



September 2026



Summary

The Rapid AI Delivery Taskforce (TF RAID) is running an open competition to field innovative proposals from UK industry on how to utilise unprecedented access to Avengers Labs datasets to enhance autonomous swarming and collaborative drone operations. Proposals should have the potential to benefit both UK and Ukrainian armed forces.

Before submitting an application, please read this competition document and complete the submission form. Applications must include a PDF proposal addressing the challenge requirements.

Key Dates:

- Competition launch date: Friday 25 September 2026.
- Briefing call to UK Industry: Wednesday 07 October 2026.
- Deadline for submissions: 23:59 BST on Thursday 22 October 2026.
- MOD review of submissions and companies: 23-30 October 2026.
- Selected companies for Phase 1 access to Avengers Labs notified: by 06 November 2026.

Introduction

The Rapid AI Delivery Taskforce (TF RAID) was established by the Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary, and reports directly to the Chief of the Defence Staff. TF RAID has one mission: to get AI-enabled capabilities into the hands of our Armed Forces. Not in five years' time, but now.

Empowered by a ringfenced budget and operating with a dedicated set of permissions and freedoms, the Task Force brings together technicians, tacticians, scientists, and industry to turn real operational problems into usable AI-enabled capabilities, safely, securely, and with clear human accountability.

TF RAID focuses on deploying AI across four areas:

- **UNDERSTAND:** Enhancing understanding through machine-augmented intelligence fusion.
- **INFORM:** Informing operational effect by delivering advantage in denied and degraded environments through real-time understanding of the electromagnetic environment.
- **PLAN:** Improve planning through automation, accelerated decision-making, and rapid wargaming.
- **EXECUTE:** Deliver operational impact using swarms of AI-enabled uncrewed systems.

Under the recently announced [UK-Ukraine AI Partnership](#), on the 24 August 2026, TF RAID secured an agreement with Ukraine for the UK to be the first foreign partner to be granted access to their Avengers Labs platform. This inaugural competition for UK industry, Avengers: AI Swarming, will contribute to the EXECUTE pillar of TF RAID's work.

Avengers: AI Swarming - Competition Overview

TF RAID is running an open competition to field innovative proposals from UK industry on how to utilise unprecedented access to Avengers Labs datasets to enhance autonomous swarming and collaborative drone operations. Proposals should have the potential to benefit both UK and Ukrainian armed forces.

CHALLENGE STATEMENT

TF RAID invites innovative proposals from UK industry to exploit operationally-derived datasets from Ukraine's Avengers Labs to develop AI-enabled swarming capabilities.

Applicants should outline how they would exploit access to large-scale, labelled battlefield datasets (including daylight and infrared images of armoured vehicles, artillery, air defence systems, and aerial targets) within an ML Ops environment to develop technologies that enhance autonomous swarming and collaborative uncrewed aerial vehicle (UAV) operations.

Proposals must enhance one or more of the following areas of military UAV operations: autonomous target recognition, distributed decision-making, adaptive mission execution, and collaborative sensing and information fusion. Proposals should demonstrate a credible pathway from ML model development to operational experimentation, with applicability to both Ukrainian and UK Defence requirements.

For the purposes of the competition, the problem areas are defined as:

Autonomous target recognition

AI-enabled detection, classification, prioritisation, and tracking of operationally relevant objects across complex and contested environments.

Distributed decision-making

Enabling multiple autonomous systems to dynamically adapt routes, priorities, and behaviours in response to changing battlefield conditions, without relying on a single point of control.

Adaptive mission execution

AI approaches enabling multiple autonomous systems to coordinate actions under constrained communications and decentralised control.

Collaborative sensing and information fusion

Methods for sharing, fusing, and exploiting information across multiple platforms and sensors to improve situational awareness and mission effectiveness.

The competition will be run in two phases. **Phase 1** will be open to submissions from UK-registered companies between 25 September–22 October 2026. The MOD will subsequently select up to 12 companies to be awarded free access to the Avengers Labs platform via a non-financial contract, for a three-month period over approximately late November 2026 to late February 2027. **Phase 2** will commence from early 2027, when up to five companies from the first phase will be awarded funded MOD contracts to further develop the innovative capabilities they will have developed and demonstrated during the period accessing the data platform.

