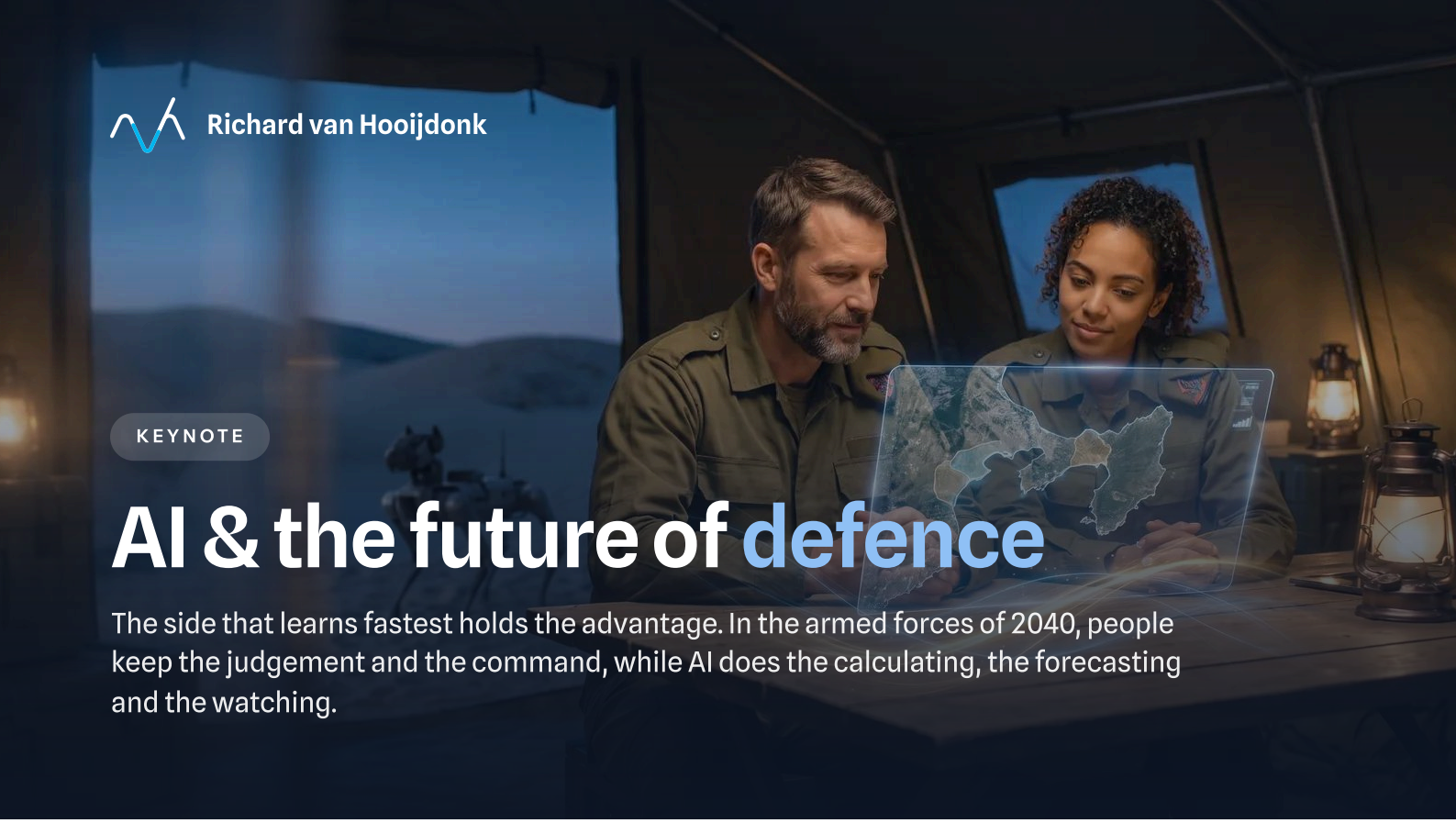


Richard van Hooijdonk

KEYNOTE

AI & the future of defence

The side that learns fastest holds the advantage. In the armed forces of 2040, people keep the judgement and the command, while AI does the calculating, the forecasting and the watching.

AI and new technology are changing more than combat. They change the pace at which defence has to adapt, and the advantage goes to the armed forces that learn faster than their opponent.

Futurist and trend watcher Richard van Hooijdonk expects defence to work at two speeds: systems respond in seconds, while an organisation with a fixed chain of command has to learn faster. That tension is what this keynote is about. In armed forces, AI is already part of the daily routine. It fuses images from drones, radar and satellites into one picture of the situation, searches open sources for signals, predicts when a vehicle needs maintenance and makes the opponent in a simulator smarter. Further ahead lie fighter jets leading a squadron of uncrewed aircraft, swarms of thousands of systems, quantum sensors that reveal what stays hidden today, and conflicts in which AI on both sides responds within seconds. The change in the organisation is at least as large: who takes which decision, how quickly a lesson from the field reaches training, and how armed forces with a fixed chain of command still learn fast. In the keynote you see what works now, what is being trialled and what is still to come. How quickly does a good idea in your organisation travel from the shop floor to the unit?



