

POLICY BRIEF | VISITING SCHOLAR SERIES

POLICY ON ADVANCED WEAPONS TECHNOLOGIES

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Dr. Latiff spoke at the Tower Center Aug. 29, 2018 at the program “Future War: Exploring the New Global Battlefield.”

The U.S. has historically led the world in the development of advanced technologies, both for commercial purposes and for military applications. Nuclear weapons, stealth, submarines, satellites, the computer, and the internet are but just a few of the long list of things which have defined the last century of technology in the U.S. Unsurprisingly, other nations look to U.S. successes and follow our lead, copying the technologies, often improving on them, and occasionally deploying them against us. So naturally the U.S. government and its suppliers find it necessary to continue to invest heavily in research and development to stay one step ahead of our competitors both economically and militarily.

While it would be ridiculous to deliberately stop or, for that matter, slow down this pace of development and innovation, it is important that technology developers pay attention to potential downsides of their innovations and attempt to understand and mitigate them. U.S. government agencies and the industries that support them should be required to include in their development plans and schedule milestones an analysis of potential ways in

which their inventions might be misused or abused, ethical considerations in the deployment of the technologies, potential mitigation strategies, and, in the case of weapons technologies, the potential for violations of existing international weapons conventions and the laws of armed conflict. Where appropriate, agencies and corporations should be required to have selected programs reviewed by outside experts in ethics as well as law. These actions should be required not only of unclassified systems, but of classified military and intelligence systems as well.

With the goal of eliminating over-classification, increasing transparency to an often-mystified public, and encouraging public involvement in national security issues, government agencies should be required to justify why their information should be or must remain classified. The government's Declassification Review Board should be given aggressive goals and funded and staffed appropriately to dramatically reduce the level of classified information in government programs.

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