# Military Automation Transition Act

## Section 1. Short Title

This Act may be cited as the **"Military Automation Transition Act."**

## Section 2. Findings and Purpose

**(a) Findings:** Congress finds the following:

1. **Technological Opportunity and Costs:** Advances in artificial intelligence, robotics, and autonomous systems present an opportunity to make U.S. military operations faster, safer, and more cost-effective. Service members currently constitute one of the most significant expenses in the defense budget, and reducing reliance on human personnel through automation promises a more effective force at potentially lower long-term costatlanticcouncil.org. For example, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) like the MQ-1/MQ-9 have demonstrated dramatically lower operating costs compared to manned aircraft (approximately **$737 per flight hour for a Predator drone vs. $22,000+ for a U-2 spy plane**atlanticcouncil.org). These savings, coupled with keeping personnel out of harm's way, underscore the benefits of automation. However, historical trends also show that savings from automation are often redirected to new capabilities, meaning overall budgets may not shrink proportionallyatlanticcouncil.org. The primary benefits are increased readiness, expanded operational capacity, and reduced risk to troops rather than purely budgetary reductionsatlanticcouncil.org.
2. **Global Competition:** Rival powers are aggressively pursuing military automation. The Department of Defense has noted that the United States, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China have all **expanded efforts to develop autonomous military systems and artificial intelligence** for defensearmscontrol.org. In FY2020, the Pentagon planned to spend **$3.7 billion on unmanned systems** and nearly $1 billion on AI developmentarmscontrol.org, signaling the scale of investment deemed necessary to maintain a competitive edge. Accelerating U.S. adoption of autonomous military technology is vital to preserve technological superiority and deterrence. Failure to do so risks ceding advantage to adversaries who are integrating drone swarms, robotic vehicles, and algorithmic decision-making into their force structure.
3. **Force Multiplication and Operational Advantages:** Autonomous systems act as a force multiplier by allowing fewer or no warfighters to accomplish missions that once required many. These systems can **operate in environments too hazardous for humans**, undertake long-endurance missions

beyond human physiological limits, and react at machine speeds. For instance, the U.S. Navy has demonstrated a prototype **unmanned surface vessel (Sea Hunter)** capable of autonomously sailing from California to Hawaii and backdvidshub.net, and is developing crewless ships described as "**low-cost, high-endurance**" platforms to augment the manned fleetarmscontrol.org. All military domains – land, air, sea, space, and cyber – stand to gain from increased automation, which can **augment combat power at lower cost and with fewer casualties** as noted by the Navyarmscontrol.org. The integration of AI for command and control can accelerate decision cycles, processing battlefield data faster than human commanders and thereby improving responsiveness under high-intensity conflict conditions.

4. **Ethical and Security Considerations:** The transition to an automated force must be handled with great care for ethics and security. Lethal Autonomous Weapon Systems (LAWS), which can select and engage targets without human intervention, raise significant legal and moral questions. Internationally, there is growing concern about the use of "killer robots." In December 2024, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for the development of new international laws on autonomous weapons (166 nations in favor, 3 opposed)asil.org, reflecting global anxiety about the implications of AI in warfare. The United States must ensure that any use of autonomous military force complies with the Law of Armed Conflict and ethical norms. This includes maintaining **appropriate human accountability for the use of force**, clear rules of engagement for autonomous systems, and robust testing to prevent malfunctions or unintended engagements. Additionally, **cybersecurity is a paramount concern**: AI-enabled platforms can be vulnerable to novel cyber attacks and data manipulation in ways traditional systems are noteuropeanleadershipnetwork.org. Without strong safeguards, an adversary could attempt to hack or subvert autonomous systems, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

5. **Economic and Workforce Impacts:** A deliberate transition to automation will have profound effects on the defense workforce. The Department of Defense currently employs over a million active-duty personnel whose roles and training will need to adapt. Studies indicate that military automation will **require reducing or redefining certain occupational specialties, re-skilling many service members, and creating entirely new career fields**mwi.westpoint.edu. Just as the introduction of motor vehicles in the early 20th century forced militaries to retire horse-mounted units and retrain personnel as drivers and mechanics, the introduction of robotic systems will demand new skills (e.g. robot maintenance, AI oversight) while rendering some traditional roles obsolete. Experts project a growing need for personnel in technical and cognitive roles that are difficult to automate – for example, **technicians in software, robotics**

**and cybersecurity, data analysts, AI ethicists, and human-machine teaming operators**mwi.westpoint.edu. At the same time, displaced service members can apply their discipline and technical aptitude in civilian sectors. Ensuring a just and orderly transition for these individuals is both an ethical imperative and critical for retaining public support for this transformation.

**(b) Purpose:** In light of the above findings, the purpose of this Act is to direct and fund a comprehensive 10-year program to transition the United States Armed Forces to a fully automated force structure, as recommended by the *"Cost-Benefit Analysis of a Fully Automated U.S. Military"* report. This Act authorizes the replacement of human-operated combat and support systems with autonomous systems (including drones, uncrewed vehicles, and AI-driven command networks) across all service branches. It establishes a dedicated **Autonomous Defense Transition Command** to oversee this transformation, provides a phased investment strategy with full cost estimates, and sets requirements for transparency, accountability, and ethics. The Act further provides for the decommissioning of legacy manned systems, workforce retraining and placement for affected personnel, and international engagement to manage the strategic ramifications of automated warfare. The ultimate goal is to enhance U.S. national security by leveraging technology to reduce American casualties and increase force effectiveness, while upholding our values and preventing instability that could arise from the unregulated proliferation of autonomous weapons.

