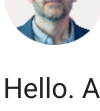




Tech Decoded

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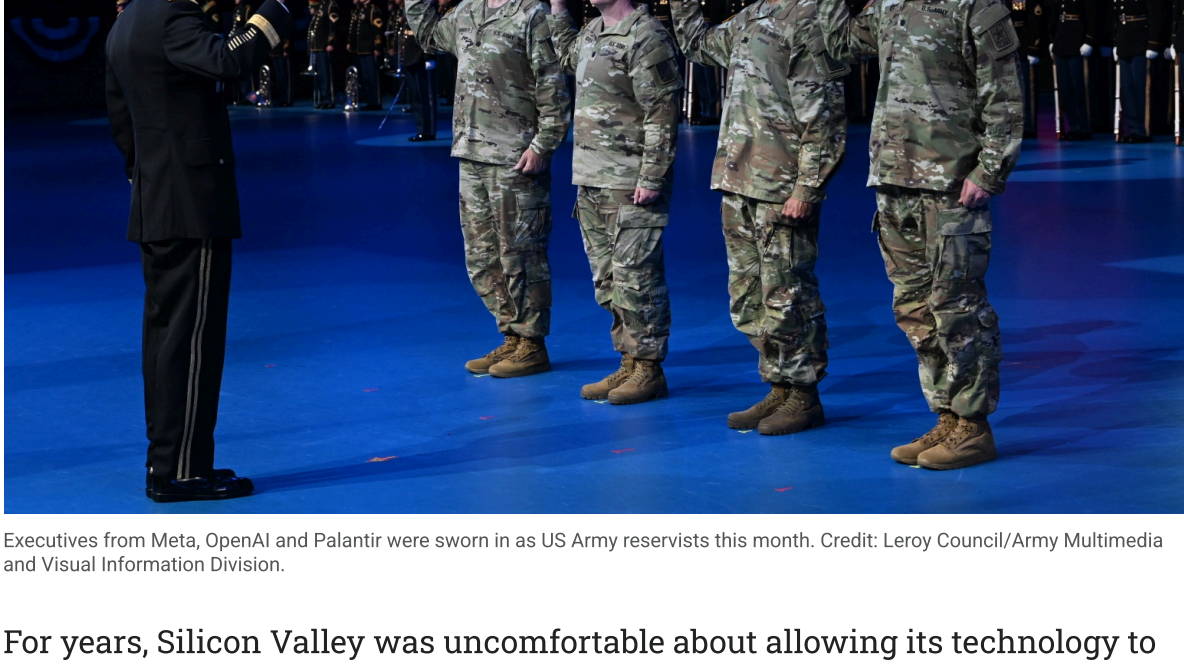
Daniel Thomas
Editor, Tech Decoded

Hello. After years of restricting their work for the US military, Silicon Valley firms are now queuing up to sign major defence deals. I examine what's behind the shift and whether the public will put up with it. We also report on Trump Mobile's decision to drop the "Made in the USA" reference from promotional materials for its new smartphone, and find out how cult 1960s band the Grateful Dead helped build the internet.

PS: If you haven't already, [please let us know what you think](#) of our new-look format!

THE DOWNLOAD

How big tech learned to love defence



Executives from Meta, OpenAI and Palantir were sworn in as US Army reservists this month. Credit: Leroy Council/Army Multimedia and Visual Information Division.

For years, Silicon Valley was uncomfortable about allowing its technology to be used for lethal military purposes.

But more recently, giants like Meta and Google have quietly **been relaxing or abandoning** their safety pledges and embracing closer ties with the Pentagon - a process that has accelerated under US President Donald Trump.

Last week, OpenAI signed a \$200m defence contract to prototype "frontier" technologies for military use. In May, Meta said it was partnering with a start-up to build AI-powered combat goggles for soldiers.

And earlier this month, top executives from those companies and data analytics firm Palantir even donned fatigues and were sworn in to a new US army unit set up to better integrate military and tech industry expertise.

Driving this shift is the increasingly **central role played by technology in modern warfare**.

