What the Fort Bragg JIOP Actually Is

The Joint Innovation Outpost (JIOP) on Ft Bragg is an integral part of the Army's innovation program. It is the parent headquarters and transformation hub that oversees and works alongside multiple Operational Acquisition Detachments (OADs). As such, it is an important part of North Carolina's innovation ecosystem. Understanding what the JIOP is and its mission may be a part of your Technology Transition strategy.

- **JIOP** (Lt. Gen. James M. Gavin Joint Innovation Outpost): Serves as the overall organization and nexus for rapid innovation. (COL Monahan is the JIOP Commanding Officer)
- **OAD**s (Operational Acquisition Detachments): Smaller, specialized units embedded underneath or working with JIOP. For example:
    - OAD 1 is embedded with the XVIII Airborne Corps and co-located at the JIOP on Ft Bragg. (LTC Rollins is the OAD1 Commanding Officer)
    - OAD 2 is embedded with I Corps (JBLM Lewis-McChord, WA).
    - OAD 3 is embedded with III Corps (Ft Hood, TX).

The key difference between the Operational Acquisition Detachments (OADs) and the Joint Innovation Outpost (JIOP) comes down to tactical execution versus strategic governance.

While they work hand-in-hand as a unified "team of teams," they play entirely different roles in the Army's modernization process.

JIOP: The Strategic Architecture & Funding Conduit

The James M. Gavin Joint Innovation Outpost acts as the umbrella headquarters, administrative engine, and formal bridge to the broader Army acquisition enterprise.

- **Big-Budget Authority**: The JIOP commands high-level milestone decision authority (up to $50 million) to execute large-scale prototyping projects.
- **The "Four Doors" System**: The JIOP manages the overarching intake funnel (the "Four Doors") that filters ideas from top-down commander objectives, bottom-up soldier ideas, external joint agencies, and tech industry pitches.

    - **First Door (Soldier-Derived Solutions):** Bottom-up, soldier-driven innovations. Troops in the field can submit ideas, highlight operational problems, or suggest new uses for existing equipment through a dedicated online portal or competitions like *Dragon's Lair*.
    - **Second Door (Commander's Technical Innovation Objectives):** Directives from the XVIII Airborne Corps Commander (General Anderson) targeting specific, high-priority problem sets and campaign plan priorities for "fight tonight" readiness.
    - **Third Door (Other Directed Activities / Army & Project Manager Requests):** External requests from across the Army, including Product Managers (PMs) or interagency and joint partners looking for units to test equipment, provide feedback, or solve specific capability gaps.
    - **Fourth Door (Direct Industry Engagement):** A single point of entry for private industry and commercial tech companies to bring forward ready-to-test solutions and commercial technology directly to meet real battlefield challenges.

- **Institutional Scaling**: The JIOP coordinates directly with senior leadership—like the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (ASA(ALT))—to transition successful battlefield prototypes into permanent, Army-wide Programs of Record.

OADs: The Tactical "Soldiers in the Dirt" Execution

The OADs are the highly specialized tactical execution arms embedded directly within specific operational Army Corps.

- **Embedded with the Warfighter**: Unlike traditional acquisition offices, OADs live and breathe the specific problem sets of their assigned Corps (e.g., OAD 1 at Fort Bragg is specifically aligned with the XVIII Airborne Corps Campaign Plan).
- **Rapid, Real-Time Iteration**: OADs take the tech and physically go "into the dirt" on non-standard ranges. They bring academic and industry engineers side-by-side with frontline soldiers to test and break prototypes on the spot.
- **Targeted Problem Solving**: They look for immediate, localized capability gaps. For example, when OAD 1 noticed soldiers were breaking expensive drones during airborne jumps, they rapidly designed a 3D-printed modular soft case to fix the issue within a year.

Feature	Joint Innovation Outpost (JIOP)	Operational Acquisition Detachments (OADs)
Primary Role	Strategic oversight, governance, and institutional synchronization.	Tactical testing, field evaluation, and localized problem-solving.
Location	Centralized headquarters.	Embedded directly within operational Corps (I, III, and XVIII Airborne).

Focus	Managing the overall pipeline and macro transition pathways.	Direct "Soldier-in-the-loop" engineering and rapid field-testing.

The TRL Sweet Spot for OADs: TRL 6 to TRL 7

An Operational Acquisition Detachment (OAD) normally works with technologies sitting firmly at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6 (Prototype demonstration in a relevant environment) and TRL 7 (System prototype demonstration in an operational environment).

They do not deal with basic research or laboratory bench science (TRLs 1–4). Instead, they take fully functional, existing technological models—often Commercial Off-The-Shelf (COTS) equipment or late-stage defense vendor hardware—and push them straight into "the dirt" during field training exercises like *Scarlet Dragon* to see if they can survive real-world operational stressors.

Innovation Center vs. Rapid Fielding Center

An OAD is structurally and functionally a Rapid Fielding and Operational Prototyping Center, rather than a true discovery "innovation center."

While the overarching JIOP Headquarters acts as the *innovation nexus* (handling broad industry scouting, ecosystem outreach, and venture-capital-style program design), the OADs are built exclusively to smash the military's notorious "Valley of Death"—the multi-year lag between a working prototype and getting it into a soldier's hands.

OADs are "rapid fielding" centers in three distinct ways:

1. **Speed of Material Delivery**: Their explicit metric of success is bypassing slow, multi-year bureaucracy to put tactical equipment in the field immediately. OAD 1 at Fort Bragg routinely drives contract awards down to an average of just 20 days.

2. **Adapting Over Inventing**: When an OAD identifies a need (like protecting Short Range Reconnaissance drones during airborne drops), they don't invent new material sciences. They rapidly engineer a 3D-printed modular soft case or modify a commercial drone vendor's chassis to solve the issue in months.

3. **Soldier-in-the-Loop Integration**: True innovation labs are full of engineers in lab coats. OADs, by contrast, pull engineers *out* of those labs and force them to iterate on functional tech based on immediate, brutal feedback from tactical Corps commanders and frontline soldiers.

How the JIOP Publishes Funding Opportunities

The JIOP and OADs can release opportunities on SAM.gov, but they also utilize an OTA arrangement with One Nation Innovation (ONI).

Because the military cannot easily interface directly with commercial startups and venture capitalists due to traditional bureaucratic constraints, ONI acts as the foundational engine that makes the JIOP ecosystem work.

You can view open ONI opportunities at https://marketplace.gocolosseum.org/

In Short

If you want to research a brand-new quantum radar technology for the Army, you go to an Army Lab or Army FUZE, both of which are now part of the Army's Pathway to Innovation and Technology (PIT).

If you want to take an existing drone or a new frangible counter-UAS round, ruggedize it, issue it a contract, and hand it to a paratrooper within months, you go to an OAD.

CAUTION

The JIOP and the OADs are not clearing houses for every new product that may have benefits to soldiers. They are looking for very specific, rapidly accessible, products and services that meet specific needs (see the innovation focus areas listed on the PIT website). Those are needs that have been identified by the units served by the OADs.

So, for instance, if you want to work with OAD 1, but your innovation has not been identified as a critical need by the XVIII Airborne Corps, then it is probably not a good fit for you.