## Section 3. Definitions

In this Act:

- **"Autonomous system"** means any vehicle, weapon, device, aircraft, vessel, or software-driven platform capable of performing tasks or missions **without real-time human control**, once activated or deployed. This includes **autonomous weapon systems** that can select and engage targets without further human input, as well as autonomous non-lethal systems for logistics, surveillance, or support.
- **"Fully automated military"** refers to a state in which the core operational functions of all branches of the Armed Forces are conducted by autonomous systems or remotely controlled systems, **with minimal or no personnel in harm's way** during combat operations. In a fully automated military, humans serve primarily in supervisory, strategic decision-making, maintenance, and support roles, rather than as front-line operators of weapons or vehicles.
- **"Legacy system"** means any military platform or system that **requires human operation or crew** to fulfill its primary function. This includes, but is not limited to, crewed aircraft, manned ground combat vehicles (tanks, armored

personnel carriers with onboard troops), crewed naval vessels and submarines, and any other weapon system or support vehicle operated directly by military personnel.

- **"Replacement autonomous system"** means a new or upgraded system that performs an equivalent or superior function to a legacy system **without requiring onboard human operators**. Examples include unmanned aerial vehicles replacing crewed airplanes, robotic combat vehicles replacing manned tanks, and crewless ships or submarines replacing crewed naval vessels.
- **"Autonomous Defense Transition Command (ADTC)"** means the temporary command established by Section 5 of this Act within the Department of Defense to coordinate and oversee the transition to a fully automated force.
- **"Department"** means the Department of Defense (DoD).
- **"Secretary"** means the Secretary of Defense, except where otherwise specified (e.g., "Secretary of the Army" refers to the civilian head of the Department of the Army).
- **"Service branch"** or **"military department"** refers to each of the Armed Forces: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force (and for purposes of this Act, the Navy includes the Marine Corps as a component, and the Department of the Navy shall implement Navy and Marine Corps transition programs in coordination).
- **"Covered period"** refers to the 10-year transition period beginning on the date of enactment of this Act, over which the automation conversion authorized by this Act is to take place.
- **"Lethal Autonomous Weapon"** means an autonomous system, as defined above, specifically designed to employ lethal force. Such a system, once activated, can **select and engage targets without additional human intervention**asil.org. This definition aligns with emerging international usage and is included here to facilitate oversight and ethical guidelines.

## Section 4. Mandate for Autonomous Modernization of the Armed Forces

**(a) General Requirement to Replace Manned Systems:** The Department of Defense is hereby directed to begin an immediate and comprehensive transition to automated systems. **Within 180 days** of enactment, the Secretary of Defense shall issue implementation orders to each service branch requiring the phased replacement or conversion of all legacy human-operated military systems with autonomous or remotely operated systems. This replacement shall occur as rapidly as practical, with the objective of achieving a **fully automated force within 10 years**. The transition will encompass combat, support, and command

functions across the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force. Key areas of modernization shall include, but are not limited to:

- **Unmanned Aerial Systems (Air Force and Naval Aviation):** Expand development and procurement of **autonomous drones** and uncrewed aircraft for all missions currently performed by manned aircraft, including fighters, bombers, reconnaissance planes, and support aircraft. By the end of the covered period, the Air Force shall have replaced the majority of its crewed aerial fleets with **UAVs or optionally-piloted vehicles** that can operate autonomously or under remote human supervision. The **cost-efficiency of UAVs** (as evidenced by systems like the MQ-9 Reaper, which costs a fraction per hour to operate compared to legacy fighters or spy planesatlanticcouncil.org) and their proven combat effectiveness in reconnaissance and strike roles should be leveraged at scale. The Navy's carrier air wings shall likewise transition to carrier-capable drones for strike and patrol missions. No new manned combat aircraft programs shall be initiated, and **by Year 5** of the transition, **all new combat aircraft acquisitions must be uncrewed or autonomous** platforms. Human pilots may be retained for certain roles (e.g. liaison or aerobatic teams) but will not be required for frontline combat deployment by the end of the transition period.
- **Autonomous Ground Combat and Logistics Systems (Army and Marine Corps):** The Army and Marine Corps shall integrate **Robotic Combat Vehicles (RCVs)** and autonomous ground systems to replace manned tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery, and logistical vehicles. This includes light, medium, and heavy unmanned ground vehicles capable of carrying weapons, sensors, or supplies. The Army has already tested RCV prototypesdvidshub.net; this Act accelerates those efforts to deployment. **By Year 7**, at least two brigade combat teams in the Army and one Marine Corps regiment should be fully equipped with robotic vehicles in lieu of traditional manned vehicles as a pilot for broader adoption. These autonomous ground units will be capable of remote operation as well as increasing levels of on-board autonomy (navigation, target acquisition under human-set parameters, etc.). Similarly, logistics convoys and base resupply will transition to **autonomous trucks and cargo drones**, reducing the risk to soldiers from IEDs and ambushes during supply missions. The Act mandates that **all routine convoy operations in theater be conducted with unmanned vehicles by Year 10**, with necessary exceptions only for emergency or last-resort situations.
- **Uncrewed Naval Vessels and Submarines (Navy):** The U.S. Navy shall accelerate development of **crewless ships and submarines** to complement and eventually replace certain classes of manned warships. This includes unmanned surface vessels (USVs) for missions such as patrol, mine clearing, anti-submarine warfare, and even armed escort or picket duties, as well as

