

Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP
Foreign and Commonwealth Office,
King Charles Street,
London,
SW1A 2AH

5 November 2014

Dear Philip,

At the annual conference of the Convention on Conventional Weapons ('CCW') in Geneva next week, states will have the opportunity to renew the CCW mandate and continue discussions in 2015 on 'lethal autonomous weapons systems' ('LAWS').

We write as Chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group ('APPG') on Drones and the APPG on Weapons and Protection of Civilians, guest Chair of the APPG meeting on 'drones and the increasing autonomy of weapons systems', and Chair of recent Birmingham Policy Commission on the Security Impact of Drones, to applaud your decision to support renewal of the mandate.

The CCW meeting on 13 and 14 November presents the opportunity for our Government to engage further and assume a leading role in securing a new international framework to address the concerns of LAWS. The UK's experience in arms control, the technology of precursor systems such as the Taranis, and diplomatic influence, place your Department in a unique position to take a leading role in a new international process, building on existing CCW work.

In our view, and in line with discussion at the joint APPG meeting yesterday, we invite you to address the following recommendations in your statements at the CCW meeting next week:

1. The UK and other states should develop and publish comprehensive national policies on autonomous weapons, including a requirement for individual attacks to remain under meaningful human control;
2. The UK and other states should undertake reviews of new weapons, under article 36 of Additional Protocol I, before developing systems with any significant increase in automated functions, such as the generation of attack profiles;

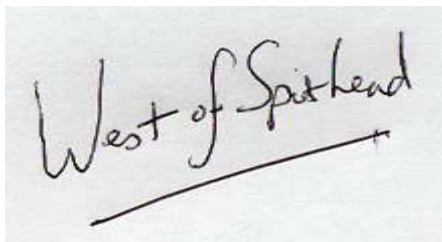
3. The UK and other states should disclose and explain how they are assessing and ensuring meaningful human control over weapons systems in development, trial or use;
4. The new CCW mandate should lead to a formal meeting or meetings of experts to consider points 1-3 above, consider the requirements and limitations of existing international law, and identify next steps with a view to securing international consensus to address the concerns posed by autonomous weapons systems.

We are happy to discuss this with you further.

We will place a copy of this letter, and your reply, in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Watson
Chair of the APPG on Drones

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "West of Spithead" with a horizontal line underneath.

Admiral Lord West

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin Caton".

Martin Caton
Chair of the APPG on weapons and protection of civilians

Professor Sir David Omand