

HMDC Presents... DISEC: Video 2 Transcripts

These are the words spoken in the two Video 2 films for DISEC (The United Nations and International Efforts). 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 2 (EXPLAINER)

[0:00] Alright, let's dive right into this explainer. We're mapping out the massive international landscape you're going to navigate as delegates. We are tackling a pretty complex issue today, but I promise, by the end of this, you'll have a perfectly clear picture of the global playing field. We're going to use this roadmap to locate the exact gap your committee needs to fill. We'll hit the UN's four fragmented tracks, spanning privacy, armed drones, terrorism, and autonomous weapons. Then we'll evaluate UN operations, look at outside international actors, and finally, strategize on how to fill that DISEC gap. Section 1, the UN's four tracks. Let's start with a current, kind of fragmented reality within the United Nations itself. It's actually fascinating how a single piece of technology can end up scattered across so many different desks.

[0:47] So here is the absolutely crucial takeaway. Despite how incredibly common these devices are, no single resolution covers them directly. According to the United Nations General Assembly, December 17, 2024, even their very latest texts only touch the topic from the side without ever mentioning drones by name. That is the baseline you are working from. Instead of one unified approach, the UN has split the issue into four distinct tracks. We're looking at privacy in the digital age, armed drones and accountability, terrorist drones, and finally, autonomous weapons and military AI. Privacy and armed drones. Let's see how this builds across those first two tracks, focusing heavily on human rights and transparency. Let's unpack the privacy track first. According to the United Nations General Assembly, December 18, 2013, Resolution A-R-E-S-68-167 laid the initial foundation, warning that new technology drastically increases surveillance power.

[1:45] And this actually gets renewed every two years. As the tech advanced, the warnings definitely escalated. Fast forward to Resolution A-R-E-S-79-175. According to the United Nations General Assembly, December 17, 2024, they explicitly warned about the harms of facial recognition without safeguards. Then, the focus shifted to protests. According to the UN Human Rights Council, July 14, 2022, Resolution A-HRC-R-E-S-50-21 specifically named aerial surveillance vehicles as a major concern. And most recently, according to the UN Human Rights Council, April 7, 2025, a really firm stance was taken. Biometric identification simply must not be used for mass surveillance. Now let's shift gears to the armed drones track.

[2:30] According to the UN Human Rights Council, March 28, 2014, Resolution A-HRC-R-E-S-25-22 was adopted. In this one, states were urged to keep armed drone use fully transparent and strictly compliant with international law. But this vote brilliantly illustrates the global divide. Resolution A-HRC-R-E-S-25-22 passed 27-6 with 14 abstentions. However, major drone users found transparency undesirable and actually voted against it. Because of that intense resistance, international oversight remains incredibly weak. In fact, according to the UN Human Rights Council, August 15, 2020, a report exposed that the Security Council has questioned the legality of an extraterritorial targeted killing exactly one time.

[3:20] Just once. Terrorism and autonomous weapons. Next up, we're examining the security-focused tracks, which center around preventing non-state actors from getting these systems and regulating the machines themselves. On the terrorism track, according to the United Nations Security Council, August 2, 2019 [Our report says: August 2, 2017], Resolution S-R-E-S-2370 explicitly condemned the flow of unmanned aircraft to terrorists. Later, according to the United Nations Security Council, December 30, 2021, Resolution S-R-E-S-2617 pushed to raise awareness of this specific threat. Yet, there is still a massive blind spot here. According to the UN Human Rights Council, March 1, 2023, the 2022 Delhi Declaration left a gaping hole by completely ignoring the abuse of drones by states themselves.

[4:08] Now, the autonomous weapons track is happening right inside your committee. The groundwork started when, according to the United Nations General Assembly, December 22, 2023, Resolution A-R-E-S-78-241 officially requested state views. Momentum really built the following year. According to the United Nations General Assembly, December 2, 2024, Resolution A-R-E-S-79-62 convened formal consultations. A companion resolution, according to the United Nations General Assembly, December 24, 2024, affirmed that international law absolutely applies to military AI. And the ticking clock you need to watch? According to the United Nations, July 1, 2024, the Secretary General urged for a binding treaty on lethal autonomous weapons by 2026.

[4:54] Bringing us to Section 4, UN Operations and Progress. Let's evaluate the UN's own actions and their overall progress, because it's super important to look at how the organization conducts its own affairs. Interestingly enough, the UN itself uses surveillance drones to help achieve its missions. According to the United Nations Security Council, March 28, 2013, Resolution S-R-E-S-98 [Our report says: S/RES/2098] explicitly authorized peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to use unmanned aerial systems to monitor arms flows. Now, it's fascinating to see the stark contrast between strong, agreed language and the reality of weak oversight. What is currently working? Well, privacy language is robust, military AI squarely falls under human rights law, and investigators are successfully using drone footage as hard evidence.

[5:43] But what is not working? There is absolutely no direct resolution. Transparency is actively opposed by major users, oversight remains very weak, and counterterrorism efforts completely ignore state abuse. International actors and gaps. Beyond the UN, we really must look at what other actors are doing globally to see if anyone else has managed to solve this puzzle. Outside the UN, we have export regimes. According to the Wassenaar Arrangement, last accessed October 2026, 42 states control unmanned airborne vehicle exports. Similarly, according to the Missile Technology Control Regime, last accessed October 2026, 35 countries do the exact same thing for delivery systems. Finally, looking at broader agreements, according to the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat, last accessed October 2026, the Arms Trade Treaty currently has 117 states parties.