**unmanned undersea vehicles (UUVs)** for surveillance and combat roles. The Navy's recent prototype programs (e.g., **Sea Hunter**, a 135-foot autonomous vessel that has demonstrated long-range self-navigationdvidshub.net) prove the concept of reliable uncrewed ships. Under this Act, larger displacement combat USVs capable of offensive operations are to be developed and fielded. The Navy is already seeking to build such vessels to undertake missions of traditional warships **without a human crew onboardarmscontrol.org**, providing greater endurance and lower operating costs. By **Year 6**, the Navy shall commission at least **two squadrons of unmanned surface vessels** and begin phasing them into deployments alongside crewed fleets. By Year 10, the goal is to have a significant portion of routine naval patrols and presence missions handled by uncrewed vessels. Additionally, the Navy will expand its use of autonomous submarines for both intelligence gathering and combat — for example, large displacement UUVs that can perform long-endurance underwater missions such as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), or act as force multipliers carrying payloads. All new classes of warships authorized after enactment of this Act must be **designed for either full autonomy or optional manning**, to ensure no further expansion of exclusively crew-dependent platforms.

- **Autonomous and AI-Driven Command & Control Systems (All Branches):** The Department shall develop and deploy **AI-based battlefield management systems** to assist in commanding the new autonomous forces. This includes advanced decision-support AI that can process intelligence from drone sensors, track unit positions, recommend courses of action, and even execute routine command functions at machine-speed under human-defined rules. While human commanders will set objectives and rules of engagement, AI systems will coordinate the movements and actions of swarms of drones, unmanned vehicles, and cyber defense assets in real time. Each branch shall incorporate **AI command agents** into their command centers (for example, an AI battle management system in an Air Operations Center to assign drone sorties, or an AI ground command system in Army units to coordinate robotic tanks). By Year 5, at least one operational exercise in each service should demonstrate a **"human-on-the-loop" command structure**, wherein human commanders supervise while an AI system manages tactical details. By Year 10, the **standard operating procedure** is envisioned to include AI assistance at every level of command, from strategic planning to tactical control, allowing the U.S. military to react faster than adversaries. All AI command systems will be required to operate within parameters set by human officers and to yield to human override in any situation that demands human judgment. This blend of automation with retained human oversight seeks to harness AI speed while upholding the **principle of human responsibility** for critical decisions.

• **Space and Cyber Operations (Space Force and Cyber Command):** The U.S. Space Force shall maximize the autonomy of space-based assets and their ground control systems. Satellites and orbital defense systems already operate largely via automated software; under this Act, the Space Force will develop **AI-enabled satellite constellations** that can maneuver, avoid threats, and coordinate with minimal human input. Any future space-based sensors or weapons (should they be developed) must include autonomous operation capabilities to react instantly to threats like missile launches or anti-satellite weapons, under predefined rules. In cyberspace, the U.S. Cyber Command and service cyber components will leverage automation for network defense—deploying AI that can detect and counter intrusions at machine speed—as well as for potential offensive cyber operations with autonomous tools (subject to policy guidance and rules of engagement). These technology enhancements ensure that in domains where milliseconds matter, the military's automated systems can act in timeframes impossible for human operators.

**(b) Prohibition on New Manned Systems:** Effective upon enactment of this Act, **no funds may be expended to initiate development or procurement of new manned combat systems** except by explicit waiver from Congress. Ongoing legacy programs may continue through their planned cycles, but their capabilities must be supplanted by autonomous alternatives on a rolling basis. The Secretary of Defense shall establish a process to review any proposed acquisition for consistency with this Act's automation goals. If a service seeks to develop a system that requires human operators (for example, a new fighter aircraft or tank design with a human crew), it must justify to the Secretary and to Congress why an autonomous or remotely operated alternative is not feasible, and such program shall require specific Congressional authorization notwithstanding this Act.

**(c) Interim Milestones:** The Autonomous Defense Transition Command (established in Section 5) shall set specific **branch-by-branch benchmarks** for each two-year interval of the transition. As a guideline, by **Year 3** of the covered period, at least 20% of new procurement in each service should be for autonomous systems; by **Year 5**, at least 30% of operational units (e.g., squadrons, battalions, ships) should include autonomous or remote-operated platforms in their regular order of battle; by **Year 8**, the majority of front-line platforms fielded should be autonomous or uncrewed; and by **Year 10**, the goal is essentially 100% of front-line combat systems are automated, with any remaining crewed systems relegated to support or training roles to be drawn down thereafter. These targets shall be refined by ADTC in consultation with service chiefs, but shall be ambitious enough to achieve the Act's purpose.