Avengers Labs

Avengers Labs is a Ukrainian-owned production-grade MLOps environment: a platform which enables the data discovery, dataset configuration, training, testing, and evaluation of AI models using battlefield data and a standardised ML toolset and methodologies. Its structure enables users to evaluate not only overall model performance, but also performance under specific operational conditions and battlefield contexts.

Scale of the Data:

- 5M+ frames of real-world data
- Millions of annotated objects
- A diverse collection of conditions and scenarios
- Multi-level metadata and annotations
- Continuously growing through regular updates

Nature of the data

The curated datasets consist of real-world UAV footage of various ground and aerial targets collected in Ukraine.

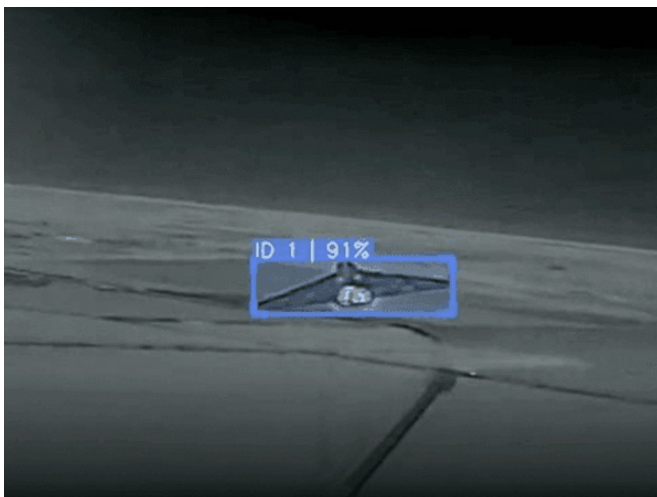
The data is organized into a **multi-layered metadata and annotation structure**, enabling analysis at the level of complete datasets, individual observations, and specific objects. At the dataset level, information captures the general origin and collection context, source characteristics, media quality, versioning, and the availability of additional annotations.

At the individual sample level, the data provides **context about observation conditions**, including environmental factors, recording conditions, and basic media characteristics. This makes it possible to create targeted subsets and understand how different collection conditions may influence the data.

At a more detailed level, **object-level annotations** describe the objects present, their location, visibility, condition, relationship with the surrounding environment, and, where available, their behavior across sequences of observations. Additional specialized annotation frameworks extend this information for different sensing modalities, observation conditions, object categories, and event types.



Visualisation Examples



Key details

The following list outlines key information for applicants to be aware of:

- a. The competition is only open to UK-registered companies.
- b. Companies submitting proposals must use the proposal template provided by the MOD and answer all of the questions. Submissions must contain a maximum of four (4) pages in a PDF format document.
- c. Companies that are successfully selected under Phase 1 of the competition shall bear all of the costs incurred under the contract with the MOD. Phase 1 should therefore be viewed as a competitive qualification stage, whereby UK-registered companies can demonstrate the operational value of their innovative proposals. Please note that an initial award of a contract is not a guarantee of a follow-on contract with the MOD.
- d. Companies that successfully make it through to Phase 2 shall be eligible to receive MOD-funded contracts to further develop the innovative capabilities they will have developed and demonstrated after accessing the Avengers Labs platform.
- e. Due diligence shall be conducted on applicants as part of the MOD's selection process, and there shall be continued oversight of the approved companies accessing the Avengers Labs platform by the MOD and Ukraine.
- f. UK-registered companies who successfully gain access to the platform shall be subject to a range of security and compliance obligations, including strict access and security controls.
- g. Access to the platform does not require companies to transfer ownership of their existing technologies or proprietary software, however, Ukraine shall own the trained AI model weights developed by UK companies, with a licence and sublicense (via the MOD) being granted to the MOD and relevant UK company respectively.

