



Responsible Artificial Intelligence in Defense Act of 2026

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The United States must lead in military AI — quickly, safely, and within the law.

- **The strategic threat environment demands speed.** China and Russia are integrating militarized artificial intelligence at an accelerating pace. Failure to match that investment — and to field AI-enabled capabilities rapidly — risks ceding decisive military advantage in the conflicts and crises of the coming decade.
- **Speed must be matched with care.** Artificial intelligence is a rapidly evolving technology, and its incorporation into military operations — particularly lethal autonomous systems — is genuinely new territory. A rigorous framework for human oversight is not a brake on adoption; it is the foundation that makes sustainable, confident adoption possible.
- **National security tools must not become domestic surveillance tools.** Powerful AI capabilities developed for battlefield use must not be turned on U.S. citizens. The civil liberties of Americans demand clear, statutory limits on how military AI may be used at home.

What the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in Defense Act Does

This bill amends Title 10, U.S. Code to establish the first statutory framework governing the Department of Defense's acquisition, testing, and use of AI-enabled autonomous weapon systems. It directs the DoD to maximize AI adoption for defense; requires human oversight, including a manual override capability until AI systems achieve a reliability threshold comparable to manned systems; and prohibits the use of military AI for mass surveillance of persons inside the United States.

Summary

Section 1 – Short Title

- Names the bill the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in Defense Act of 2026.

Section 2 – DoD Policy and Acquisition Requirements

- **Establishes a statutory policy directing the DoD to maximize use of AI and autonomous capabilities** to the fullest extent practicable, in recognition of the urgent strategic imperative.
- **Requires appropriate levels of human judgment:** operators must retain the ability to monitor, detect unintended behavior, and manually disengage or deactivate any deployed AI-enabled system.
- **Establishes a two-tier risk classification system** for autonomous weapons and AI capabilities, scaling human oversight requirements to the level of risk posed.
- **Mandates pre-development and pre-fielding review** by the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, covering design safety, law-of-war compliance, cybersecurity, and legal review by DoD General Counsel.
- **Requires privacy impact assessments** for higher-risk AI capabilities, conducted by the DoD Director for Privacy, Civil Liberties and Transparency.

Section 2 – Prohibitions on Certain Uses of AI

- Prohibits AI from making the decision to launch a nuclear weapon.
- Prohibits DoD use of AI for warrantless monitoring, tracking, profiling, or targeting of individuals or groups reasonably believed to be located in the United States.
- Prohibits lethal autonomous force without appropriate human judgment.

Section 2 – Testing, Evaluation, and Oversight

- **Directs the Director for Operational Test and Evaluation** to conduct rigorous, realistic testing before fielding, with ongoing monitoring as operational environments evolve.
 - **Establishes an Autonomy and AI Working Group** within DoD to support senior-level review, develop safety standards, and advise components on compliance.
 - **Requires annual reporting** to congressional defense committees through 2037.
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