



Pentagon Says Killer Robot Technology Will Be Driven By Foreign Competition

TN Note: Previous denials of autonomous unmanned and armed weapon systems being developed are beginning to weaken. Now, officials say US development of such weapons will depend upon what our enemies do with the technology. Thus, if China launches killer robots, the U.S. will be right with them. Note that Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter is a technocrat along the caliber of Robert MacNamara who orchestrated the Viet Nam war. Carter is also a member of the Trilateral Commission, but is on “leave” while serving in the government.

Robotic systems and unmanned vehicles are playing an ever-growing role in the US military — but don’t expect to see Terminator-style droids striding across the battlefield just yet.

A top Pentagon official on Wednesday gave a tantalizing peek into several projects that not long ago were the stuff of science fiction, including missile-dodging satellites, self-flying F-16 fighters and robot

naval fleets.

Though the Pentagon is not planning to build devices that can kill without human input, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work hinted that could change if enemies with fewer qualms create such machines.

“We might be going up against a competitor that is more willing to delegate authority to machines than we are, and as that competition unfolds we will have to make decisions on how we best can compete,” he said.

Work, who helps lead Pentagon efforts to ensure the US military keeps its technological edge, described several initiatives, including one dubbed “Loyal Wingman” that would see the Air Force convert an F-16 warplane into a semi-autonomous and unmanned fighter that flies alongside a manned F-35 jet.

“It is going to happen,” Work said of this and other unmanned systems.

“I would expect to see unmanned wingmen in the air first, I would expect to see unmanned systems undersea all over the place, I would expect to see unmanned systems on the surface of the sea,” Work told an audience at a discussion in the capital hosted by The Washington Post.

The US military has over the past 15 years invested heavily in unmanned drone technology, used to surveil vast parts of the Middle East and Africa and sometimes conduct deadly strikes — though remote human operators decide when to fire.

Driverless convoys

Commercial tech firms like Google are rushing to develop driverless vehicles, but Work said it would take longer for the military to create autonomous trucks given the challenges of navigating off-road.

“When the roads become more dangerous we will go off road, and that type of navigation is extremely difficult,” Work said.

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