

# RENMUN VII

*Peace in Permanence*



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**Chair Report**

## Chair Introduction

Welcome delegates,

It is truly a delight to be welcoming all of you to DISEC at RENMUN VII! We are Howard Lee and Aidan Lai, from Diocesan Boys' School and Renaissance College respectively. It is an honour for us to be chairing DISEC this year. DISEC at times can be a council often neglected by the general public for its lack of immediate and binding action. However, don't be fooled by its purely advisory nature. As the first committee of the United Nations General Assembly, the council is of the utmost importance regarding security and demilitarisation throughout a plethora of nations and regions. Ensuring citizens throughout the globe stay safe.

It is a chair's responsibility to foster debate and encourage healthy rivalry between delegates - to ensure a productive yet opinionated council for delegates to enjoy. For these goals, we call on you delegates for assistance. Together, we hope to explore key concepts that foster a thoughtful and dynamic environment. MUN can be an experience that shapes long-term memories and lasting friendships - we mean to make this conference no different.

So go on and deliver that speech you've been unsure about for days on end. Write that clause you've been too nervous to mention to your allies in fear of rejection. Stay firm and clear with your stance in the midst of overwhelming pressure to change. We find that the best stories seldom come from delegates that allow others to push them around - but from those that stand against the tide of public opinion.

With that said, we truly hope that all delegates can find a fulfilling and entertaining experience in this council. There are times when a delegate is expected to do their best in furthering the debate and to continue the interests of the committee. There are also times however when they are encouraged not to take the matter at hand too seriously - to abandon etiquette in favour of having fun with their fellow delegates. We chairs wholly support delegates choosing these times at their own discretion.

Best wishes,

Head Chair Howard Lee ([Howardsklee@gmail.com](mailto:Howardsklee@gmail.com))

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# Addressing the dangers posed by lethal autonomous weapons

## Introduction

Once a common - almost stereotypical staple in science fiction. Metallic, faceless, autonomous drones that hunt and kill without the need for human action. A notion formerly limited to the ridicule of American film audiences, is quickly becoming a reality in militaries worldwide.

Lethal autonomous weapons (LAWS), are weapons designed to act without the need for manual human control. While there is no singular definition that ascertains the full nature of this technology, a directive from the US department of defence defines LAWS as: “weapon system[s] that, once activated, can select and engage targets without further intervention by a human operator”.

The debate around this topic is far from a clear and cut discussion. Unlike splitting the atom or using chemical weapons, LAWS can be classified into multiple categories. It is not enough to simply think of LAWS as weapons that can kill on their own. If that were the case, then all weapons capable of acting independently like landmines or traps would all fit into the definition of LAWS. (As a note this report focuses on a futuristic definition of LAWS in development by major countries. However delegates may wish to further that definition)

Despite decades of back and forth between nations it is unsurprising that a solid definition of LAWS has not been found. Delegates are highly encouraged to define what they consider to be autonomous weapons in their resolutions.

## Dangers

The dangers/benefits of LAWS revolve around its use of autonomy and self-directive. The eventual breakdown of the manpower requirement in warfare in favour of autonomous weapons that can be mass produced would undoubtedly change the landscape of war forever.

This technology is still in its beginning stages however. We have seldom seen true autonomous technology being utilised on the battlefield. This is because the resource and monetary requirements for developing these weapons are only available to major world powers. It would raise various ethical and practical implications that will be mentioned later.

## Key Terms

Term	Definition
LAWS	Lethal Autonomous Weapons: Weapons capable of acting with lethal force without direct human control (Up for delegate interpretation)
Responsibility gap	A situation where the impossibility of finding those responsible leads wrongful acts to go unpunished.
Black Box	A black box refers to a system for which we know the inputs and outputs but can't see the inner workings that turns the former into the latter.
Forever Wars	When wars are no longer restricted by soldiers who will fight on the front line, replaced instead by automatons without traditional logistic, moral and physical limitations - it is not impractical to believe that wars could last years or even decades more than they already have.  Leading to "Forever wars" where no nation will be sufficiently crippled to end the fight.

## Background Information:

From the original traps fashioned by hunters used since the beginning of humanity to landmines placed by the axis forces during WW2 - we're no strangers to weapons that require only minimal human intervention to effectively function. It's important to note however that these are but a preview of what we are likely to see in the future. There are many case studies I'd recommend reading up on to get a good idea on what LAWS in the future could look like. Some of these are:

Israeli Harpy - A UAV designed to track down and destroy enemy radar emitters autonomously after activation. American drone strikes - Especially its use in the middle east and past incidents of civilian casualties. South Korean Autonomous Turrets - weapons installed in the DMZ that have the capability to autonomously select and attack targets kilometres away.

