



A VIPERIUS CASE STUDY · AUGUST 2026

The Anduril Playbook From \$50K to a \$20B Deal

How Anduril turned a single \$50,000 SBIR award into a nine-figure program of record — and the seven-year contracting trail every defense startup should study.

INTRODUCTION

The company that changed what the Pentagon expects from a startup.

In 2017, Oculus founder Palmer Luckey launched Anduril — and with it, sent a real jolt through the fabric of American defense industry standards.

2017

FOUNDED BY PALMER LUCKEY, FRESH OFF OCULUS, WITH A BET ON AI-NATIVE DEFENSE SOFTWARE

1,994x

GROWTH FROM ANDURIL'S FIRST SBIR PHASE I AWARD TO ITS PROGRAM OF RECORD IDIQ

\$200M+

COMBINED DISCLOSED VALUE OF THE CONTRACTS PROFILED IN THIS CASE STUDY

Built around AI systems, autonomy, and adaptive machine learning, Anduril helped open the eyes of the Department of Defense — renamed the Department of War (DoW) in 2025 — to the vast opportunity in bringing modern software and artificial intelligence into military systems. Just as important, it exposed the edge that American adversaries stood to gain if the United States didn't adapt quickly.

As Anduril's technology worked its way into military and law-enforcement operations, the Department developed a real appetite for commercially built electronics and software — and that appetite has only grown since.

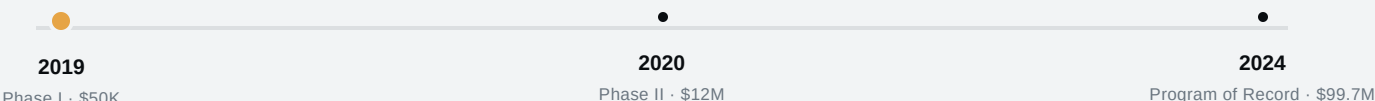
WHY THIS CASE STUDY

At Viperius, we believe a close read of Anduril's rise — contract by contract — is one of the clearest ways to understand how the modern defense contracting environment actually works. What follows is a breakdown of the specific awards that took Anduril from a \$50,000 prototype check to a company the Pentagon builds programs around.

SECTION 01

Lattice and the SBIR: how a \$50,000 bet became a \$12M contract.

Anduril's earliest and most instructive wins came through the Small Business Innovation Research program — specifically, Phase I and Phase II competitions built around its Lattice software.



Teaching Sensors to Talk to Each Other

\$50,000

2019 · USAF SBIR PHASE I · CONTRACT FA8751-19-P-A027 · LATTICE

The military's sensor and tracking systems, built by dozens of different manufacturers, couldn't communicate with each other — leaving human analysts to manually piece together threats like inbound aircraft, missiles, and drones. The Air Force was chasing its Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) vision: one system pulling data from every branch in real time. **Anduril's Lattice software proved it could connect sensor data across otherwise incompatible hardware** — a Phase I win that turned into a \$12M contract to build Lattice out further.

Closing the Gap in Missile and Satellite Tracking

\$50,000

2019 · USAF SBIR PHASE I · CONTRACT FA8649-19-P-A474 · LATTICE

The Air Force had identified a real vulnerability: difficulty tracking low-flying inbound cruise missiles, compounded by a fast-growing number of satellites and orbiting objects to manage. It put out a call for dual-use technology that could integrate into military hardware quickly. **Anduril won by upgrading Lattice rather than building something new** — proof that for a startup, improving existing software is almost always faster and cheaper than starting from zero, and the government rewards that speed.

Modernizing Arctic Early Warning

\$50,000

2020 · USAF SBIR PHASE I · CONTRACT FA8649-20-P-0246 · LATTICE

The North Warning System — the joint U.S.–Canada arctic radar network — was increasingly vulnerable to low-flying, stealthy cruise missiles it wasn't built to detect. **This win brought Lattice into air defense for the first time**, and set up the \$701,752 Phase II award on the next page.

SECTION 01, CONTINUED

Proving it works: the Phase II awards.

A strong Phase I showing bought Anduril the chance to prove Lattice could hold up in real operational settings — twice over, in the same year.

From Prototype to Program: the First Phase II**\$12,000,000**

2020 • USAF SBIR PHASE II • CONTRACT FA8650-20-C-9300 • LATTICE

Following a strong Phase I showing, the Air Force wanted to see Lattice mature into something deployable in the real world.

This award marked a genuine turning point — proof that defense contracting could move at startup speed rather than crawl through the acquisition system's infamous "valley of death," and that a startup with limited capital could still win contracts worth real money, fast.

