**“Robots are your new office security guard”**

This article, written by Jennifer A. Kingson, discusses some of the pros and cons around using robots as security guards. It uses the product designed by Cobalt Robotics that has been tested and used by several different clients in order to discuss what has been successful and unsuccessful about these types of robots. The main pros that the article discusses is that robotic security guards don’t get distracted, and are able to save companies large sums of money per year, at the cost of technical issues, “ignoring people in distress,” as well as whether or not they can actually prevent crime. Robots being used in security applications, while having the potential to save costs, have large potential to cause damage due to automating the moral that a human security guard performs.

Using robots to replace or create a substitute for security guards requires them to be autonomous moral agents, due to the nature of the work they need to do. Security guards are in a position where they need to make moral judgements, in terms of self-defense, defending the place in which they work, as well as things like recognition of threats/intruders. There are a few positives to an autonomous security guard. For example, risking itself is much better than a human in the same position making these decisions, or given a well performing algorithm, a security robot could better detect threats within the building [1]. The latter however poses several issues with the current technology, as well as how the technology is developed. How does the robot detect threats? Given that facial recognition software right now is not entirely accurate, as shown in Khan and Fu’s study of facial recognition consistency [2], using that technology could lead to several issues, such as misidentifying threats and non-threats. Giving employees card access to the building and having the robot scan for those might be a potential solution, although that can run into the issue of workers, cleaners, and other people moving around the building without their card being identified as threats as well. This can lead to people who are allowed to be in the building get removed, or otherwise just cause problems even if it does not lead to removal of persons, as it can disrupt many days and working people due to these errors.

Another set of problems that robot security guards brings up is what happens when a threat is identified? Generally, security guards are armed, and are able to use that power and threat to remove people they deem dangerous. While this has its own problems: Who is being identified as a threat? Why are they deemed a threat? As well as other issues regarding profiling and recognition of people, it places this power in someone who people can blame for their actions [3]. However, many people are rightfully uncomfortable for a robot to have that kind of lethal force, meaning that either these robots will have to deal with intruders in other ways, or the people around the robot will feel unsafe because of the robot itself. This means that these robots may have to call in human guards or security in order to deal with these intruders, which calls into question: Why even use the robot in the first place?

Overall, using robots to replace the function of a security guard, while seemingly enticing at first glance, has a host of ethical problems regarding the moral autonomy of the robot. People do not generally believe that an autonomous robot should have the power required to carry out all the duties of a security guard, while at the same time implementing them into buildings and companies. If the robots are given the necessary force to carry out the role of a security guard, any mistakes they make can lead to huge consequences in which justice cannot be carried out due to blame being very easy to diffuse between everything that goes into the design of the robot.

**Citations:**

[1] Kingson, J.A. (2023) *Robots are your new Office Security Guard*, *Axios*. Available at: https://www.axios.com/2023/03/03/security-robots-artificial-intelligence

[2] Khan, Z. and Fu, Y. (2021) “One label, one billion faces,” *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1145/3442188.3445920>.

[3] Lee, M. *et al.* (2021) “People may punish, but not blame robots,” *Proceedings of the 2021 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* [Preprint]. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445284.