute's HUSTLE Defense Accelerator



HUSTLE accelerator participants travel to Washington, D.C. to meet with congressional representatives as part of Griffiss Institute's defense tech business accelerator program. Photo by Griffiss Institute.

Rome, NY – February 24, 2026 – Five startups from New York, Colorado, and Texas have been selected by Griffiss Institute (GI) to join Cohort 5 of its Defense Tech Accelerator, HUSTLE. The program – *Helping Upstate Science and Technology Leaders and Entrepreneurs* – connects early-stage defense technology startups directly with Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) subject-matter experts, mission partners, and Department of War pathways to adoption.

This cohort will focus on a U.S. Air Force problem set centered on the future of Command, Control, Communication, and Battle Management (C3BM), exploring two key areas: *AI for Command and Control*, where AI supports human decision-making, and *Command and Control of AI*, which focuses on managing autonomous systems.



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GI received submissions from startups nationwide specializing in these emerging technologies. Following multiple rounds of review, five companies were selected for the upcoming cohort, representing a cross-section of emerging technologies relevant to AI-enabled Command and Control applications:

- [Archangel Response Corp.](#) – a Syracuse, New York–based company that creates AI systems that help warfighters and autonomous platforms make smarter, faster decisions, even in remote or communication-denied environments.
- [AugSense](#) – an Aurora, Colorado–based company that develops AI-powered sensor and edge-computing systems that deliver reliable, real-time decision support in contested and bandwidth-limited environments.
- [Full Spectrum Research](#) – a Taberg, New York–based company that builds AI systems with hardware-level security that keep autonomous and command-and-control operations reliable, even in contested or disconnected environments.
- [QuantumAstra](#) – a Frisco, Texas–based company that develops quantum sensors that deliver highly sensitive, real-world measurements of magnetic, electric, and temperature fields in a compact, robust platform.
- [Vigilare AI](#) – a Syracuse, New York–based AI company that builds AI systems that help operators control drones in remote or contested environments, providing real-time insights, visual understanding, and mission guidance.

The cohort is planned to begin in March 2026 with an eight-week program designed to familiarize the participants with the Department of War ecosystem. Companies will gain insights into government contracting and industry partnerships, and collaborate with AFRL subject-matter experts.

Participants will also compete for up to \$550,000 in SAFE note funding, made possible through sponsorship from New York State Empire State Development (ESD), and support from National Grid and AFRL. Companies awarded funding are required to demonstrate at least one year of corporate residency in New York State, reinforcing GI’s mission to bolster economic growth in the state and the Mohawk Valley region.

“It can be difficult to approach the federal government and the Department of War with new innovations and solutions,” said Seth Mulligan, Chief Ventures Officer. *“HUSTLE is designed to help startups navigate these processes while also supporting growth and scaling.”*



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Since its inception in 2022, HUSTLE has supported 37 startups, including the companies selected for this upcoming cohort, with three relocating directly to the Innovare Advancement Center in Rome, NY. Alumni companies have also gained recent global recognition, with two selected to participate in this year's NATO DIANA Programme: Drone City (HUSTLE Cohort 2 & 3) and NanTenna (HUSTLE Cohort 4). These achievements highlight the program's ability to support companies that create meaningful impact locally, nationally, and internationally.

For more information about the accelerator or its sponsors, visit
<https://www.griffissinstitute.org/hustle/>

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[About Griffiss Institute](#)

Griffiss Institute is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization based in Rome, NY, accelerating national security innovation through its three-pillar mission of Talent, Technology, and Venture Development. As the steward of the Innovare Advancement Center, an open, unclassified research and collaboration campus, Griffiss Institute fosters and drives partnerships across government, industry, and academia to advance dual-use technologies. Griffiss Institute is committed to strengthening national security through nontraditional STEM education, accelerated innovation, and the commercialization of emerging technologies, with a deep belief in American-made solutions by a resilient U.S. science and engineering workforce.

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