Trump sees AI as key to US national security and wants to stop China gaining the lead. And Silicon Valley seems genuinely more hawkish than in the past.

At the same time, the tech industry has the chance to take a much bigger slice of the US defence budget, which is set to hit a record level under this administration.

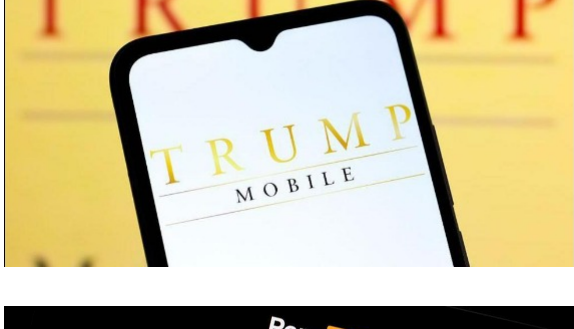
Whether the public will accept all of this is unclear. In the past, defence work by big tech firms **has sparked staff protests** and bad publicity.

Perhaps the bigger concern is what happens if billions of dollars of new funding flood into AI weapons systems.

"AI-powered warfare is a genie we won't be able to put back in the bottle, and pursuing it should be a last resort, not a first step," says Tyler Johnson of the Midas Project, a nonprofit that advocates for the safe use of AI.

The download: *Big tech clearly sees this as a huge commercial opportunity - but if the public object, will it think again?*

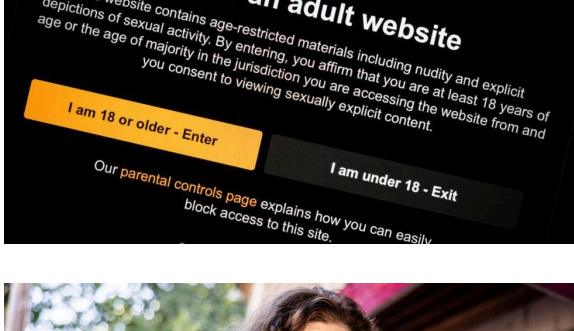
TOP STORIES



Trump Mobile drops 'Made in the USA' reference

The tagline was no longer displayed on its website as of Wednesday - but Trump Mobile says its new smartphone will still be made in America.

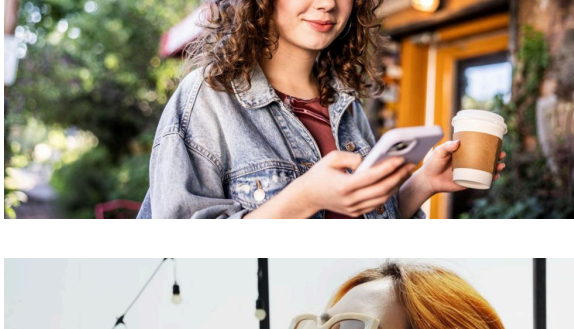
[Read more >](#)



Pornhub to strengthen age checks in UK

The porn website will bring in "government approved" age checks in Britain, amid scrutiny of its measures to stop children accessing adult content.

[Find out more >](#)



Bumble to axe staff as dating app struggles

Bumble, which also owns Badoo, is cutting almost a third of its workforce, as it struggles to grow and investors sour on its prospects.

[What's gone wrong? >](#)



Warning as demand for cheap gadgets heats up

Demand for so called "fast tech" - cheap electronic items that are quickly binned or abandoned - is growing, an e-waste charity has warned.

[Read more >](#)



Judge backs AI firm over use of copyrighted books

A US judge has ruled that Anthropic's use of books to train its chatbot does not breach copyright law. It comes after three authors sued the company.

