



## Cases for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Senior Military College Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl

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UNIVERSITY of NORTH GEORGIA™

TRUIST CENTER FOR ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

## Case #1: Robo...Dog?

The first robot dog was created in 1999. Robot dogs that exist now can go safely into spaces that may be dangerous for people, like during search and rescue operations and during emergency responses. Several fire departments around the world have started using robot dogs to assist during the response to burning buildings and large fires. In 2024, the City of Denver Colorado's Police Department deployed a new robot dog that can assist in ways older versions of robotic assistance couldn't, like climbing stairs, going around obstacles, or picking itself up if knocked over by something or someone.<sup>1</sup> Robot dogs have even been purchased as pets for families and to assist disabled persons.

There are concerns around data privacy with the use of robot dogs, as many of the dogs record what is happening to them and all around them, including using facial recognition technology with humans the robot dogs interact with. Additionally, in many instances the robot dogs are being used in public spaces and personal privacy has been a topic of conversation.

Now, militaries around the world have purchased robot dogs for many purposes, including surveillance, law enforcement, and crowd management. However, recently China has moved to equipping robot dogs with weapons, like machine guns, flamethrowers, and explosives alongside partners like Unitree Robotics in the launch of the B1 weaponized robotic dog for military purposes.<sup>2</sup> The People's Liberation Army in China engaged the new weaponized dogs in a training exercise with Cambodian forces in a combat demonstration in August 2024.<sup>3</sup> This was a surprise to military leaders around the world and, at the time, Unitree spokespersons said that seeing the technology implemented this way was a surprise to them as well.

China has released statements about replacing human soldiers with an army of robot dogs and have moved to upgraded enhancements in the use of a Unitree B2 version of the robotic dog.<sup>4</sup>

If robot dogs were used as combatants in war, it would violate Isaac Asimov's First Law of Robotics, which says, in part, "A robot must not harm a human." In some cases, however, war is unfortunately necessary, and if someone or something needs to harm a human, one might think that it might as well be a robot dog. After all, a robot dog could be effective, it won't feel pain when injured, and it won't have family and friends that will grieve if it "dies." With that said, a serious question arises whether we can trust them to not misuse their power.

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<sup>1</sup> NEXT, Kyle Clark. December 5, 2024, <https://www.instagram.com/kyleclark9news/reel/DDLp44ARoco/>.

<sup>2</sup> Business Today: [Meet China's new machine gun-toting robo-dog that can replace human soldiers](#). May 29, 2024, [Unitree B1](#) and AI Nexus: [China's New Military Secret Unveiled: Ai Robot Dogs!](#).

<sup>3</sup> SkyNews: [China's robotic dogs still a novelty to most - as firms grapple with military using tech as weapons](#). August 24, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Carros Show: [China has Revealed its World's First Army of Robot Dogs](#). 2024

## Case #2: Invisible Battle

Big movie pictures have pulled us into the thought of being invisible for many years. From the scary horror films like *Invisible Man* to the invisibility cloak that is bestowed to Harry Potter during the first film, *The Sorcerer's Stone*, the thought of being invisible has invoked both positive and negative perceptions.<sup>1</sup>

Militaries of the world are now in a race to create the best invisibility technology.<sup>2</sup> “Called Broadband Achromatic Metalens, the technology uses metamaterials to make an object (or person) undetectable across multiple lightwave spectra, including near ultraviolet, near infrared, shortwave infrared, and thermal. Objects cloaked in this material are nearly invisible not only to the human eye but also to night-vision cameras and other devices. This stunning scientific feat works by manipulating the normal refraction and distribution of light waves (similar to eyeglass lenses). And yes, even the shadow of the cloaked object disappears! The technology is still young and far from Harry Potter quality but one Canadian company, Hyperstealth Biotechnology Corporation, has already started capitalizing on the science and is showing no signs of abandoning their foothold in what is sure to be a product of profound significance in multiple ways.”<sup>3</sup>

Major wildlife conservation organizations are reacting positively to the potential advancement, citing that the ability to observe wildlife in their native habitats could change greatly with the implementation. Scientists speak to a limitless potential for research advancement through wildlife observations. Meanwhile, there are critics who say just because a human is invisible to the eye won't mean the wildlife won't know they are there and that some of the predications are based on theories only, not practical experiences with such wildlife.

In 2024, China announced significant advancements to the technology and their intentions of future use of the technology in military operations and even in warfare.<sup>4</sup> However, top military lawyers from multiple nations have started raising concerns around the use of invisibility technology, stating that such advancements could be in violation and breach of the Geneva conventions.<sup>5</sup> On top of that, many senior military leaders have spoken out against the technology advancement for the use in military applications.