Keeping the Space Network Online**\$701,752**

2020 • AIR FORCE SPACE COMMAND SBIR PHASE II • CONTRACT FA8808-20-C-0006 • LATTICE

Air Force Space Command had a real fear: if even one satellite or sensor dropped offline, it could blind their entire orbital picture. They needed a way to automatically reroute connections and keep tracking uninterrupted. **Anduril won with a further-upgraded Lattice**, letting the Air Force strengthen its grip on space-based assets — all while Anduril retained full ownership of the underlying software. This contract also opened the door to a Phase III award worth \$99.7M.

SECTION 02

From SBIR graduate to prime: the procurement era.

Once Lattice had proven itself through SBIR, Anduril's contracting story shifted — from winning small awards to winning the infrastructure that lets a company skip the slowest parts of government procurement entirely.

From SBIR to Program of Record

\$99,700,000

NOV 2024 · U.S. SPACE SYSTEMS COMMAND IDIQ · 5-YEAR PROGRAM OF RECORD · SPACE SURVEILLANCE NETWORK (LATTICE)

By late 2024, Lattice had grown into a resilient mesh-networking backbone for the Space Surveillance Network — the global system of sensors that tracks satellites and orbital debris. Space Systems Command awarded Anduril a \$99.7M IDIQ contract alongside a five-year Program of Record designation, the formal milestone that moves a technology off SBIR funding and into the government's long-term budget. **Anduril's climb from a \$50,000 Phase I award to a nine-figure Program of Record** is a case study in its own right — proof a startup can scale without matching the capital-heavy hardware programs of the legacy primes, by owning the software layer those systems increasingly depend on.

Commercial Tech, Repurposed for Combat

\$8,000,000

2023 · USAF AFWERX · GHOST AND GHOST-X UAS SYSTEMS

Anduril secured AFWERX funding to adapt already-existing commercial drone technology for military use. **New technology doesn't always need to be built from scratch to make it into the field** — the government often favors converting proven commercial tech to "dual-use" status, since it already has a working proof of concept and needs far less time to become combat-ready.

A Seat at the Table, No Bidding War Required

Undisclosed

2023 · USAF ABMS IDIQ · LATTICE

Selected as a competing vendor on the Air Force's Advanced Battle Management System IDIQ, Anduril secured an undisclosed award after showing Lattice could fuse hardware and software data across multiple domains at once. **IDIQs (Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity contracts) are an efficient way for startups to win government funding** without waiting through a lengthy standalone competition — and a fast way to build credibility inside a department.

Skippping the Line

\$87M of \$20B

MAR 2026 · JIATF 401 TASK ORDER · FIRST ORDER UNDER A 10-YEAR, UP-TO-\$20B ARMY ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT · LATTICE

In March 2026, the Army awarded Anduril a 10-year enterprise agreement worth up to \$20 billion — the largest contract in the company's history, consolidating over 120 separate procurement pathways into one framework. Its first task order, worth \$87M, made Lattice the government's common tactical command-and-control platform for counter-drone operations under JIATF 401. **The task order structure is the real unlock:** once the enterprise agreement exists, new work can be assigned without a fresh year-plus procurement cycle each time. Learning how to find these direct-sell pathways is often the difference between a startup that survives its first few years of federal contracting and one that doesn't.

SECTION 03

What every defense startup should take from this.

Strip away the dollar figures and Anduril's trajectory is a repeatable pattern — not a one-off story of a founder in the right place at the right time.

1 Upgrade, don't reinvent.

Nearly every award above came from improving existing software, not building something new from scratch. Startups win by iterating fast, not by starting from zero.

2 Dual-use tech has a head start.

Commercial technology repurposed for defense already has a proof of concept — and the government rewards that with speed.

3 Phase I is a door, not a destination.

A \$50,000 award is a foot in the door. The real prize is what it unlocks next: Phase II, Phase III, and eventually a program of record.

4 IDIQs build relationships fast.

Vehicles like the ABMS IDIQ let startups win funding and credibility without waiting through a full standalone competition.

5 The real win is skipping procurement.

Direct-sell agreements like JIATF 401 are the ultimate goal — they let a company bypass the year-plus procurement cycle that kills most startups before they ever get to scale.

THE COMMON THREAD

Every one of these wins started with someone finding the right opportunity before a competitor did. That's the work Viperius does for the defense startups we work with.

IN CLOSING

Anduril didn't get lucky.
They found **the right contracts**
before anyone else did.



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