ANNUAL REPORT

State of AI Weapons 2026

What the database shows: the numbers, five trends and the state of the rules

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347	31	238
SYSTEMS TRACKED	COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN	DEPLOYED

48

FIRST USED SINCE 2020 (OF 153 WITH A KNOWN YEAR)

This report summarises what the ArtificialWeapons.com database covers as of October 2026, how the picture is changing, and where the main uncertainties lie. It is built from public sources, and 313 of the 347 systems link to a source we have checked; we are adding the rest.

1. What we count as an AI weapon

We track systems that use machine learning, automation or autonomy in selecting, tracking, guiding or engaging targets, or in the command and intelligence systems that direct them. That includes autonomous and loitering drones, AI-assisted targeting software, uncrewed ships and ground vehicles, autonomous air defense, electronic warfare, and cyber and information weapons. A system can be on our list even when its makers do not describe it as AI: many weapons are autonomous in a narrow function, such as a missile seeker that recognises a ship on its own. We do not have access to classified programs, so the database reflects what is publicly known.

2. The database in numbers

The 347 systems in the database come from 31 countries. The United States, Israel, Russia and China account for most entries, which reflects both where the technology is most developed and where information is most available.

Country	Systems
United States	112
Russia	45
Israel	42
China	30
Iran	17
Türkiye	14
Ukraine	13
India	11
Germany	11
United Kingdom	9
France	7
North Korea	6

By category, uncrewed aircraft dominate, followed by interceptors and targeting systems:

Category	Systems
Autonomous Drone	149
Autonomous Interceptor	41
Cyber Weapon	37
AI Targeting	26
Autonomous Naval	23
Autonomous Ground System	20
AI Command & Control	19
Electronic Warfare	16
Swarm System	8
Information Warfare	8

By status:

Status	Systems
DEPLOYED	238
TESTING	38
RETIRED	37
IN DEVELOPMENT	34

Counts reflect our coverage, not the world's inventory. They will rise as we add systems, so use them to understand structure rather than as a census.

3. Five trends

Mass-produced drones are now central to war. Russia's war in Ukraine turned cheap drones into a primary weapon on both sides: hand-built first-person-view drones, loitering munitions such as the Lancet-3, one-way attack drones such as the Shahed-136 and Ukraine's own Liutyi, and uncrewed boats such as the Magura V5 and Sea Baby. The lesson for armies is that quantity and speed of adaptation matter.

Uncrewed "wingmen" are moving from concept to prototype. The US Air Force's Collaborative Combat Aircraft program, Australia's MQ-28A Ghost Bat, Türkiye's Kizilelma and Chinese designs such as the FH-97A all pursue the same idea of cheaper uncrewed aircraft flying with crewed fighters.

Counter-drone defense is becoming automatic. Defending against swarms leaves little time for a human to decide on each shot, so air-defense systems such as Skyranger 30, Goalkeeper and the Phalanx increasingly operate with automatic detection and tracking, and new options such as microwave weapons (Leonidas) and lasers (DragonFire, Iron Beam) are entering service or testing.

AI is entering targeting and command. Software such as Project Maven, Ukraine's Delta and the IBCS network combines sensor data faster than people can. Media investigations into Israeli systems such as Lavender and Gospel have made the question of human oversight a public one; the Israeli military disputes some of the reporting.

Rules lag behind technology. There is still no treaty. Two UN General Assembly resolutions passed with large majorities, the UN Secretary-General wants a binding instrument by 2026, and states are meeting under the CCW. See our treaties and regulation tracker.

4. What to watch next

- The CCW Seventh Review Conference in November 2026 and whether it opens treaty negotiations.
- Production decisions for uncrewed combat aircraft, and whether they reach large numbers.
- Whether Western militaries can match the drone volumes being produced in Ukraine and Russia.
- Further reporting and official statements on how AI is used in targeting.

5. Method and limits

Entries are drawn from public sources, mainly manufacturer and government statements, specialist defense media and reference works, and entries link to a source wherever we have verified one. We summarise cautiously and label claims made by governments or companies as theirs. Errors happen, especially for fast-moving programs and for state media claims that cannot be verified. If you spot one, tell us. See also our methodology.

Report data computed from the live database on 2026-10-03.