As a general gist, all the cases mentioned above contain some level of autonomy in the operation of their weapons, requiring human supervision within their operations. For example, the gun turrets placed to monitor the DMZ frequently require manual human target selection - for more complicated cases and will not fire unless the target is confirmed as a hostile. The Israeli Harpy will also request human confirmation before engaging a suspected target. With this revelation, one could reasonably argue that true autonomous weapons - that select and execute orders automatically are yet to really exist.

However, it takes no stretch of imagination to believe that these weapons could, in the very near future, be improved to be fully autonomous. This is what delegates will be mainly discussing. Not weapons that already exist but what we are to do before fully autonomous weapons really emerge.

## **Practical implications**

### **Negative**

Autonomous weapons not tied to a human cost may lower the threshold for war, removing the main economic and political obstacle towards military action. In the past the US has fought various costly and often unsuccessful wars in Vietnam, Iran and Afghanistan. The consequences of which have destroyed public perception of interventionist policies, leading to a popular anti-war sentiment. LAWS that act require no such costs could allow various militaries a politically viable way to continue waging wars.

It is because of these benefits major powers are incentivised to continue development on this technology. Leading to two possible outcomes: the first being where world powers engage in a new arms race - eventually leading to a "Forever war" between two powerful militaries. Without the risk of mutually assured destruction; LAWS could be produced en-masse and used to inflict devastation without boots on the ground. The second being the use of these weapons by world powers to destabilise and attack smaller countries at a terrifying efficiency.

All of this implies strictly militaries would have access to this equipment. The book "AI 2042" describes a world where autonomous weapons is accesible to terrorists and non-state actors. Attacks could be carried out against government officials and business elites using autonomous drones powered by facial recognition technology. A chilling science fiction that is very possible should this technology fall into the wrong hands. Others have taken this a step further, describing LAWS as an ideal tool for dictators to carry out ethnic cleansing.

In short, countries that don't wish to expend manpower and political resources on waging war could heavily benefit from this autonomous technology.

### **Positive**

However, there are arguments for both sides of the debate. Just as those that have opposed this technology have claimed nothing but death and destruction to come from further development; those that support it have claimed autonomous weapons may "Optimise" deaths, reducing civilian and military casualties.

The argument goes that as combat becomes more advanced, there is a far higher potential for increased efficiency and precision. They argue that whereas traditional warfare requires an extensive process of spotting, discovery and execution, that often leads to significant collateral damage; LAWS could optimise this and in the process reduce civilian deaths and collateral damage.

Furthermore, there is nothing to prove that LAWS would indeed lead to greater casualties over traditional human operated warfare. History has shown that humans have always been willing to kill each other in various ways regardless of if autonomous weapons were present or not. Looking back into history, the two hundred thousand Japanese citizens killed in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings were not made autonomously but by human action. There is not much to prove weapons in the hands of human beings would be better than weapons in the hands of autonomous control.

Being a technology still in its infancy, a world dominated by terminator-esque deathbots is still far away. However practical applications of LAWS have already been used to great effect. It takes only a slight foresight to see that combat in the near future may be dominated by drones similar to remote strike drones that we see in the US or models of automatic of the Israeli Harpy.

Delegates in this committee today will be discussing their stance around this topic. Some more guiding questions can be found later on.

## **Potential Clashes**

### **Machine accountability**

Once again using the US as an example: semi-autonomous drone strikes conducted by often classified and deeply shrouded operators have already jeopardised our current definitions of accountability. Causing potential crimes against humanity to go unpunished. Who is held accountable when a drone kills innocent civilians? Philosopher Robert Sparrow argues that the autonomy of LAWS makes tracing those

responsible back to its original agent infeasible. He calls this the “Responsibility gap”, where an impossibility of accountability leads wrongful acts of war to go undeterred.

Additionally some countries consider the act of ending a human life reserved for humans and humans alone. Seeing the very concept of weapons acting on their own - decided life or death to be wholly abhorrent.

Delegates will consider whether or not the very definition of accountability needs to be changed with the rise of these weapons. Debating too if the significant ethical and moral concerns call for potential restrictions or preventative measures.

