

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 12, 2026

The Honorable Peter Hegseth  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hegseth,

I write to express concern regarding risks to U.S. servicemembers, allies, and partners by any rapid update to existing procedures under Department of Defense Directive 3000.09 Autonomy in Weapon Systems, as directed by National Security Presidential Memorandum 11 (NSPM-11) on June 5, 2026.<sup>1</sup> Further, I request information on mitigation measures under any revision that accelerates fielding; compresses test, evaluation, verification, and validation; or curtails the ability of commanders and operators to exercise human judgement over the use of force.

Since January 2023, Directive 3000.09 has served as the core Pentagon policy document guiding rigorous procedures that ensure autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems function as expected and intended, are geographically delimited in use, allow for termination, and are suitably robust to adversarial manipulation. Any update that significantly reduces safeguards and disrupts rigorous reviews risks friendly fire and civilian harm incidents affecting U.S. servicemembers, partner or allied militaries, or host nation civilians. That any such incident could result in U.S. access, basing, or overflight rights being restricted or revoked heightens the risk incidents are deliberately triggered by foreign adversarial manipulation of hastily fielded systems.

NSPM-11's stated intent to "eliminat[e] unnecessary barriers to rapid deployment"; "adapt commercial or open-source AI technologies"; and the compressed, 90-day deadline for an update raise serious questions about whether sufficient analysis of how prospective changes may aggravate risks to U.S. servicemembers and U.S. power projection has been conducted.<sup>2</sup>

Given the gravity of risk, I request responses to each of the following questions no later than June 26, 2026:

1. How will the updated directive ensure robust mitigation measures to prevent friendly fire incidents against U.S. servicemembers by autonomous weapon systems, semi-autonomous weapons systems, or targeting recommendations produced by AI-enabled decision support systems?
2. Has the Department of Defense assessed whether U.S. adversaries seek to use autonomous weapons incidents to undermine U.S. access, basing, and overflight in U.S. allies' and partners' territory? If so, please provide that assessment.
3. How is the Department of Defense balancing rapid adoption with preventing foreign adversarial manipulation designed specifically to cause friendly fire or civilian harm?
4. What safeguards are in place to prevent harm to host nation civilians from autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems?

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, "DoD Directive 3000.09, "Autonomy in Weapon Systems," 25 January 2023, <https://www.esd.whs.mil/portals/54/documents/dd/issuances/dodd/300009p.pdf>; The White House, "National Security Presidential Memorandum/NSPM-11," 5 June 2026, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/06/national-security-presidential-memorandum-nspm-11/>.

<sup>2</sup> The White House, "NSPM-11," Sec. 2(a), 2(b), and 3(a).

5. Have U.S. allies and partners been briefed on fielding of autonomous weapons in or transiting their territory? How regularly are they briefed?
6. What civilian harm mitigation and response capacity has been tasked to address the risks posed by autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems and AI-enabled decision support systems? Does the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group have dedicated personnel for civilian harm mitigation and response analysis in the development, testing, and fielding of autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon systems?

The United States' unique ability to project power throughout the world depends on the commitment and professionalism of U.S. servicemembers and a historically unparalleled network of trusted allies and partners. Protecting these invaluable American assets requires robust and deliberate mitigation, coordination, and policy.

I look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator

CC:  
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