How to apply

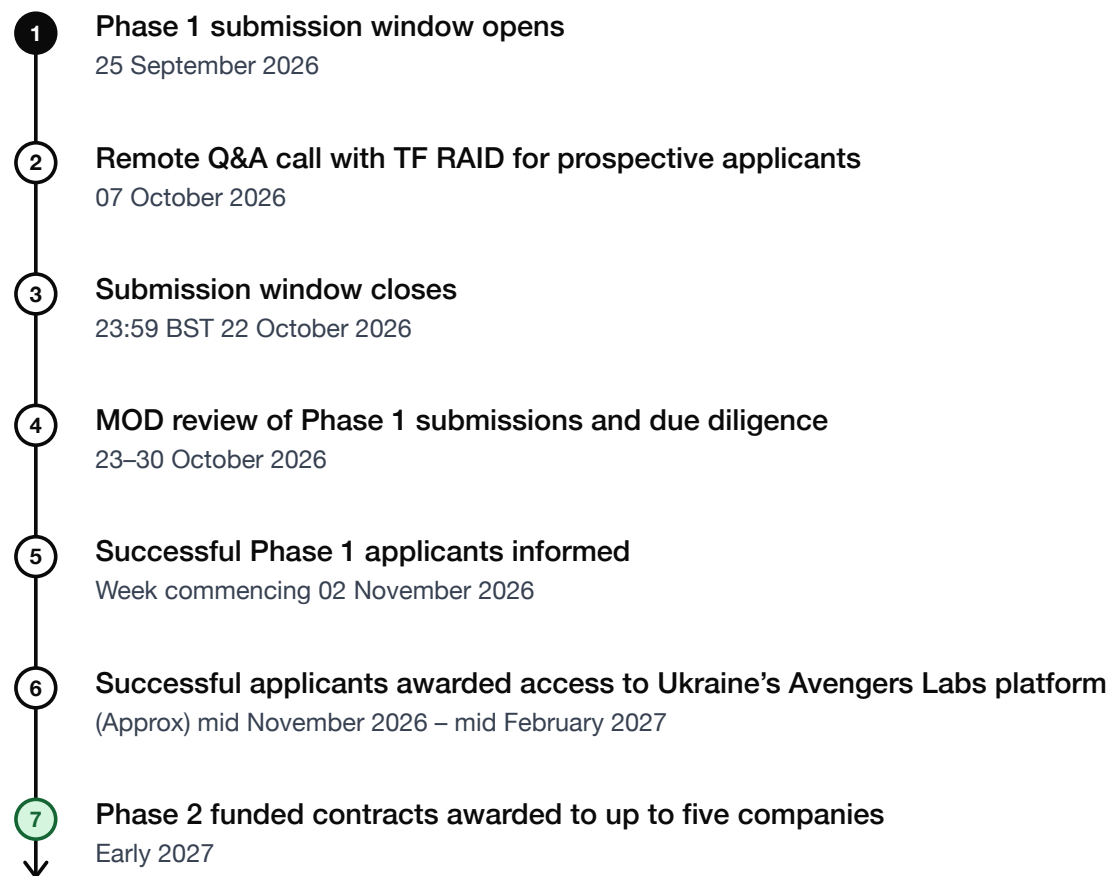
Applications should be submitted by 23:59 BST on 22 October 2026. Applications are to be made via [the submission portal here](#).

Applicants should answer all questions outlined within the proposal template, and below:

- a. What is your innovative proposal and which challenge area(s) does it address?
- b. What AI capability do you propose to develop, adapt, test or evaluate?
- c. What differentiates your proposed capability from existing solutions?
- d. How will you use Avengers Labs data and platform capabilities?
- e. What existing capabilities, experience and assets would your organisation bring to this initiative?
- f. What outcomes would you expect to demonstrate during the first phase?
- g. What resources will your organisation commit to this initiative?
- h. How will your organisation ensure the secure and responsible use of data?

Competition Timeline

The competition runs on the timeline below:



Brief for prospective applicants

A remote briefing for prospective applicants will take place on Wednesday 07 October 2026. Companies planning to attend the briefing call must register to the event link found on the submission portal by 12:00 BST on Monday 05 October 2026.

Emails in your registration must be from an official company domain email address of a UK registered company. And your application should include the name and role of the individual planning to attend the briefing, along with the company name and Companies House registration number.

Points of contact

Prospective applicants with queries should send them via: MSHQ-TF-RAID-Outreach@mod.gov.uk. Based on the anticipated large volume of applications, we're unlikely to be able to respond to all queries, and especially to those queries which are answered in this and other publicly available MOD documents.

Media enquiries should be addressed to the Defence Directorate of Communication (DDC), here: newsdesk@mod.gov.uk.