**(d) Exceptions and Safety Valve:** The President may waive specific requirements of this section on a case-by-case basis if deemed necessary for

national security, subject to notification of Congress. For example, if unforeseen technological hurdles delay a particular capability, or if a critical legacy system must be temporarily retained due to an emergent threat, the President (or Secretary of Defense with Presidential concurrence) may extend its use. However, any such waiver must be reported in writing to the congressional defense committees with a justification and a plan to mitigate the shortfall. The intent is that waivers are **limited and temporary**, to ensure the overall 10-year automation timeline remains on track.

## Section 5. Establishment of the Autonomous Defense Transition Command (ADTC)

**(a) Establishment and Mission:** There is established within the Department of Defense the **Autonomous Defense Transition Command (ADTC)**, a joint command charged with overseeing and coordinating the United States military's transition to a fully automated force. The ADTC shall serve as the central authority to manage this multi-faceted transformation across all service branches. Its core mission is to **ensure that the development, acquisition, testing, and deployment of autonomous systems occur in a unified, efficient, and accountable manner**, consistent with the requirements of this Act and the broader national security strategy.

**(b) Leadership:** The ADTC shall be led by a Director, who may be a senior civilian official or a flag/general officer (of four-star rank) appointed by the President by and with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Director of ADTC will report directly to the Secretary of Defense. Each military service branch shall detail a deputy director to the ADTC at the three-star level (or civilian equivalent), to represent their service's interests and to execute ADTC directives within their service. The leadership team will thus be joint in composition, ensuring all perspectives are represented.

**(c) Organization:** The ADTC will be organized into functional divisions reflecting the major components of the transition. These may include: (1) **Technology & Acquisition Division** – to coordinate R&D and procurement of autonomous systems (working closely with DARPA, service acquisition executives, and defense industry partners); (2) **Operations & Integration Division** – to coordinate field testing, doctrine development, and integration of autonomous units into existing force structure; (3) **Training & Personnel Division** – to coordinate development of new training pipelines for operators, technicians, and to manage retraining of displaced personnel in collaboration with DoD's education institutions; (4) **Ethics & Safety Office** – a dedicated office to oversee compliance with ethical use-of-force guidelines, legal review of autonomous capabilities, and system safety testing (this office will liaise with the DoD General

Counsel, Judge Advocate General's Corps of each service, and relevant experts); (5) **Cybersecurity & Resilience Division** – to coordinate cybersecurity protections for autonomous systems and build resilience against hacking or electronic warfare (in coordination with U.S. Cyber Command and NSA); and (6) **Administration & Oversight Division**– handling budgeting, contracting oversight, auditing, and reporting, including the preparation of the annual reports required by Section 8.

**(d) Responsibilities:** The ADTC shall have the following duties and authorities:

1. **Program Management:** Serve as the executive agent for all major autonomous system programs that are part of the transition. The ADTC will set **development priorities**, prevent duplication of effort between services (e.g., if Army and Marine Corps both need a robotic ground vehicle, ADTC ensures a coordinated approach), and ensure interoperability of systems (so that, for example, an Air Force reconnaissance drone can seamlessly share data with a Navy autonomous ship and an Army command AI).
2. **Budget Allocation:** Formulate and execute the budget for the transition program (as authorized in Section 6), including distributing funds to service programs and R&D projects. The ADTC Director will have programming authority to shift funds among autonomous systems projects as needed to address shortfalls or exploit breakthroughs, with appropriate notification to Congress.
3. **Milestone Tracking:** Define and track the **milestones and metrics** needed to achieve the 10-year full automation goal. This includes setting technical performance goals (e.g., an autonomous drone flight hours before maintenance metric, or target accuracy requirements for autonomous weapons under test conditions), scheduling test events and field trials, and monitoring progress. If certain milestones are not being met, ADTC can direct corrective actions or recommend adjustments to strategy.
4. **Policy and Doctrine Coordination:** Develop, in coordination with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and service doctrine commands, the new **tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs)** and operational concepts made possible by automation. The ADTC will sponsor wargames and simulations exploring how an automated force fights, to inform concept development such as swarming tactics, human-machine teamed operations, and AI-driven logistics. ADTC's work will feed into updated field manuals, Navy tactics publications, Air Force doctrine, etc., ensuring the **software (doctrine) is updated along with the hardware**.
5. **Interagency and Industry Liaison:** Act as the primary liaison with other government agencies, private industry, and academic institutions for matters relating to defense automation. This includes coordinating with the Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs on retraining programs (as per

Section 10), working with the Department of State on international norms (Section 11), and partnering with technology companies and contractors to leverage the best commercial innovations for military use. The ADTC will establish streamlined processes to collaborate with tech startups, federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs), and university research labs on relevant AI and robotics projects.

