

HMDC Presents... DISEC: Video 1 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 1 films for DISEC (The Topic). We read along while we watch, pause at each time mark, and circle any word we do not know so we can look it up together.

VIDEO 1 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Welcome, delegates. Let's jump right into this explainer. What you're about to hear is a definitive dossier designed to prepare you for the disarmament and international security committee debate. Today, we're exploring one of the absolute most pressing technological issues facing the international community right now, drone surveillance and privacy. Here is our roadmap for today. We'll be covering what a drone actually is, the legal right to privacy, the specific role of DISEC, the measured harms of this technology, six major solutions to consider, and finally, your critical decision. All right, let's kick things off with section one, drones as surveillance tools. So what exactly is a drone? Well, formally, it's known as an unmanned aerial vehicle or an unmanned aircraft system. But quite simply, it's an aircraft with absolutely no pilot on board. And you know, they come in so many sizes, from massive vehicles that can fly across oceans to tiny little machines that can literally fit right in the palm of your hand. Now, here is the really crucial point. Regardless of their size, nearly all of these devices gather information. Because they carry cameras or sensors, almost every single drone out there is inherently a surveillance tool. They are essentially powerful eyes in the sky. And that is true whether they're flown by a military, a local police department, or just a private citizen. Privacy as a right. We have to remember that all people possess an international right to privacy. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights protect individuals against arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, and home. This framework right here is the fundamental legal anchor for our entire debate. Next up, section three, the role of DISEC. As a delegate, it's important to know your limits and your powers. Let's be clear, DISEC cannot pass binding law. However, you possess the vital power to recommend treaties, set global norms, and jumpstart negotiations. You are here to shape international consensus, which is a highly desirable outcome for global security. Now, let's look at the real world impact in section four, harms of drone surveillance. To put the sheer scale of this into perspective, according to UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020, 102 countries and 20 armed groups currently possess military drones. This shows us that the technology is spread like wildfire and is certainly no longer held by just a few nations.

[2:26] And it's not just on the battlefield. According to UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023, more than 1,000 US police departments are using drones. This moves this incredibly powerful technology directly into everyday policing in local communities. This brings us to public gatherings. According to UN Human Rights Council, August 4, 2022, watching protests from above actively discourages free expression. People naturally change their behavior when they know there's a camera up in the sky recording their faces. The technology itself is getting deeply advanced, too. According to Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, September 17, 2019, advanced surveillance is incredibly widespread. 75 of 176 countries are using artificial intelligence surveillance. The data shows this happens across all government types, meaning it's a truly global issue. There's also a very direct physical danger.

[3:19] According to UN Human Rights Council, June 30, 2014, watching people is directly linked to aiming strikes. The surveillance data gathered from the air is frequently the very information used to coordinate lethal military action. To give you a stark example of this According to OHCHR, May 28, 2025, nearly 150 civilians were killed in Kherson after being picked out on drone video. This illustrates how surveillance cameras directly become targeting systems in modern conflicts. So what can we actually do about this? That brings us to Section 5, 6 Major Proposed Solutions. Solution 1 is strict legal limits based on necessity and proportionality. The advantage here is that it helps keep desirable uses intact, like using drones for search and rescue operations. However, the undesirable aspect is that the standard is broad, because words like necessary are really open to interpretation. It heavily invites military and intelligence exemptions. Solution 2 relies on registration and no-fly zones.

[4:20] Now, the advantage is that this system already works across 27 EU countries. But any claim that this solves the entire problem is simply incorrect. The disadvantage is that it completely misses micro-drones, weighing under 250 grams, which are frequently used by militaries. Solution 3 proposes limits on facial recognition. The highly desirable advantage is that it targets the absolute most intrusive feature of surveillance, protecting people and crowds. The undesirable disadvantage, though, is that security forces demand this technology to find suspects, meaning many states will strongly resist giving it up. Solution 4 is export controls on the technology itself. The clear advantage is proactive. It helps stop harm before it even happens, by limiting exactly who can buy the cameras and parts. The disadvantage is that current systems are totally voluntary, and only include some global producers, allowing outside suppliers to continue trading freely. Solution 5 focuses on transparency and oversight. The advantage here is that it bans no technology, making it a highly desirable path for winning more votes from hesitant states. But the undesirable reality is that states closely guard their military secrets. Without verification, these pledges can simply be ignored.

[5:33] Finally, Solution 6 proposes a new treaty on autonomous weapons by 2026. The major advantage is that it sets a clear, binding legal line right now, before the technology advances even further. The disadvantage? Well, negotiations are notoriously slow, and major military powers heavily prefer non-binding rules over strict treaties. And that brings us to our final section, Section 6, Your Decision as Delegate. The stage is set. Deliberate carefully on the facts we've gone through today, and really consider your country's national interests. The future of global privacy rests in your hands. Which solution will your country support, and why? HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026.

