

New Zealand: Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain

1. This national submission from New Zealand responds to Note Verbale ODA-2025-00029/AIMD, and should be read alongside New Zealand's response to Note Verbale ODA-2024-00019/LAWS (linked [here](#)).

New Zealand's position on artificial intelligence in the military domain

2. New Zealand recognises that the potential and existing applications of artificial intelligence in the military domain (AIMD) will have far-reaching and multifaceted impacts.

3. As yet, while it is unclear what the nature and extent of many of these impacts will be, artificial intelligence (AI) is already being applied in a wide range of military functions by some military organisations, including for intelligence, planning, logistics, navigation, and communication. Although it has certain risks, AIMD can give users significant advantages including greater speed, efficiency, accuracy, and situational awareness. Like other militaries, the New Zealand Defence Force intends to pursue the opportunities presented by AI for improving its operations and maintaining interoperability with its partners.

4. We reiterate OP1 of UNGA resolution 79/239, "that international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law, applies to matters governed by it that occur throughout all stages of the life cycle of artificial intelligence, including systems enabled by artificial intelligence, in the military domain". In addition to binding legal obligations, relevant ethical standards should be taken into account throughout the lifecycle of AIMD.

5. New Zealand recognises that AI is relevant to the development and use of some weapon systems, for instance in elevating levels of autonomy. New Zealand's position on autonomous weapon systems is detailed [here](#).

6. It is conceivable that AI could be applied to the development of weapons of mass destruction. Biological and chemical weapons are clearly prohibited under international law, and New Zealand affirms that the general-purpose criterion in both the Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Conventions would apply were AI to be used to develop such weapons, which means, *inter alia*, AI must not be used to this end. In addition, as has been noted by States Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, including New Zealand, it is essential that meaningful human control is maintained over nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, pending their elimination and the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Existing and emerging normative proposals

7. Reaching common understandings and building norms are important aspects of promoting the responsible military use of AI. In 2024, New Zealand joined the US-led

Political Declaration on Responsible Military Use of AI and Autonomy, along with many other countries. This Declaration affirms that “military use of AI can and should be ethical, responsible, and enhance international security”. New Zealand has also engaged in the REAIM Summits.

8. New Zealand sees value in multilateral discussions, including through the United Nations, dedicated to developing and agreeing norms around AIMD. The participation of non-state stakeholders, including civil society, international and regional organisations, and industry in these discussions is important throughout these processes.

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