6. **Oversight of Ethical Compliance:** Through its Ethics & Safety Office, ADTC will ensure that the development and deployment of autonomous systems adhere to U.S. legal obligations and ethical standards. It will implement the policies described in Section 8 regarding use-of-force protocols, testing, and evaluation. ADTC shall have the authority to **halt or delay** the fielding of any autonomous system that is found to be unreliable or non-compliant with established safety criteria, pending remediation.

7. **Public and Congressional Reporting:** Ensure transparency by regularly briefing Congress (as detailed in Section 8) and by providing the public with appropriate updates on the program's goals and achievements, consistent with classification restrictions. A degree of public communication is important to maintain trust and understanding of why this transition enhances security.

**(e) Duration and Sunset of ADTC:** The ADTC is intended to be a **temporary, mission-specific command**. It shall exist for the duration of the 10-year transition period, plus an additional **one-year wind-down period**. At the end of the wind-down period (i.e., 11 years from enactment), the ADTC will be disestablished unless Congress acts to extend its mandate. Prior to disestablishment, the ADTC Director shall certify to Congress whether the objectives of this Act have been met and shall make recommendations for any functions that ought to continue (for instance, whether a permanent office should remain to monitor autonomous systems after full deployment, or whether remaining tasks should be handed off to the military departments). The intent is that by the time ADTC sunsets, its mission is complete and any further oversight can revert to normal DoD structures.

## Section 6. Authorization of Appropriations and Phased Investment Schedule

**(a) Funding Authorization:** There is hereby authorized to be appropriated a total of **$600 billion** over the 10 fiscal years following enactment to carry out the programs and requirements of this Act. This funding is to cover research, development, testing, evaluation, procurement of autonomous systems, upgrades to command and control infrastructure, training programs for personnel, and associated implementation costs (including the operations of the ADTC). These authorized funds are supplemental to the base defense budget

and are intended to ensure the transition can occur without cannibalizing existing readiness or other modernization priorities. The funds shall be allocated annually according to the phased schedule in subsection (b) and shall be included in the President's budget submissions to Congress each fiscal year. Actual appropriation of these funds will be subject to annual Congressional budget approval, but this Act establishes the priority and maximum authorized amounts.

**(b) Phased Investment Schedule:** The transition will proceed in **phases**, with funding and efforts concentrated as needed at each stage. The following schedule provides a guideline for the allocation of resources and the focus of activities in each phase:

1. **Phase I – Research, Development, and Planning (Fiscal Years 1–2):** *Authorized Funding: $100 billion total.* In the first two years, emphasis is on R&D and laying the groundwork. A substantial investment (roughly $50B per year for two years) will go into accelerating critical technologies: artificial intelligence algorithms (especially for vision, target recognition, and decision-making), secure autonomous control systems, resilient communications networks for drone swarms, and prototyping various autonomous platforms. During Phase I, each service will identify all categories of legacy systems to be replaced and initiate design or prototyping efforts for their autonomous replacements. Funds will also be used to upgrade testing ranges and simulation facilities to accommodate autonomous systems testing (for example, creating "drone traffic control" systems at ranges, or urban test sites for robotic vehicles). By the end of Phase I, the Department should have multiple prototype systems in each domain (air, land, sea) ready for evaluation, and a detailed master plan, developed by ADTC, that sequences out the replacement timelines for all major legacy systems.

2. **Phase II – Prototyping, Testing, and Initial Deployment (Fiscal Years 3–5):** *Authorized Funding: $200 billion total.* This phase covers the middle four years and represents the peak development and initial fielding period. Roughly $65B per year is allocated to bring prototypes to production and begin deploying autonomous units to the field for real-world operational testing. During Phase II, the services will conduct extensive evaluations of new autonomous systems: Army units will hold field exercises with robotic vehicles alongside troops, the Air Force will run side-by-side comparisons of drone squadrons with traditional squadrons, and the Navy will deploy trial uncrewed vessels with carrier strike groups or as independent deployers. Funds will go toward procuring **initial production lots** of successful prototypes (e.g., perhaps dozens of new armed drones, a fleet of unmanned tanks, several unmanned ships). Training programs for operators and technicians will scale up during this phase, requiring investment in new curricula and simulators. Cybersecurity

hardening efforts are in full swing in Phase II, ensuring that as systems come online they are secure (penetration testing, red-team exercises funded via this budget). By the end of Phase II (Year 5), at least 30–40% of the planned new autonomous systems should be fielded in at least prototype or initial operational capability form across the force. Annual reports (Section 8) will specifically assess which legacy systems can begin drawdown based on Phase II results.

3. **Phase III – Full-Scale Production and Transition (Fiscal Years 6–8):** *Authorized Funding: $200 billion total.* In this phase, successful autonomous systems transition to full-rate production and wide deployment. Approximately $66B per year is used to procure larger quantities of mature systems: for instance, if Phase II proved a certain model of unmanned combat aerial vehicle effective, Phase III buys them in hundreds to equip all necessary squadrons. Simultaneously, funds support the **conversion of military units** – e.g., converting a manned armored brigade into one equipped entirely with robotic vehicles requires not just the hardware but also restructuring the unit and additional training for its personnel. Phase III funding also covers facilities and infrastructure changes: maintenance depots must be outfitted for new robotic systems, ships may require modifications to operate drones, communication bandwidth on satellites may need expansion to handle increased data from autonomous systems, etc. By the end of Phase III (Year 8), the bulk of the procurement is complete, and the Armed Forces should be **operationally employing automated systems as a norm**. Many legacy systems should at this point be in standby or limited roles, with some already retired (per Section 9's decommissioning schedule). This phase also invests in any **mid-course corrections** – if certain technologies lag, additional R&D funds are applied; if new needs were discovered, some funds may shift to address those.

