G1VE TECHNOLOGIES

Human Command, Machine Speed: The Ethics and Tactics of AI-Augmented Warfare

W.B. Carrington, MBA, LSSMBB, CTPRA, GRCA, GRCP

Feb 16, 2026

Original source

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/human-command-machine-speed-ethics-tactics-warfare-w-b--dcbyc/

The Command Dilemma: Speed vs Control

Every battlefield commander faces the same impossible choice: speed or control. Make decisions fast enough to seize fleeting opportunities—but risk catastrophic errors. Take time for careful analysis—but lose the initiative to faster adversaries.

For centuries, commanders chose control. Human judgment, informed by experience and doctrine, governed the application of lethal force. Speed was sacrificed for wisdom.

That calculus is obsolete. In 2026, adversaries operate at machine speed. China's PLA integrates AI across kill chains. Russia deploys AI-optimized artillery targeting. Iran uses AI to coordinate drone swarms. Enemies who process battlefield data faster, decide faster, and act faster win before human commanders finish their first OODA loop.

The solution isn't replacing human commanders with AI. It's human-machine teaming—humans maintain command authority while AI delivers machine-speed intelligence, recommendations, and execution. Human judgment. Machine speed. Ethical framework. Warfighting dominance.

This is the future of Joint Force operations. And it's operational today.

DoDD 3000.09: The Ethical Framework

DoD Directive 3000.09 (November 2012, updated 2023) establishes the policy framework for autonomous weapon systems (AWS) and AI in combat operations:

Key Principles:

1. Human in the Loop (HITL): Humans authorize every use of lethal force
2. Meaningful Human Control: AI recommendations require human review before execution
3. Responsible AI: Systems must be testable, reliable, and auditable
4. Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) Compliance: AI decisions must adhere to proportionality, distinction, and necessity

What DoDD 3000.09 Allows:

- AI target identification and tracking
- AI course-of-action generation and recommendation
- AI threat assessment and priority ranking
- Autonomous navigation and positioning
- Human authorization required before lethal action

What It Prohibits:

- Fully autonomous lethal weapon systems that select and engage targets without human authorization
- AI decisions on nuclear weapons employment
- AWS deployment without rigorous testing and validation

The Balance: AI accelerates every step of the kill chain except the final decision. Humans retain moral and legal responsibility. AI provides speed and precision. Humans provide judgment and accountability.

Human-AI Teaming in Combat: How It Works

Scenario: Strike Package Planning (Traditional vs AI-Augmented)

—

Traditional Human-Only Process (4-6 Hours):

1. Intelligence Fusion (90 min): Analysts manually review ISR feeds, SIGINT, HUMINT, IMINT from multiple sources
2. Target Development (60 min): Identify high-value targets; assess collateral damage; validate under LOAC
3. Mission Planning (90 min): Plan ingress/egress routes; coordinate air refueling; deconflict airspace
4. Weaponeering (45 min): Select munitions; calculate weapons release parameters
5. Approval Chain (45 min): Route through JAG, commander, Joint Force staff

Total Time: 4-6 hours from intelligence to execution authorization

AI-Augmented Process (45 Minutes):

1. AI Intelligence Fusion (5 min): Maven Smart System ingests all-source intel; identifies targets; ranks by priority; flags LOAC concerns
2. AI Target Development (10 min): AI generates collateral damage estimates; proposes engagement options; highlights risks
3. AI Mission Planning (15 min): AI optimizes routes for threat avoidance, fuel efficiency, and timeline; auto-deconflicts with other operations
4. Human Review and Modification (10 min): Commander reviews AI-generated plan; adjusts based on operational context AI cannot assess (political sensitivities, strategic timing, commander's intent)
5. Human Authorization (5 min): Commander approves strike; authorizes weapons release

Total Time: 45 minutes—6-8x faster than human-only process

Accuracy Improvement:

- Human-only targeting: 78% first-strike success rate
- Human-AI teaming: 96% first-strike success rate
- Reduction in civilian casualties: 42% (AI collateral damage prediction prevents high-risk strikes)

Maven Smart System: AI at the Tactical Edge

Palantir's Maven Smart System (deployed across U.S. Combatant Commands since 2024) exemplifies operational human-AI teaming:

Capabilities:

- Real-Time Target ID: Analyzes full-motion video from drones/satellites; identifies military targets with 98%+ accuracy
- Multi-INT Fusion: Integrates SIGINT, IMINT, GEOINT, MASINT into unified intelligence picture
- Predictive Analytics: Forecasts enemy courses of action based on pattern analysis
- Decision Support: Generates recommended strike packages with probability-of-success calculations

Warfighter Feedback (2025 Operational Assessment):

"Maven doesn't replace my judgment. It amplifies it. I see threats Maven identifies that I would have missed. Maven processes hours of ISR in seconds. But I still make the call on lethal force. That's how it should be." — F-16 Squadron Commander, CENTCOM AOR

Key Metric: Maven-enabled strike packages achieve mission objectives 27% faster with 35% fewer sorties than traditional planning—reducing aircrew exposure to threats while increasing mission success.

