

April 17, 2026

Chairman Roger Wicker

Senate Armed Services Committee
425 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Jack Reed

Senate Armed Services Committee
729 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Mike Rogers

House Armed Services Committee
469 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Adam Smith

House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Rogers, and Ranking Member Smith:

We write to you as shepherds of our communities, as people of faith who believe that the sanctity of human life is a sacred obligation. As AI tools are increasingly used in a military context, we urge Congress to establish legal boundaries governing when and how the Pentagon may deploy AI-powered autonomous weapons, ensuring that the men and women of our Armed Forces are always entrusted to make the final decision on when to take a life.

Recent controversy over the military's use and acquisition of AI models has revealed a disturbing reality: although these systems are increasingly used in military operations, there are currently no rules that guarantee human monitoring of autonomous weapon systems. Every great faith tradition teaches us that the taking of a life is a grave and solemn act. As a matter of conscience, we believe that such a decision must never be delegated to a machine.

Today's AI is not ready to make life-or-death decisions.

We speak out of respect for human dignity rather than out of fear of technology. AI systems are devoid of the humanity that allows each of us to comprehend the world in which we exist. They falter in unfamiliar circumstances. And they cannot grasp, in any meaningful sense, the moral and spiritual gravity of ending a human life.

Every person who may be in the crosshairs of such a weapon is someone's parent, child, neighbor, and loved one. Machines do not comprehend that truth. There are serious moral repercussions from misidentifying a target, striking at the wrong time, or misinterpreting a scenario.

Existing rules are insufficient for the moment we face.

The United States currently has no laws restricting the use of AI-enabled autonomous weapons without human oversight. Existing internal Defense Department policy requires that autonomous systems allow commanders to exercise "appropriate levels of human judgment," but this guidance is both ill-defined and can be changed at any time by the Secretary of Defense, without congressional approval. Its central terms are deliberately vague, and it contains waivers that could allow these safeguards to be quietly bypassed.

It is our duty to construct guardrails before, not after, lives are taken. The moral framework of lethal AI systems cannot be based on internal documents that are subject to change and reinterpretation without public discussion or democratic approval.

We call for a simple, sacred principle: humans must own the decision to take life.

Our traditions do not oppose the use of technology in the defense of our nation. But they are united in this: the deliberate taking of a human life must involve human conscience, human judgment, and human responsibility. We request that Congress enact what is commonly referred to as a "human-in-the-loop" requirement. Such a policy stipulates that a real person must examine the choice, confirm that it complies with the rules of war, and provide clear, affirmative authorization before any AI-recommended target may be struck.

No weapon system should be permitted to complete a lethal act without that human step. This standard preserves the benefits of AI-enabled defense while honoring the irreplaceable moral weight of the people involved, who serve and those who may be in harm's way. It can be carefully tailored to various operational realities, such as allowances for emergency situations and systems like missile defense where any delay is dangerous in and of itself. It is also consistent with international humanitarian law.

The time to act is now, before principles of human agency are lost.

AI's integration in the military poses a question that we, as a society, are compelled to answer: who decides when a machine is permitted to take a human life? This must not be answered by a defense contractor, a technology executive, or a Cabinet secretary acting unilaterally. It must be answered by the people's elected representatives, who are accountable to the public.

We implore you: do not wait for a catastrophe to necessitate action. It has never been more critical to set wise and humane boundaries. Technology advances faster than our moral frameworks, and the window for courage and conviction is narrow.

Thank you for your attention to this issue and for ensuring that as AI is integrated in the military, the men and women of our armed forces remain firmly behind the wheel.

Sincerely,

Emma Petty Addams, Co-Executive Director, Mormon Women for Ethical Government

Rabbi Melanie Aron, Rabbi Emerita, Jewish Earth Alliance

Brian J. A. Boyd, U.S. Faith Liaison, The Future of Life Institute

Zachary Davis, Executive Director, Faith Matters

Dr. Valerie M. Hudson, SquareTwo Journal

Rabbi Peg Kershenbaum

Ray Kim, Director of U.S. Programs, International Center for Religion & Diplomacy

Rabbi Douglas Kohn, Temple Beth Jacob

Medlir Mema, Executive Director, Organized Intelligence

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Christopher Scammell, CEO, Buddhism & AI Initiative

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E. Glen Weyl, Co-Founder, Faith, Family and Technology Network; RadicalxChange Foundation; Plurality Institute