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<sup>1</sup> New York Post, Ben Cost: [Real-life 'invisibility cloak' one step closer — scientists unveil cutting-edge camouflage material](#). December 5, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Proceedings – US Naval Institute, John D. Miller: [Win the Race for Invisibility](#).

<sup>3</sup> Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE) 27<sup>th</sup> Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl: Case 17 – *Potter's Prized Possession*. Pg. 26, third paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> Popular Mechanics, Brandon Weichert: [China Invented a New Invisibility Cloak. What Does That Mean for the Future of Warfare?](#) December 6, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> The Guardian: [Military 'invisibility cloaks' could breach Geneva conventions](#).

### Case #3: No Peace of Land

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most protracted and contentious disputes in modern history. Its roots trace back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with the rise of nationalist movements among Jews and Arabs in the region of Palestine, then part of the Ottoman Empire. Following World War I, Britain assumed control under the League of Nations mandate and endorsed the Balfour Declaration, which supported establishing a "national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine. Tensions between Jewish and Arab populations escalated as Jewish immigration increased during the 1930s and 1940s, fueled by persecution in Europe.

In 1947, the United Nations proposed a partition plan to create separate Jewish and Arab states. While Jewish leaders accepted the plan, Arab leaders rejected it, leading to the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 after the establishment of Israel. The war resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, an event Palestinians refer to as the Al Nakba ("The Catastrophe").<sup>1</sup> Since then, the region has seen several wars, the occupation of Palestinian territories by Israel after the 1967 Six-Day War, and ongoing disputes over land, sovereignty, and self-determination.

On October 7, 2023, Hamas, the Islamist militant organization governing Gaza, launched an unprecedented attack on Israel. Thousands of rockets were fired, and armed militants infiltrated Israeli towns, targeting civilians and taking hostages. Initial reports were that over 1,200 Israelis were killed, including women, children, and elderly individuals. The final death toll from the October 7, 2023 attack is now thought to be 695 Israeli civilians, including 36 children, as well as 373 security forces and 71 foreigners, giving a total of 1,139.<sup>2</sup> Over 250 Israeli citizens were captured and taken back to Gaza as hostages.<sup>3</sup> The attack marked one of the deadliest days in Israeli history and provoked global shock and condemnation.

Israel responded with a massive military offensive against Gaza, including airstrikes and artillery fire, targeting Hamas infrastructure. The strikes caused significant civilian casualties and widespread destruction, with Gaza's already strained healthcare and infrastructure systems pushed to the brink of collapse.

The conflict intensified in the weeks following, resulting in thousands of deaths on both sides. Israel declared a state of war and conducted ground operations in Gaza, targeting Hamas but leading to severe humanitarian crises. Palestinian civilians, trapped under blockade conditions, continue to face dire shortages of food, water, medical supplies, and electricity. In the year since the war began, the death toll in Gaza has exceeded 43,000 with the majority being civilians and over half being women and children,<sup>4</sup> according to Palestinian health officials. Beyond the death toll, the conflict has resulted in the displacement of millions of people. "According to OCHA, by

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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nakba#:~:text=The%20term%20is%20used%20to,displacement%20of%20Palestinians%20by%20Israel>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231215-israel-social-security-data-reveals-true-picture-of-oct-7-deaths>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-44124396>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/at-least-43000-palestinians-killed-more-than-half-women-and-children-in-war-in-gaza-palestinian-health-ministry-says>

the end of the year, 65,000 homes were destroyed, forcibly displacing 1.9 million Palestinians.”<sup>5</sup>  
In addition, approximately 100,000 Israelis are internally displaced, primarily from communities near the border of Lebanon and near the Gaza strip.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/middle-east/israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/report-israel-and-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://hias.org/emergency-response-israel/>

## Case #4: Directed Energy Weapons

Weapons of war are starting to look more and more like weapons from science fiction. One of the latest examples is laser beam guns, which is reminiscent of *Star Wars* technology.

Laser beams have significant advantages over traditional projectiles such as missiles: e.g., they travel at the speed of light with virtually flat trajectories and don't make noise.

Prototypes of laser beam weapons exist: e.g., the Australian Defense Force's "first directed-energy weapon, called the Fractl Portable High Energy Laser, is powerful enough to burn through steel and can track objects as small as a 10-cent piece travelling 100kmph a kilometer away.... It's silent, virtually motionless and soldiers can be taught to use it in minutes.... Corporal Patrick Flanagan was given a 'soldier's five' before he successfully shot down a drone... "You push a button to track the drone and the computer takes over, then you push another button to 'pull the trigger' just like a video game," Corporal Flanagan said."<sup>1</sup>

Laser beam weapons are just one example of directed energy (DE) weapons. Other DE weapons employ alternative electromagnetic waves such as microwaves or radio waves.

