

GovDay 2023 Brings Government and Industry Together to Talk Digital Transformation



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On March 30, 2023, NetApp sponsored NetApp GovDay 2023 – a half-day event designed to explore the key mission challenges facing government agencies and the military, and the technology advancements that are driving government digital transformation initiatives.

The event is themed, “Driving Innovation to Power the Mission,” and it will feature a number of keynote sessions and panel discussions about

important technology topics such as multi-cloud operations, cyber resilience, and embracing a zero trust approach to cybersecurity.

Some of the planned speakers include:

- **Ryan McArthur**, JWCC Program Manager, Hosting and Compute Center (HaCC), Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA)
- **Colonel Kenneth “Shake”**

R. Carmichael, CIO of USCYBERCOM, Director of the Command, Control, Communications and Computers (C4) Systems Directorate (J6)

- **Michelle Rudnicki**, NetApp Vice President, Public Sector
- **Rick Scurfield**, NetApp SVP and Chief Commercial Officer

In advance of the event, the GovDataDownload editorial team sat down with Retired Army Lt. Col. Indira Rice Donegan, Sr. Strategist for Data-Centric Hybrid Cloud Solutions at NetApp and one of the speakers at GovDay. During our discussion, we asked LTC Donegan about the main IT and communications challenges impacting today's military, the new technologies driving digital transformation initiatives forward, and what attendees can expect at next Thursday's event.

GovDataDownload (GDD): What are some of the largest IT trends and technologies that government agencies are looking to leverage today? How are these technologies impacting how they're architecting their networks?



Indira Rice Donegan
Retired Army Lt. Col., Sr.
Strategist for Data-Centric
Hybrid Cloud Solutions at
NetApp.

Indira Rice Donegan: I think there is some variance between the different services and COCOMs within the military, but at the senior leader level, what is consuming bandwidth is data center consolidation and co-location, which leads to leveraging government and commercial clouds.

The second these organizations go "hands-free" with their data using cloud technology, the next big driver or focus becomes security. Zero trust cyber security is currently the hottest approach to security across the government because it allows government agencies and military organizations to focus on securing the data – itself – instead of securing where the data resides.

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Indira Rice Donegan

It allows them to dig into the expanded use of identity and access management platforms and application modernization.

Today, the military services are undergoing massive modernization efforts. As part of these programs, they're trying to connect a massive ecosystem of sensors and endpoints via JADC2 service efforts and experimenting to create a more granular view of the battlespace. This increased amount of data and intelligence is intended to provide more data-driven decision-making at the top levels.

Over the past three years, we've seen increased investment in artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) in the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). It will be interesting to see how the different services and combatant commands leverage AI and ML in the future.

All these technologies can accelerate mission

outcomes and are forcing the DoD to think differently and assume risk. They're also forcing the DoD to reconsider the best way to sunset older architectures and applications that can't keep up with the needs of warfighters and of modern, pacing threats such as China.

GDD: What are some of the largest challenges facing government CIOs, CDOs, and CISOs?

Indira Rice Donegan: Most government CIOs are exploring or deploying digital services to their customers and other stakeholders, yet many of the obstacles they face are non-technical. Some of these challenges include siloed strategy and decision making, a risk-averse culture, and insufficient budgets with long acquisition cycles. Together, these challenges are limiting the pace and adoption of digital solutions across the DoD and intelligence community.

This is especially true for agencies and organizations that are leaning forward in the foxhole with the cloud. The total cost of ownership for government cloud initiatives includes the training and development of the workforce – which is primarily comprised of personnel with on-prem expertise and experience. When it comes to enterprise communications, the tactical edge is largely delivered and supported by commanders on the ground calling the shots based on what they need for the fight. Having sufficient cloud practitioners across the DoD is something the Service and COCOM CIOs are actively wrestling with.