VIDEO 1 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] An unmanned aerial vehicle, or what we commonly call a drone, is simply an aircraft without a human pilot on board. But because almost every modern drone is equipped with a high-resolution camera, these machines are, by default, flying surveillance tools. This introduces a direct conflict with international human rights law. Article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy. Addressing this conflict falls to DISEC, the Disarmament and International Security Committee. As the General Assembly's first committee, DISEC negotiates global security norms and drafts recommendations. While it cannot pass legally binding international law on its own, its resolutions set the agenda for treaties and global arms agreements.

[0:50] The need for those agreements is urgent. As of 2020, at least 102 countries maintain an active military drone inventory. This is no longer a niche capability controlled by a few wealthy powers. Commercial technology has driven prices down, allowing at least 20 armed non-state organizations, including cartels, to acquire these systems. A rapidly expanding network of cheap, capable flying cameras is actively challenging the human right to privacy across the globe. Knowing you are being watched changes how you behave. When domestic police forces deploy drones to monitor peaceful assemblies from the sky, people often stay home. This constant overhead presence creates a chilling effect that discourages free speech and lawful protest.

[1:38] This tactic has become routine. Research shows that more than 1,000 local police departments in the United States alone now actively use drones for domestic operations. Tracking these devices is increasingly difficult. The Black Hornet micro-drone is currently used by roughly 20 different military forces. Weighing less than 20 grams, it flies almost silently and fits easily in the palm of a hand, allowing operators to monitor targets entirely unnoticed. In a military context, that kind of invisible monitoring dictates life and death. In modern conflicts, a drone's camera acts as the primary targeting system, identifying individuals on the ground and immediately feeding those coordinates into lethal strikes. As surveillance technology shrinks to the size of an insect and expands its capacity for lethal force, international law now faces a profound challenge.

[2:31] Regulators have to balance a state's legitimate power to secure its borders against a citizen's right to live their life unobserved. DISEC delegates currently have six major policy solutions to choose from to build that regulatory framework. The first three focus strictly on domestic, everyday usage. Solution one establishes strict legal limits on all surveillance. It requires that deploying a drone must clear a legal threshold of absolute necessity, ensuring governments only intrude on privacy when trying to protect civilian lives. It also requires surveillance to be proportionate, restricting flights to specific locations and limiting how long data can be stored. The terminology here is broad. Because each state defines necessity differently, national intelligence agencies often exploit these vague terms to create massive security loopholes.

[3:21] Solution two treats drones like standard vehicles. It forces operators to officially register their devices and allows governments to draw physical no-fly zones in the sky, legally banning surveillance vehicles from hovering over sensitive civilian locations like hospitals, schools, and private homes. Solution three ignores the hardware entirely and targets the software. By restricting or banning real-time facial recognition from the air, this policy prevents authorities from automatically identifying and tracking thousands of individuals in a crowd. However, law enforcement agencies argue fiercely against this ban. They rely on that exact same biometric software to locate missing persons and identify active terrorist suspects. While domestic policies protect daily civilian privacy, they have a glaring blind spot.

[4:11] They completely fail to constrain authoritarian governments or regulate international warfare. To address state-level violence, the committee has to look at the international flow of technology. Solution four relies on strict export controls. Using frameworks like the Wassenaar Arrangement, a coordinated export agreement among 42 participating governments can restrict the sale of dual-use cameras and individual drone components, suffocating the supply chain before bad actors can build their fleets. Solution five demands transparency and oversight. It requires states to publicly log when and how they deploy drones and mandates independent investigations whenever a strike results in civilian harm. The weakness here is compliance.

[4:57] National security agencies naturally guard their military intelligence. Without a mechanism to physically verify these logs, voluntary reporting is often highly unreliable. That leaves solution six, negotiating a new, legally binding international treaty on autonomous weapons. Backed by a 2026 deadline pushed by the UN and the Red Cross, this treaty would outright ban systems equipped with artificial intelligence that can select and execute targets without direct human intervention. International export limits and sweeping weapons bans offer the strongest external constraints on state violence, but they demand a massive level of global consensus. And in practice, that consensus is historically fragile and very slow to build.

[5:42] You now have to weigh these six tools against your assigned country's unique geopolitical realities. If diplomacy stalls, artificial intelligence and aerial surveillance technologies will permanently outpace our current human rights protections. But absolute inflexible bans carry their own risks. Sweeping regulations could cripple a nation's ability to locate missing citizens or defend against legitimate terrorist threats. When you enter the DISEC committee, you will have to draw a definitive legal line in the sky. Your negotiations will dictate how the world balances global security with the individual right to privacy.