Example of a microwave DE weapon: the "Active Denial System is a millimeter wave source that heats the water in a human target's skin and thus causes incapacitating pain. It was developed by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory and Raytheon for riot-control duty. Though intended to cause severe pain while leaving no lasting damage, concern has been voiced as to whether the system could cause irreversible damage to the eyes. There has yet to be testing for long-term side effects of exposure to the microwave beam. It can also destroy unshielded electronics."<sup>2</sup>

Example of a radio wave DE weapon: "Radio Frequency Directed Energy Weapon (RFDEW).... This UK-developed system was unveiled in May 2024 and uses radio waves to fry the electronic components of its targets, rendering them inoperable. It is capable of engaging multiple targets, including drone swarms, and reportedly costs less than... 13 cents... per shot, making it a cheaper alternative to traditional missile-based air defense systems."<sup>3</sup>

It's easy to imagine DE weapons being used in unethical ways: e.g., they could be used to carry out eugenics programs or win unjust wars. Yet one also wonders what the unintended consequences may be, especially at such high energy levels. Scientific studies have shown that much lower levels of electromagnetic radiation can negatively affect both humans and non-humans: e.g., by lowering sperm counts, damaging DNA, by causing skin cancer, or by causing brain damage.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.defence.gov.au/news-events/news/2024-06-17/defences-first-directed-energy-weapon-put-test>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Directed-energy\\_weapon&oldid=1258902978](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Directed-energy_weapon&oldid=1258902978)

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Directed-energy\\_weapon&oldid=1258902978](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Directed-energy_weapon&oldid=1258902978)

<sup>4</sup>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9409438/#:~:text=Representation%20of%20microwave%20radiation%20effects,and%20declines%20in%20spatial%20memory>

## Case #5: Militaristic Immigration Control

“President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to use the U.S. military to help deport millions of undocumented migrants, a plan that breaks from U.S. tradition against deploying troops domestically.”<sup>1</sup>

At a news conference at Trump National Golf Club in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, Trump said: “We’re going to have the largest deportation in the history of our country... and we’re going to start with Springfield and Aurora.”<sup>2</sup>

Trump has not said how he plans to use the military to help carry out the deportations, but he has recruited three border hardliners as key administrators: Tom Homan as “border czar,” Stephen Miller as White House deputy chief of staff for policy and a homeland security adviser, and Kristi Noem as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>3</sup> Homan says military planes could be used for deportation, while Miller says that military troops could be deputized to arrest undocumented immigrants.<sup>4</sup> Additionally: “Miller told The New York Times that former President Donald Trump’s immigration proposals include building mass detention camps, overseeing mass deportations, expanding ideological screenings for visa applications, suspending the refugee program, terminating temporary immigration protections and invoking a 1700s-era law to deport people without due process.”<sup>5</sup>

Trump and his soon-to-be Vice President JD Vance say that toughening up the United States’ immigration policies will have a number of nationalistic benefits: e.g., they say it will reduce the number of violent criminals in our country, reduce the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs into our country, reduce human trafficking to or from our country, reduce demand for housing in our country in order to make housing more affordable, reduce the extent to which illegal migrants take jobs that would have otherwise gone to our citizens, and reduce our tax burden in paying for illegal migrants’ education, healthcare, and welfare benefits.

Critics of the Trump administration’s deportation plans have said a number of things: e.g., that removing millions of undocumented migrants could lead to labor shortages especially in agriculture and construction, that it could lead to family separations such as separating children from their parents without either the parents or children knowing where the others are, holding children in uncomfortable camps full of misery and molestation, that the strategy would largely involve deporting non-criminals with deep roots in the U.S. such as those who have served in the U.S. military, that mistakes will be made where citizens will accidentally be deported, that such policies will lead millions of Americans to view many Hispanic or “foreign seeming people” in the United States with a skeptical eye.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://archive.ph/14Tei#selection-1355.19-1369.40>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2024/09/13/trump-deportation-immigrants-springfield-ohio-aurora-colorado>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/nov/18/trump-military-mass-deportation>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/u-s-military-trump-mass-deportation-plan/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.politifact.com/article/2023/nov/21/how-viable-is-donald-trumps-2024-immigration-plan/>



## Case #6: Women in Combat

“Every country in the world permits the participation of women in the military, in one form or another.”<sup>1</sup> Yet it is not as common to allow women in combat roles. Indeed, Donald Trump’s pick to lead the U.S. Department of Defense, Pete Hegseth, believes that women should not serve in combat roles.<sup>2</sup>

Biological women naturally have much less testosterone than biological men; to be more precise, they tend to have about 1/20<sup>th</sup> the testosterone of men. A consequence is that they tend to have a harder time building muscle and their bones tend to be softer. Because they have a harder time building muscle, they tend to be physically weaker, making it harder to carry heavy equipment or win physical fights. According to an article from 2021, men are having a much easier time than women in passing the U.S. Army’s fitness test.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, because women’s bones tend to be softer, they are more prone to broken bone injuries, which can be a problem on the battlefield.