The best way for the military to build out and modernize an aging architecture that needs to outpace efforts from near-peer competitors, such as China and Russia, is to create a data fabric or data mesh where the storage management function is hyper-evolved and standardized on a best-in-class, hyperscaler-agnostic solution. Standardization will allow the services to maximize efficiencies and gain major advantages.

GDD: How are companies like NetApp working to help federal agencies overcome these challenges?

Indira Rice Donegan: NetApp has been a mission partner to the DoD for more than 20 years. The company's solutions are on every post, camp, and station – including every forward deployed location.

As an industry leader in storage management – and as a cloud optimization leader that has been adopted by every major hyperscaler – we do two things better than anyone else. We accelerate workloads and applications to any cloud faster than going it alone. We also deliver a highly functional and easy-to-administer hybrid multi-cloud experience to the warfighter at a steep cost savings.

To help overcome the cloud knowledge and expertise gap that we discussed, we leverage an operating system that the DOD is very well-trained on and experienced with – OnTap.

By leveraging NetApp solutions to help with their cloud journey, government and military organizations have saved as much as 50 percent or more in their total cost of ownership. That is incredible savings, and it's achievable with solutions that are available today.

GDD: Next week, NetApp is sponsoring an event called, "NetApp GovDay 2023." What is this event all about? What is the overarching theme of the event?

Indira Rice Donegan: I don't believe that there is an "official" theme for the upcoming NetApp Gov Day, but – for me – it is all about embracing the cloud across the government and military organizations that sacrifice so much to secure our freedom.

We want to celebrate our customers – and the warfighter – and assist them in their efforts to embrace better data management plans, and IT modernization. We want to help them leverage storage that works for their mission requirements and saves them money. And we want to enable multi-cloud accessibility that is affordable and accelerates mission outcomes.

Our customers are at the heart of everything we do at NetApp. We want to give the attendees at NetApp Gov Day 2023 an opportunity to hear from their peers and the best in the business about the vital work different agencies are doing in service to our country.

NetApp is the backbone for many of the systems and missions across the DoD. We are a mission partner that delivers solutions that just work when the mission needs them. Getting close to our end users is what it is all about and I am excited to meet some new faces.

GDD: Is GovDay 2023 going to feature any government voices? Who will be appearing and what will they be speaking about?

Indira Rice Donegan: Yes, we have a number of exciting government speakers that are confirmed pending agency approval. Ryan McArthur, the Project Manager for the JWCC contract will be there. Colonel Ken Carmichael, the CIO for USCYBERCOM is also scheduled to attend. They are both doing very exciting work and I've excited to hear them both speak live. I believe we also have a few other government leaders trying to join, so it should be an informative event with great representation from across the government and private industry.

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I'll be presenting with a number of “NetVets” – former military NetApp employees that hung up their uniforms after more than 80 years of collective service. Our group all transitioned to industry successfully and still manage to stay close to our warfighter brothers and sisters. I'm a former 25A Signal Officer, Don Zimmerman is a former B-52 pilot, and JC Caesar is a retired two-star Navy Admiral. We'll be teaming up to discuss how NetApp makes things easier for the DoD.

GDD: Who should attend GovDay 2023? What can they anticipate learning? What knowledge will they come away from this event with?

Indira Rice Donegan: Who should attend? Anyone that is grappling with data and needs to get workloads into the cloud. Or anyone that wants to seamlessly connect from the tactical edge, to core, to the cloud – any cloud, anywhere, at any time– and needs to do more with less. This half-day event is for them.

Who do we want to attend? We want decision-makers, influencers, data managers, IT architects, on-prem data center practitioners, and cloud practitioners to show up. The information that we share is going to be incredibly relevant, cutting-edge, and mission-critical. Plus, attendees will get to meet the NetApp USPS leadership!

If you do anything related to IT and the cloud on behalf of the federal government or military, you're not going to want to miss this. Especially if you work just across the street at a particular five-sided building. To all of those folks, I say, “Don't be shy! Come out, learn, and network over lunch. You'll be glad you did!”