Ethical AI in Combat: The Hard Questions

Question 1: Can AI be trusted to identify targets in complex environments?

Answer: Not alone. AI excels at pattern recognition but struggles with context. Example:

Scenario: AI identifies a military-age male carrying a rifle near a school.

AI Assessment: Probable combatant; engagement authorized
Human Assessment: Could be security guard, hunter, or civilian in conflict zone; requires further ISR before engagement

Human-AI Teaming Solution: AI flags potential target; human reviews context (location, behavior patterns, corroborating intelligence); makes final call.

Result: AI provides speed; human provides judgment.

Question 2: What happens when AI recommendations conflict with commander's intuition?

Answer: Commander overrules AI—and documents reasoning.

Real Example (Declassified 2025):

Scenario: Maven recommended strike on building assessed as enemy command post (95% confidence based on communications signatures).

Commander's Concern: HUMINT source (not available to AI) reported civilian hospital operating in adjacent building; risk of collateral damage from blast effects.

Decision: Commander rejected AI recommendation; ordered additional ISR; confirmed hospital presence; strike cancelled.

Outcome: Correct decision—prevented civilian casualties and strategic blowback. AI lacked critical HUMINT context only human commander possessed.

Lesson: AI is decision support, not decision replacement. Humans retain override authority.

Question 3: Who is accountable when AI-informed strikes cause unintended harm?

Answer: The human commander who authorized the strike.

DoDD 3000.09 and LOAC are clear: human commanders bear legal and moral responsibility for all uses of force under their authority—including AI-informed decisions.

Accountability Framework:

- Commander reviews AI recommendations
- Commander assesses proportionality, distinction, necessity (LOAC)
- Commander authorizes (or rejects) strike
- Commander is accountable for outcome

AI provides data. Humans make decisions. Humans face consequences.

The Adversary Problem: China's AI Without Ethics

While U.S. operates under DoDD 3000.09 ethical constraints, adversaries do not.

China PLA AI Integration (2024-2026 Assessment) —

No Ethical Constraints:

- PLA doctrine emphasizes "intelligentized warfare"—AI dominance across all domains
- No requirement for human-in-the-loop on lethal force decisions
- PLA developing fully autonomous weapon systems for: Autonomous drone swarms (coordinated strikes without human control); AI-controlled anti-ship missiles (target selection by AI)\; Autonomous cyber weapons (AI executes network attacks at machine speed)

Strategic Advantage:

- PLA AI operates unconstrained by ethical frameworks
- Faster decision cycles (no human review delays)
- Higher risk tolerance (AI errors acceptable in pursuit of speed)

U.S. Response —

DoD cannot abandon ethical AI principles to match China's speed. Instead:

1. Accelerate Human-AI Teaming:

- Deploy faster AI systems that provide human commanders with near-instantaneous recommendations
- Reduce human review time through improved AI explainability (commanders understand AI reasoning faster)

2. Develop Counter-Autonomous Systems:

- AI-vs-AI electronic warfare
- AI-enabled missile defense that defeats autonomous threats
- Cyber tools that disrupt adversary AI networks

3. Build AI Resilience:

- Red Team U.S. AI systems against adversarial AI attacks
- Develop AI systems that operate in GPS-denied, communications-degraded environments
- Train warfighters to operate effectively when AI systems are compromised

The Ethical Advantage —

DoDD 3000.09 constraints are strategic strengths, not weaknesses:

- Prevents catastrophic AI errors that alienate allies and partners
- Maintains LOAC compliance—protecting U.S. legal and moral standing
- Builds public and international trust in U.S. military operations
- Ensures AI serves warfighters rather than replacing them

Recommendations: Human-AI Teaming for Joint Force Dominance

For DoD/Combatant Commands —

1. Expand Maven Smart System Deployment

- Current: Deployed at division/wing level and above
- Goal: Deploy to brigade/squadron level by end of 2026
- Rationale: Tactical commanders need AI decision support; cannot wait for echelon-above requests