4. **Phase IV – Final Integration and Legacy Drawdown (Fiscal Years 9–10):** *Authorized Funding: $100 billion total.* In the final two years, funding tapers as the emphasis shifts from buying new equipment to fully integrating and fine-tuning the automated force, and safely retiring legacy systems. Roughly $50B per year is allocated, focused on **integration, training, and systems refinement**. This includes final software improvements or upgrades to AI (perhaps incorporating lessons learned from years of real operation), and ensuring all systems across branches are interoperable in a joint network. These years fund large-scale exercises and simulations to validate that the fully automated force can operate cohesively in conflict scenarios. Concurrently, resources support the disposal or transfer of legacy equipment (see Section 9) – for example, dismantling old vehicles, securely deactivating and recycling parts of decommissioned systems, or converting some for target practice or museum displays. Investment in retraining and placement of remaining displaced personnel also peaks towards the end of Phase IV, ensuring that as the last

human-operated units stand down, their crew have moved into new roles or civilian careers (Section 10). By the end of Phase IV (Year 10), the transition is intended to be complete: the United States military should be predominantly composed of autonomous platforms with the corresponding human workforce expertly managing and maintaining this equipment rather than operating it in combat.

**(c) Management of Funds:** The funds authorized in this section shall be placed in dedicated accounts or budget program elements clearly identifying them as supporting the Military Automation Transition. The ADTC, through the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), shall have oversight of these funds. The Department's Financial Management regulations will track expenditures to ensure they align with the Act's objectives. Unused funds authorized for a given phase may roll over to subsequent years within the 10-year period if certain projects are delayed or if cost savings are achieved, but any reallocation between phases exceeding 10% of an annual amount must be reported to the congressional defense committees. The goal is to maintain flexibility while keeping Congress informed of significant shifts.

**(d) Cost Updates:** Given the unprecedented nature of this transition, cost estimates may evolve. The Secretary of Defense shall provide an updated cost projection to Congress at the end of Year 5 (midpoint of the transition) and again at Year 8, reflecting actual expenditures, any adjustments in quantities, or technology changes. If the total funding required is expected to exceed the $600 billion authorized, the Secretary must notify Congress with a rationale and propose how to address the shortfall (whether through increased efficiency, extended timeline, or a request for additional authorization). Conversely, if the effort is on track to underspend, the Secretary should identify potential areas to reinvest savings or accelerate the program.

## Section 7. Reporting Requirements and Congressional Oversight

**(a) Annual Report:** The Secretary of Defense, acting through the Director of the Autonomous Defense Transition Command, shall submit to Congress an **annual report** on the progress of the military automation transition. The report shall be unclassified with a classified annex if necessary, and be submitted no later than **March 1** each year, covering the activities of the prior fiscal year. Each annual report shall include:

1. **Program Progress:** A detailed description of progress made toward replacing legacy systems with autonomous systems. This should cover each service branch, listing which specific platforms have been fielded as autonomous replacements, which legacy systems have been retired or are in process of decommissioning, and the results of any major tests or exercises.

The report should quantify the degree of automation achieved (e.g., percentage of units or missions now performed autonomously).

2. **Milestones and Metrics:** An assessment of whether the transition is meeting the milestone targets set forth (as per Section 4(c) and ADTC's internal plans). If any milestones were missed or delayed, provide an explanation and a recovery plan.

3. **Budget Execution:** A financial accounting of funds expended versus funds authorized for that year and cumulatively. Breakdowns by major project or category (air, land, sea, etc.) should be included. The report should highlight any significant cost variances (overruns or savings) and how those are being managed.

4. **Technological Developments:** A summary of key technological successes or setbacks. For example, note if a certain AI algorithm performed above expectations, or if a particular autonomous vehicle had reliability issues. Include information on any safety incidents or accidents involving autonomous systems and how they were resolved.

5. **Personnel Impact:** Data on the number of service members retrained or reassigned in the period, participation in transition assistance programs, and remaining personnel in roles slated for automation. Also include any issues encountered in retraining (like shortfalls in training capacity or unfilled openings in new roles) so Congress can gauge the human impact.

6. **Policy and Doctrine Updates:** Describe any updates to military policies, doctrine, or rules of engagement related to autonomous systems that were implemented in the past year. Also list ongoing studies or wargames influencing how the new technology is used.

7. **Interagency & International Coordination:** Summarize efforts in the past year to engage with allies, international forums, or other agencies regarding autonomous warfare (as elaborated in Section 11). Note any agreements reached or concerns raised by partners.

8. **Planned Activities:** Outline key objectives for the next year of the program – e.g., major acquisitions, test events, or expected milestones – to give Congress foresight into upcoming work.