[6:34] Now, these regimes certainly help control technology exports, but their membership is limited, and they definitely do not explicitly cover all small surveillance drones. And there are plenty of other specialized actors in the mix. For example, according to the Council of Europe, last accessed October 2026, their AI treaty explicitly excludes national defense, meaning any claims that it comprehensively covers military AI are completely incorrect. Over in the aviation space, according to ICAO, last accessed October 2026, their standards focus entirely on safety, not privacy. Meanwhile, according to the Global Counterterrorism Forum, last accessed October 2026, their Berlin Memorandum offers practices that remain entirely non-binding. And finally, we see a lot of humanitarian pressure from the ICRC.

[7:21] And according to UNIDIR, December 1, 2017, some really important ongoing research on transparency and oversight. Filling the DISEC Gap. We have mapped out the entire landscape, which leads us right to your mission. This is exactly where your strategy comes into play. Because across all these bodies, resolutions, and treaties, military and security surveillance is consistently excluded. That leaves a massive gap that causes severe harm to privacy and human rights globally. This is your exact area of responsibility. So I challenge you right now. How will your country fill this gap? Will you advocate for strict export controls, push for new transparency standards, or drive hard to meet that 2026 treaty deadline? HMDC Forensics, Harvard MUN Online, December 2026.

VIDEO 2 (CINEMATIC)

[0:00] That quiet hum above a protest or a city block might be a military-grade drone. Today, some systems can circle a single location for 20 hours [Our report says: about 14 hours], capturing high-resolution video, scanning faces, and vacuuming up private mobile phone conversations. But inside the halls of the United Nations, a strange silence persists. As of 2026, there is not a single UN resolution that directly targets the issue of drone surveillance by name. Instead, the UN handles the problem in pieces. The conversation is fractured across four entirely separate policy tracks — digital privacy, armed drone accountability, counterterrorism, and the push to regulate autonomous weapons.

[0:47] By scattering the debate, the international community has built a system with massive blind spots. When human rights experts talk about data storage and security committees talk about killer robots, the routine, everyday use of military and police drones to watch civilian populations slips right through the cracks. To see how we got here, let's look at the UN's actual track record. The timeline begins in 2013, when the General Assembly passed its first major resolution protecting the right to privacy in the digital age. But that exact same year, the UN Security Council authorized its own peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to use unmanned aerial systems to monitor arms flows. By 2014, the Human Rights Council tried to force accountability, drafting a resolution demanding transparency and investigations into armed drone strikes.

[1:39] It passed, but major drone-using nations, including France, the UK, and the US, voted against it. Following that split, the Security Council shifted its focus entirely toward non-state actors. Resolutions in 2017 and 2021 explicitly target the flow of drones to terrorist groups, while remaining completely silent on state abuses. The conversation pivoted back to human rights in 2022, when the Council finally named aerial surveillance vehicles as a direct threat to peaceful civilian protests. Now, the debate sits in the General Assembly's first committee, driven by a tight deadline to negotiate a treaty on lethal autonomous weapons by 2026. We have a decade of declarations scattered across different committees.

[2:27] Yet if a state decides to point a camera drone at its own citizens, or uses metadata to choose a target for a lethal strike, there is still no unified mechanism to hold them accountable. The UN General Assembly isn't the only actor trying to write the rules. Several outside organizations have built their own frameworks to govern new technology. Groups like the Missile Technology Control Regime and the Wassenaar Arrangement coordinate export rules for massive weaponized delivery systems. But their thresholds completely ignore the 20-gram micro-drone that militaries now use to silently navigate dense, urban alleyways. The Arms Trade Treaty exists to regulate conventional weapons sales, but its risk assessments rarely consider the specific privacy implications of selling dual-use camera drones to authoritarian governments.

[3:17] Then there is the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, signed by major global powers in 2024. It mandates strict human rights protections for civilian AI, but it contains a massive intentional loophole. The treaty explicitly excludes any artificial intelligence used for national defense. Meanwhile, the International Civil Aviation Organization writes the global rules for integrating drones into shared airspace. Their mandate is strictly focused on physical safety in the air, purposefully leaving privacy rights on the ground out of the equation. Look closely at these external frameworks and a pattern emerges. Whether it's aviation safety, treaties on arms control, or civilian AI rules, every single treaty specifically carves out military and security operations.

[4:05] They regulate the edges and leave state security agencies completely unchecked. This animated map shows what the international community has actually managed to regulate. We have rules for aviation safety, guidelines for digital data, treaties for civilian AI, and task forces for counterterrorism. But look at what sits right in the middle. There is a massive void. The everyday use of military and security drone surveillance operates in a completely unregulated gray area. This is where your work begins. As a delegate in the Disarmament and International Security Committee, your task is to draft the first resolution that looks directly into this void. You need to decide how your country will approach the problem. Will you push for strict legal limits on surveillance time and live facial recognition?

[4:54] Will you demand binding export controls on drone components? Or will you build a framework for transparency and independent oversight? The tools to fix this exist, but no one has put them together. Until this committee acts, the international legal framework remains dangerously incomplete.