Abstract

The thesis explores the ethical implications of implementing lethal autonomous weapon systems in the USA. The thesis works with academic literature as well as a variety of sources, including legislative, policy and analytical documents. The theory part introduces the ethical concerns stemming from implementing autonomous technologies in armed conflicts. The emphasis is on three selected issues: justifiability, prejudice and responsibility. These issues are explored in terms of the possibility of them violating international humanitarian law. In the practical part of the thesis an analysis of the U. S. strategy to implement lethal autonomous weapons was conducted. It examines, to what extent and how, the three ethical issues mentioned above are considered in this strategy. This part analyses documents published by the Department of Defense or other federal entities. The analysis demonstrated that the U. S strategy considers all of the mentioned ethical issues. The responsibility for the actions of lethal autonomous weapons is always held by its operator. The issue of justifiability is solved through education of the operators to ensure, that the personnel operating autonomous weapons understands its functions and is able to explain its individual decisions and actions. Although the issue of prejudice is not addressed directly, the strategy still considers the issue. Every autonomous weapon must undergo detailed testing before its fielding, to ensure its flawless function. The technologies keep on being monitored during its active use and its attacks must be verified by the operator.