RICHARD VAN HOOIJDONK

Richard van Hooijdonk is a trend watcher, futurist and international keynote speaker. Many trend watchers and futurists look at the future from a distance. Richard van Hooijdonk lives in it. His team consists of people and AI agents, and he has several chips implanted in his body. He speaks about AI and new technology, the organisation of the future and leadership in the AI era. He takes you into a future you can barely picture today, and shows how you can steer it yourself.

3,000+	650,000+	30+	Bestselling
keynotes	participants	countries	author

What the keynote covers

NOW AI in defence

What AI already does for intelligence, staff work, maintenance and training.



01 One picture of the battlespace

AI turns thousands of sources into one picture of the area of operations. The next step: seeing what the opponent is likely to do.



02 Intelligence from open sources

AI agents monitor open sources in many languages, day and night, and flag anomalies. The analyst checks and interprets the findings.



03 Drones and counter-drones

Drones scout for units and support them. AI helps detect and stop drones over barracks, ports and airfields.



04 AI as a staff officer

IN PILOTS

AI helps develop strategies and plans, compare options and track execution. Staff have more time for decisions and for people.



05 Cyber defence with AI

More and more, AI finds and patches vulnerabilities on its own. The next step: attack and defence at machine pace, with people setting priorities.



06 Guarding cables and pipelines

AI tracks ship movements and raises the alarm when vessels behave oddly above cables and pipelines on the seabed.



07 Equipment and logistics with AI

AI predicts wear and the need for ammunition and fuel. 3D printers make parts close to the operation.



08 Training in virtual worlds

Practising against an AI opponent that adapts. Soon in a digital twin of the real area of operations.



09 Hybrid threats and disinformation

IN PILOTS

Sabotage, cyber attacks and influence campaigns blur together. AI helps analysts see links between scattered signals.

COMING NEXT The future of defence

Where the armed forces could be in five to fifteen years, with AI as the engine.



10 The air battle of 2040

FUTURE SCENARIO

The next generation of fighter jets is designed to lead uncrewed aircraft. The pilot becomes the conductor of a squadron.



11 War at machine speed

FUTURE SCENARIO

When AI on both sides observes, plans and responds, the time for a decision shrinks from hours to seconds.



12 Swarms of thousands

FUTURE SCENARIO

Swarms could grow to thousands of cooperating systems in the air, on and under water, with AI coordinating what they do.



13 Quantum and what stays hidden

FUTURE SCENARIO

Quantum sensors could detect what stays hidden today; quantum computers could break widely used encryption. Both touch military secrecy.



14 The contest in space

FUTURE SCENARIO

Satellites that manoeuvre, refuel and protect each other. With AI on board, space becomes a domain that responds by itself.



15 The factory that keeps pace

FUTURE SCENARIO

Design, test and build in days: AI designs, modular factories produce close to the operation, and updates keep coming.

PEOPLE & ORGANISATION

The defence organisation of the future

What AI asks of roles, units, leadership and culture in defence.



16 The AI-first organisation

Sensors and AI take over much of the watching and scouting, and make forecasts. Military personnel weigh the consequences, decide and act.



17 New roles in defence

Swarm leaders, model trainers in the field, spectrum strategists: the jobs of 2040 barely exist yet.



18 People and machines in one unit

Several drones and robots per soldier could work in the unit. The leader directs a team of people and machines.



19 Leadership in defence

Leaders in defence take the initiative on AI and new technology, and inspire their people to build tomorrow's armed forces together.



20 The future academy

Exercises and deployments are the course material. Staff learn to work with AI and new technology without waiting for formal education.



21 Growing with an ecosystem

Start-ups, scientists, partners and friendly governments develop together and share what works. New applications are put into use sooner.

THE OTHER SIDE

The other side: responsibility and risk

Data, control and crime: where AI can make defence vulnerable.



22 Data as the foundation

AI only works when data from every part of the organisation is available, reliable and connected. That is the foundation of armed forces that work with AI.



23 Human control over weapons

How much a weapon may decide for itself is under debate. The law of armed conflict applies, even when a system recognises and tracks targets.



24 Sabotage through criminal networks

With AI, hostile states and criminals get at military data and critical systems more easily: through hacks, ransomware and cloned voices.

DURATION
30, 45, 60 minutes or longer, with time for questions

LANGUAGE
Dutch or English

FORMAT
On location or online

FEE
On request

PLUS

"Richard succeeded excellently in waking up our leaders and setting them on the path to the future: after the lecture, discussions took place across various parts of the organisation about the topics covered, and initiatives have been set in motion."

Aart van Haren Managing director, PLUS

Deloitte.

"A dazzling journey through new technology. The enthusiasm and energy during his presentation, combined with the visuals, provided a successful kick-off to our event."

Patrick Steemers Partner, Deloitte

Interested in a keynote for your defence event?

EMAIL
talks@vanhooijdonk.com

PHONE
+31 85 303 0792

WEB
richardvanhooijdonk.com