### **Effectiveness of LAWs to optimise military operations**

As stated before, those in favour of LAWs have cited it as a potential method to “optimise” civilian casualties and increase combat effectiveness. Delegates have to decide whether or not this claim is true through careful consideration of case studies: On previous weapons development, uses of weapons resembling LAWs and stances of member nations to argue on either side.

### **Regulation of LAWs**

Any sort of regulation is hugely optimistic, as the incentives and implications of this technology will likely cause no actual change in development among key actors. Unlike the production of WMDs (Weapons of mass destruction) or ICBM technology (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) LAWS do not require rare minerals or an expensive and complicated lab to see results.

Seeing the increasing availability of facial recognition and the improvement of drone technology, we may reach a future where even the most moderately funded group could realistically produce their own autonomous weapons. While this may culminate in half-functional or even crude designs; one has to remember however that an autonomous weapon’s biggest benefit is the lack of a human operator. Perhaps a first generation of LAWS would not be a spinoff of already existing drone technology but rather bombs strapped to cameras equipped with the ability to recognise targets automatically. Being used by terrorist groups to replace suicide bombers.

In short, due to the increasing capabilities of software and ease of development, it is impossible to fully ban LAWS. A good resolution then would tread the fine line between creating effective enforcement and outrageous demands (i.e outright restrictions) that would bring development underground.

## Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Involvement with the Issue
Israel	Israel has been involved in the research, production and sale of LAWS. It holds a firm stance against regulation to ban or restrict these weapons and has on many occasions expressed that they “might ensure better compliance with the laws of armed conflict in comparison with human soldiers.”
China	The Chinese delegation has in the past stated that it “Supports a ban on the use - but not the development of LAWS”. A stance that some have called “Strategic ambiguity”. Based on this unclear stance they have taken, a Chinese delegation may choose to take either side of the debate.
Russia	Russia has opposed a preemptive ban on LAWS. Citing that LAWS if given ample development could “ensure the increased accuracy of weapon guidance on military targets, while contributing to lower rate of unintentional strikes against civilians and civilian targets.”
MEDCs (More economically developed countries)	Potential development of LAWS by MEDCs is likely to be a clear lynchpin to securing military dominance in the near future. MEDCs that wish to secure their position on the world stage are likely to wish to continue the development of LAWS.
LEDCs (Less economically developed countries)	LEDCs will likely not have the resources to develop effective LAWS systems in the near future. What this means is that MEDCs that do successfully develop such weapons will hold a significant military advantage over LEDCs.
Militaries	Militaries worldwide will have to consider LAWS as one of the biggest potential innovations in warfare we’ll see in the next few decades.

	<p>Some, such as those in more developed countries will see LAWs as a way to reduce casualties and increase combat effectiveness - while those in nations not powerful enough to develop effective LAWs may see weapons such as these a potential way to influence them without having to put boots on the ground. All of which should affect a country's stance on the matter.</p>
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## Possible Solutions

### Restriction through resolution

Various nations have supported restrictions on the production of LAWS. Some even suggest that the UN ban this technology through resolution. However, it is important to keep in mind that decisions made in DISEC are non-binding. Meaning while it can give recommendations towards the UNSC (United Nations Security Council), publish standard guidelines and promote arrangements that increase international safety; it cannot pass legally binding resolutions. What this means in essence is that the enforcement or even the decision to follow a potential set of guidelines eventually falls under the country's own decision.

With this established, the following is a list of potential points a resolution restricting the use of LAWS could include but are not limited to: Implementation of agencies monitoring the development of LAWs, recommended guidelines for the research and development of LAWs, recommendations towards the UNSC for future actions towards LAWs and defining what LAWs does and does not include.

### Globally accepted guidelines and recommendations

DISEC's inability to create legally binding resolutions should not discourage an aspiring delegate. A set of recommendations and guidelines created in this council today could lead to a globally accepted standard for countries; that do not wish to see autonomous weapons become a significant part of military arsenals. Setting the standard definition and inclusivity of the word laws just in of itself may finally end the ambiguity we face today and leave no room for speculation on member nation's stances on this topic.

It is for these reasons that utilising the above solutions as a focus on a potential resolution is extremely important.

## Guiding Questions

- Do the potential benefits justify the use of LAWs?
- Does regulation need to exist in order to stop LAWs from falling into the wrong hands?
- Does your nation believe the decision of ending can be handed down to a machine to decide?
- Should the international community support further development of LAWs?

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