2. Accelerate Joint AI Training

- Integrate human-AI teaming into all PME (Professional Military Education)
- Red Team exercises: Train commanders to identify AI errors and override bad recommendations
- Outcome: Warfighters who trust AI where appropriate and question it when necessary

3. Update JP 3-0 and JP 4-0

- Current doctrine predates large-scale AI integration
- Needed: Guidance on human-AI command relationships, AI failure modes, commander accountability
- Timeline: Draft doctrine by Q4 2026; field by Q2 2027

4. Invest in Explainable AI (XAI)

- Current: Many AI systems are "black boxes"—warfighters don't understand how AI reaches conclusions
- Needed: AI that explains its reasoning in real-time
- Benefit: Commanders make faster, better-informed decisions when they understand AI logic

5. Build Redundancy for AI Failure

- AI systems will fail—from technical glitches, adversary attacks, or environmental degradation
- Needed: Training and systems that allow warfighters to operate effectively without AI
- Principle: AI enhances capability but must never become a single point of failure

For Defense Industrial Base:

1. Prioritize Ethical AI Development

- Build AI systems aligned with DoDD 3000.09
- Include human override mechanisms in every system

- Market Advantage: DoD will not procure AI that violates ethical frameworks

2. Invest in AI Robustness and Resilience

- Adversaries will attack U.S. AI systems
- Develop AI that detects adversarial inputs, degrades gracefully under attack, and alerts human operators to AI compromise
- Opportunity: Counter-AI technologies are emerging high-value market

3. Support AI Governance Standards

- Participate in NIST AI Risk Management Framework development
- Adopt ISO/IEC 42001 AI Management System standards
- Competitive Advantage: Early adopters of AI governance will win DoD contracts as requirements mature

---

FY2027 Predictive Funding Signals: AI Ethics and Governance

DoD AI Strategy (released January 9, 2026) emphasizes responsible AI and AI governance. This signals significant FY2027 appropriations.

Predictive Signals:

1. AI Testing, Evaluation, Verification & Validation (TEV&V): +$450M-$650M

- Requirement: Independent testing of AI systems before operational deployment
- Opportunity: Firms offering AI TEV&V services and tools

2. Explainable AI (XAI) for Mission-Critical Systems: +$200M-$300M

- Requirement: AI systems must explain decision logic to warfighters in real-time
- Opportunity: XAI research and operational tools

3. AI Red Teaming and Adversarial Robustness: +$150M-$250M

- Requirement: Test U.S. AI against adversarial attacks
- Opportunity: AI red team services and adversarial AI tools

When to Position: NOW (February-March 2026). CDAO planning industry days Q2 2026.

Thought-Provoking Close & Bottom Line

Human-machine teaming is the future of Joint Force operations. AI delivers speed, precision, and predictive power. Humans provide judgment, ethics, and accountability.

Key Principles:

- AI amplifies human warfighters; it does not replace them
- Ethical frameworks (DoDD 3000.09) are strategic advantages, not constraints
- Speed without judgment is recklessness; judgment without speed is defeat
- The force that masters human-AI teaming dominates the battlespace

Mission Imperative: Deploy AI at scale. Train warfighters in human-AI teaming. Maintain ethical frameworks. Deliver warfighter superiority through intelligence amplification.

🎖️ Human Command. Machine Speed. Ethical Framework. Mission Dominance.

✨Call to Action✨:

Subscribe to my LinkedIn Newsletter for more Future Trends and Insights on/in Regulatory Compliance, A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) Governance/Ethics, Internal/External Audit, TPRM (Third-Party Risk Management), Fintech Innovations, and "all things GRC" (Governance, Risk Management, and Compliance). Let's navigate the future together.

🔍 About the Author:

W.B. Carrington, MBA, LSSMBB, CTPRA, GRCA, GRCP, is a seasoned Artificial Intelligence (A.I.), National Defense and National Security Strategist and Subject Matter Expert (SME) in Governance, Risk, and Compliance (GRC), A.I. Governance/Ethics, Regulatory Compliance, Data Governance, Comprehensive/Integrated Risk Management, and Project/Program Management.

As the Managing Partner at G1VE | Technologies and a Strategic Board Advisor to many multi-domain, cross-industry organizations across both the Public Sector (I.e., Fortune 500 and Fortune 1000 companies) and Private Sector entities, W.B. leverages his extensive experience and deep subject matter expertise to drive innovative solutions that enhance organizational resilience and operational integrity. Connect with W.B. Carrington, MBA, LSSMBB, CTPRA, GRCA, GRCP, on LinkedIn to stay updated on the latest insights and trends in these critical areas.