Biological women also have uteruses, which brings further risks. They can get pregnant, which can interfere with their ability to serve in a traditional “combat” role. They can be captured as prisoners of war, subjected to sexual assault, including rape. In many past wars, women soldiers have been captured, impregnated by enemy combatants who then have forced them in captivity to give birth. Due to these high-level potential impacts to women soldiers if captured, male soldiers have spoken to the overwhelming response to “protect them at all costs,” including over their own lives. These concerns, amongst other fears related in general to romantic relationships with or desires from their fellow male counterparts have been at the heart of the debate.

There are additional concerns that have been raised related to general nudity. Some fear that, if men and women serve together in combat units, they may sometimes see one another in the nude. For many years, the U.S. military historically didn’t allow what they termed as “gays” in the military, partly because a “gay” man may have an attraction to the other soldiers and make the environment either uncomfortable, or unsafe in some way for themselves or their fellow soldiers. Now these same concerns are being surfaced around woman in combat units.

With all of that said, it is important to note that some women perform exceptionally well in combat;<sup>4</sup> so, by not including them, we’re missing out on competent, high performing individuals who have chosen to serve their country. This is attractive to the U.S. military, as recruitment is difficult, particularly in combat roles. Additionally, women in combat opens a whole new area around intelligence, as there are many countries where male soldiers cannot culturally speak with the women, yet female soldiers can.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Women\\_in\\_the\\_military\\_by\\_country&oldid=1260022654](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Women_in_the_military_by_country&oldid=1260022654)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/should-women-serve-combat-military-experts-weigh>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2021/05/10/nearly-half-of-female-soldiers-still-failing-new-army-fitness-test-while-males-pass-easily.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2024/11/26/nx-s1-5201678/trumps-defense-pick-says-women-shouldnt-serve-in-combat-these-veterans-disagree>



## Case #7: Dis-Honoring the Code

During the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of college classes went online and there was a significant spike in academic dishonesty. Indeed, in 2021, 73 West Point Cadets were found cheating in their Calculus classes.<sup>1</sup> In that same year, “The U.S. Air Force Academy... kicked out students and reprimanded others after nearly 250 Cadets were suspected of using online learning to cheat on tests and plagiarize assignments,” and, indeed, most of them admitted to cheating.<sup>2</sup>

All universities have policies that condemn academic dishonesty, but the U.S. Air Force Academy’s honor code is literally written on a public wall for greater visibility: it says, “We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does.” This Honor Code, in some form, is present at all military schools and academies.

Academic dishonesty is problematic for a number of reasons. One has to do with character. The more a person cheats, the more they get in the habit of exhibiting vices, which are serious character flaws. We don’t want people running around with serious character flaws, as it makes for a bad society. We certainly don’t want people running around in the military with serious character flaws. After all, we are entrusting them to be responsible with dangerous weaponry, and to care for and get along with one another. We want them to only fight just wars, and we don’t want unethical soldiers running around going off-script, committing war crimes, raping one another, using TikTok when they’re not supposed to, selling classified information, etc.

Another problem is that we want our military officers to be highly educated. A significant percentage of officers were Cadets before becoming officers. To be highly educated, they must learn what they are supposed to have learned. If they cheated in their classes, the odds are high that they didn’t learn what they were supposed to have learned, which is liable to greatly impact or as some say “dumb down” the U.S. Military.

Big questions arise, however, regarding how exactly we should discipline Cadets who engage in academic dishonesty. If we adopt a no tolerance policy, we could permanently kick them out of the university and never let them serve in the military. If we go this route, we might risk losing too many potential service members and suffer from under-enrollment problems. We could instead adopt a two-strikes-and-you’re-out policy, giving every Cadet one warning followed by a permanent ban if they get caught doing it again. Another tactic would be to institute a re-education program of some sort where they either must perform hard labor for long hours or take ethics classes, learning about why what they did was bad, unpatriotic, dangerous, etc.

Something must be done to stop Cadets from cheating. With the advents of artificial intelligence (A.I.) being released to the public, cheating is now that much more irresistible, and prevalent. Given that it’s extra hard to prevent cheating in online courses, some have posed a solution that Cadets shouldn’t be allowed to take online courses.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/04/18/51-west-point-cadets-caught-cheating-must-repeat-a-year/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/usafa-cracking-down-on-students-for-widespread-cheating-last-spring/>