**(b) Midterm Comprehensive Review:** Not later than **5 years** after enactment, the GAO (Government Accountability Office) shall deliver to Congress an independent midterm review of the implementation of this Act. This GAO report will evaluate the program's performance, including whether funds have been used effectively, whether the transition is likely to meet its 10-year goal on time and on budget, and recommendations for course corrections. The Department of Defense shall fully cooperate with GAO, providing all information required for this assessment.

**(c) Congressional Briefings:** In addition to written reports, the Secretary of Defense (or the ADTC Director as designee) shall provide **semiannual briefings** to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, and Defense Appropriations Subcommittees, on the status of the transition. These briefings (one around March with the annual report, and one around September before end of fiscal year) will enable real-time oversight and allow Members of Congress to ask questions and raise concerns. Topics in these briefings should include any significant deviations from plans, emerging threats or challenges to the automated force, and resource needs.

**(d) Metrics of Success:** The Department, in consultation with Congress, shall develop quantifiable **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** for the transition (if not already covered in ADTC metrics). These might include measures like reduction in required personnel for a given mission, improvements in response times, cost per operation hour comparisons between new vs old systems, incident rates, etc. The annual reports should report these KPIs consistently, so progress can be tracked in a data-driven way.

**(e) Transparency and Public Accountability:** Unclassified portions of the annual report shall be made publicly available to inform the American people about this major defense initiative. The Department may conduct public outreach (such as press releases or media engagements) in conjunction with these reports to highlight the benefits and address any public concerns (for example, explaining how ethical controls are in place for “robotic” systems). While sensitive details will be protected, the spirit of this Act is one of openness about how taxpayer funds are transforming the military and how the U.S. is addressing the ethical dimensions of this transformation.

## Section 8. Oversight, Ethical Use of Force Protocols, and Cybersecurity

**(a) Civilian Oversight and Accountability:** The Department of Defense shall ensure that civilian leadership maintains robust oversight over the development and deployment of autonomous military systems. The chain of command for any autonomous weapon or unit will **always include a human accountable commander** at an appropriate level, even if immediate operational control is exercised by AI. In legal terms, the use of force by an autonomous system is considered an extension of the unit commander’s authority. This ensures that there is always a responsible human who can be held accountable under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the law of armed conflict for the actions of U.S. autonomous systems. To support this principle, the DoD General Counsel, in coordination with the Judge Advocates General of each service, shall issue guidance making clear that autonomous systems do **not absolve human**

**commanders of responsibility** for decisions made by those systems. The ADTC's Ethics & Safety Office (Section 5) will include qualified legal advisers to monitor compliance.

**(b) Ethical Use of Force Protocols:** The Department shall develop stringent **Rules of Engagement (ROE)** and technical **safety protocols** for all autonomous weapons. These protocols must ensure compliance with International Humanitarian Law, including distinction (the ability to distinguish combatants from civilians) and proportionality (avoiding excessive collateral damage). All autonomous lethal systems must be designed and **tested to verify they reliably adhere to target identification and engagement criteria** set by human commandersatlanticcouncil.org. For example, an autonomous drone's AI targeting module should be trained and evaluated to a high confidence level in recognizing lawful targets and ignoring unlawful ones, under a variety of battlefield conditions, before it is cleared for independent operations. Each such system will undergo rigorous review by the DoD's Autonomous Weapons Review Board (or a similar entity to be established if not existing) prior to deployment. This review will involve not only engineers and programmers, but also ethicists, lawyers, and warfighters, ensuring a multidisciplinary examination. Furthermore, wherever feasible, autonomous weapons will incorporate a mechanism for **"human-on-the-loop" or "human-in-the-loop" control** in their deployment: this means that a human commander can intervene or override the system if necessary. Complete autonomy in lethal force will be approached with extreme caution. As policy, fully autonomous engagement without human confirmation should be limited to situations where communication is lost or in extremis self-defense scenarios, and even then only under parameters pre-approved by a human commander.

**(c) Use-of-Force Oversight Board:** Within the ADTC, an **Autonomous Systems Rules of Engagement Council** shall be established, composed of members from the Joint Staff, Office of General Counsel, and representatives from each service's doctrine command, as well as at least one external ethicist or legal scholar (perhaps from the Defense Innovation Board or academia). This Council will regularly assess whether the autonomous systems in use are following the established ROE and make recommendations for updates. It will also review any incidents where an autonomous system used force in a manner that was not clearly anticipated by its programming or where collateral damage occurred, to determine if adjustments to algorithms or procedures are needed. All such incidents and reviews shall be summarized (in appropriate classification) in the annual reports to Congress.

**(d) International Law and Treaties:** Nothing in this Act shall be construed to violate U.S. obligations under international law. The Department of Defense must keep abreast of and comply with evolving international norms regarding

autonomous weapons. If during the covered period the U.S. ratifies any treaty or agreement governing autonomous weapons, the implementation of this Act must align with those obligations. The ADTC shall include international law compliance as a metric in its testing and deployment checklist.