[Here's why >](#)

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SOMETHING DIFFERENT

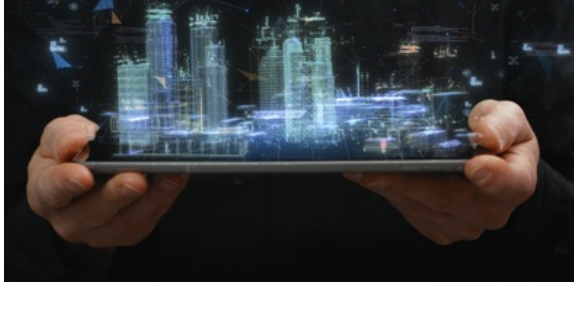
How the Grateful Dead built the internet



The Grateful Dead were pioneers in music, hippie culture and, as it turns out, technology. Credit: Getty Images

The Grateful Dead helped define San Francisco's characteristic counterculture in the 1960s, fusing folk and Americana influences with Eastern spirituality. But the band shaped far more than rock, psychedelia and the era's drug culture. Thanks to a group of music-loving tech enthusiasts, it popularised what some call the first real online community. And generations later, the ideas formed in this pioneering digital space still reverberate through our daily lives. [Read more](#).

PODCAST PICK



A tale of twin cities

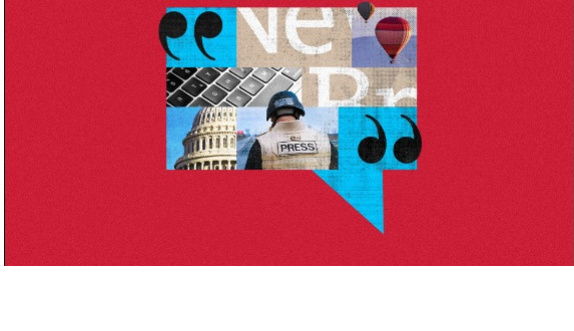
What are the advantages of creating a digital simulation of a city? Tech Life spoke to a company making so-called digital twins to find out.

[Listen here](#)

And finally...

Follow that cab! The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has contacted Tesla after footage shared on social media appeared to show its newly-launched driverless cars breaking traffic laws. The firm's long-awaited robotaxi - which boss Elon Musk says are central to Tesla's future - were tried out on public roads for the first time in Austin, Texas. The BBC has contacted Tesla for comment. [Find out what happened](#).

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News and expert analysis for every schedule. Get morning and evening editions of our flagship newsletter.

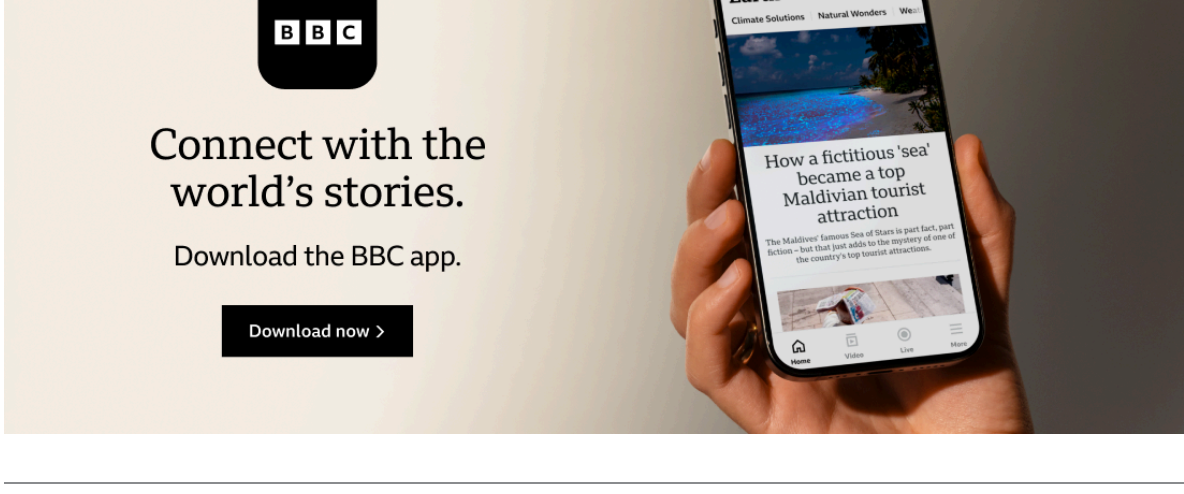
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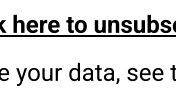
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