

UN Holds Convention on Killer Robots

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Category : Technology/Innovations

Unlocking Word Meanings

Read the following words/expressions found in today’s article.

- 1. **inhumane** / ˌɪn hyuˈmeɪn / (adj) – not gentle to humans or animals
Example: The company got criticized because of the **inhumane** treatment of its employees.
- 2. **lethal** / ˈli θəl / (adj) – deadly
Example: The unauthorized use of **lethal** weapons like guns is banned in our country.
- 3. **call for** / kəl fɔr / (idiom) – to require or demand something
Example: The advocacy group **calls for** stricter firearms regulation.
- 4. **cutting-edge** / ˈkʌt ɪŋ ɛdʒ / (adj) – advanced
Example: I was impressed by the **cutting-edge** technology in the exhibit.
- 5. **autonomous** / ɔˈtɒn ə məs / (adj) – able to operate without human control
Example: I find **autonomous** vehicles dangerous.

Article

Read the text below.

The United Nations (UN) held a convention in Geneva, Switzerland, to discuss killer robots.

In April, over 80 countries gathered to talk about the possibility of regulating the use of killer robots or weapons that can detect and shoot targets without human aid. The gathering was a follow-up to the ongoing discussions that are part of the UN’s Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Also called the **Inhumane** Weapons Convention, the CCW has already set regulations on the use of **lethal** explosives like mines and blinding laser weapons.

These weapons have caused fear among advocacy groups like the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots. Mary Wareham, the global coordinator of this organization, worries that these robots will eventually end up taking human lives. Thus, the organization is **calling for** strict international regulations on the use of these robots.

A number of states like Cuba, Pakistan, Egypt, Ecuador, and the Vatican have already imposed a ban on killer robots. On the other hand, some states that are already developing **cutting-edge autonomous** weapons have yet to come up with regulations. These include the United States, Russia, China, and Israel.

The convention is said to be done at a crucial time because several killer robots are already being developed.

In January 2017, a video released by the US Department of Defense showed an autonomous drone composed of over 100 individual robots lifting off in California. While the drone was not weaponized, the fact that its technology can be easily applied to weapons has caused alarm. In addition, Russian weapon developer Kalashnikov [kuh-luhsh-ni-kawf] announced last July that a weapon patterned after the human brain is in the works.

Viewpoint Discussion

Enjoy a discussion with your tutor.

Discussion A

- Do you find the development of killer robots alarming? Explain.

- How do you think killer robots can be put to good use?

Discussion B

- Do you think it is possible to make all devices autonomous in the future? Why or why not?

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of making autonomous devices?