

Robert N. Saunders, PhD

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Active DoD TS/SCI w/ CI polygraph

OBJECTIVE – Accelerate technology development, acquisition, and fielding to give warfighters a decisive edge in dynamic operational environments.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Industrial Engineering, Texas A&M University

Certificate in Applied Statistics, Statistics, Texas A&M University

Master of Science, Aerospace Engineering, Texas A&M University

Bachelor of Science, Aerospace Engineering, Virginia Tech

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Deputy Chief Engineer (GG-14, 0801)

(Sept 2024 – present)

Acting Chief Engineer (GG-15, 0801)

(Jan 2025 – May 2025)

Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Systems Acquisition Directorate

National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, VA

- Lead systems engineering for the multi-billion dollar next-generation overhead SIGINT architecture, consisting of >10 interdependent MSAs, to ensure end-to-end closure.
- Employ and coordinate digital systems engineering (DE) practices across SIGINT to accelerate system acquisitions and ensure seamless cross-collection system operations.
- Serve as the PM/COTR for an industry consortium, driving the maturation of architecture-wide standards.
- Lead SIGINT international partnership efforts to strengthen NRO capabilities and promote collaboration among FVEY partners.

Deputy Branch Chief (GG-13, 0801, supervisory)

(Sept 2023 – Sept 2024)

Mission Manager (GG-13, 0801)

(Feb 2023 – Sept 2023)

Office of Space Launch – Launch Management Division

National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, VA

- Oversaw the supervision of both civilian and military staff, managing hiring processes, onboarding programs, and providing ongoing mentorship.
- Identified, developed, and rapidly acquired advanced launch and on-orbit capabilities utilizing both FAR and non-FAR methods.
- Facilitated and coordinated strategic outreach initiatives with industry and government partners to effectively identify and address customer requirements.
- Managed stakeholder inputs and tracked progress throughout the PPBE process to ensure alignment and accountability.

Mechanical Engineer (NP-03, 0830)

(Sept 2016 – Feb 2023)

Materials Science & Technology Division

U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, Washington D.C.

- Provided critical insight and guidance using subject matter expertise in metal additive manufacturing (AM) and machine learning (ML).
- Co-principal investigator for multiple DoD programs in AM and traumatic brain injury (TBI), involving Tri-Service participation, with total funding exceeding \$30 million.
- Authored technical briefs for senior leaders, subject matter experts, program managers, and non-technical audiences on complex scientific topics.

Biomechanics Engineer

(June 2015 – Sept 2016)

Leidos Inc. c/o U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, Washington D.C.

- Developed comprehensive strategies to analyze blast injuries sustained during weapons training and combat, resulting in enhanced protection for Warfighters.
- Established a method to evaluate combat helmets against over 300k potential ballistic threats and performed statistical analysis to identify areas lacking protection.

AWARDS/TRAINING/CERTIFICATIONS

Awards

- 'Outstanding' (5) rating in every year of service since EOD
- NRO Innovation & Achievement awards (6 total)
- NRO Office of Space Launch Senior Technical Civilian – 3QFY23
- NRO Office of Space Launch Innovation in Launch Team Award - 2QFY24

Training

- Naval Research Laboratory Edison Memorial Graduate Training Program Recipient
- NRO Leadership Launch for Supervisors

Certifications

- NRO Contracting Officer Technical Representative (COTR)
- DAWIA Practitioner Certification in Engineering & Technical Management
- DAWIA Foundational Certification in Test & Evaluation

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Reviewer for multiple journals, incl. Journal of DoD Research and Engineering
- Technical conference session/symposium speaker, organizer, and chair
- Recurring mentor for interns, students, and new hires
- Invited speaker/panelist at academic, leadership, and professional forums
- Represent senior leaders at multi-agency forums and working groups
- Collaborate across the DoD/IC, USG, and international partners in support of the mission

PUBLICATIONS – 1 Book Chapter, 9 Journal Articles, 17 Conference Articles, 4 Tech Reports