**(e) Cybersecurity Requirements:** Because autonomous military systems will heavily rely on software, data links, and AI algorithms, the Department shall implement robust **cybersecurity measures** from day one of development through the entire lifecycle of each system. All autonomous systems, particularly those with lethal capabilities, must be designed to **fail-safe** if they detect anomalies or loss of secure control – for instance, entering a safe mode or aborting missions if the command link is compromised. The Act mandates regular **penetration testing and red-teaming** of autonomous platforms: specialized cyber units will attempt to hack or spoof the drones, robots, and AI systems in controlled environments to identify vulnerabilities. The findings must be addressed before systems are widely deployed. Acknowledging that AI systems can introduce unique cyber risks (such as adversaries attempting to feed false data or exploit AI decision patterns), the Department will invest in defensive measures that are currently lagging behind the threateuropeanleadershipnetwork.org. This includes encrypted communications, anti-jamming technology, and developing AI that can detect if it's being fed malicious inputs (for example, recognizing when sensor data might be deliberately manipulated by an adversary). The ADTC's Cybersecurity & Resilience Division will coordinate these efforts and will work closely with U.S. Cyber Command to monitor deployed autonomous systems for cyber intrusions in real time.

**(f) Independent Audits:** The Department's Inspector General (DoD IG) shall conduct independent audits and evaluations of the autonomous systems transition at least every two years, focusing on ethics and cybersecurity compliance. The IG will examine whether units are following the required protocols in the field, whether training for operators includes proper emphasis on rules of engagement and cyber hygiene, and whether any deviations or incidents have been properly reported and corrected. The IG reports will be submitted to the Secretary of Defense and Congress. Separately, at Congress's discretion, advisory bodies like the Defense Science Board or National Academy of Sciences may be asked to review the program's safety and ethical integrity. These checks ensure an external set of eyes on the program beyond those managing it.

**(g) Certification Before Deployment:** The Secretary of Defense shall require that **any fully autonomous weapon system** (one capable of selecting and engaging targets on its own) receive a special certification before being deployed in active combat. This certification, endorsed by the Joint Chiefs and

cleared by the DoD General Counsel, will affirm that the system has undergone sufficient testing, that appropriate command-and-control frameworks are in place, and that operators and commanders have been trained in its use and oversight. Without this certification, autonomous systems may be used for testing and exercises but not in live combat operations.

**(h) Preservation of Human Judgment in Nuclear and Strategic Decisions:** This Act does **not** authorize the autonomous control of nuclear weapons or release of nuclear ordnance. The deployment of AI in command systems for strategic forces (like nuclear triad components) is limited to decision support; any actual use of nuclear weapons must remain under traditional human command and control as per existing law and policy. Similarly, any strategic lethal decisions with massive destructive potential shall always require meaningful human confirmation. This provision acts as a safeguard to prevent an AI from inadvertently escalating a conflict to strategic levels without human intervention.

**(i) Continuous Ethical Improvement:** The Department will treat the integration of ethics into AI as an ongoing process. Machine learning models used in targeting or threat assessment should be periodically retrained with updated data that includes "lessons learned" from past mistakes or near-misses, if any. The Department will collaborate with external AI ethics experts to keep updating guidelines for explainability and bias in AI – for instance, ensuring that an AI can provide a rationale for why it classified a target as hostile, to the extent possible, to enable review of its decision processatlanticcouncil.orgatlanticcouncil.org. The ADTC will host annual workshops or exercises explicitly focused on ethical challenges (simulated scenarios where an autonomous system might face a tricky judgment call) to test whether systems and operators respond in accordance with U.S. values and laws.

In sum, this section ensures that as the U.S. builds a more automated military, it does so **safely, ethically, and securely** – with civilian control intact, clear rules governing autonomous force use, and strong defenses against misuse or malfunction. The Act recognizes that **"increased urgency in AI development must be matched with a laser-like focus on ensuring safe development, extensive testing, and ethical use" of these capabilitiesatlanticcouncil.org.

## Section 9. Decommissioning of Legacy Systems

**(a) Inventory and Planning:** Within 180 days of enactment, each service branch shall deliver to the ADTC and Congress a comprehensive **"Legacy Systems Retirement Plan."** This plan will identify all existing major weapons systems, vehicles, and platforms in the service's inventory that are intended to be replaced or rendered redundant by autonomous systems under this Act. For

each category (e.g., M1 Abrams tanks, F-35 fighter jets, Arleigh Burke-class destroyers, etc.), the plan should include: the number in service, the typical remaining service life, and a proposed timeline for drawdown. The plan should align with the expectation that by the end of the 10-year transition, these legacy systems will no longer be in front-line service (except as noted for residual or backup roles). The plan should also identify any systems for which the service believes a manned capability must be retained past 10 years (if any) with justifications — these exceptions will be reviewed by the Secretary and possibly by Congress.

**(b) Moratorium on New Manned Systems Procurement:** Effective immediately, no new contracts shall be entered for the procurement of legacy (manned) systems not already under contract, except if a specific waiver is granted as per Section 4(b). This means, for instance, if the Army had planned a new buy of manned trucks or the Navy a new order of manned fighters beyond those previously approved, such actions must be put on hold. The focus shifts to investing in their unmanned successors. Funds already appropriated for legacy systems in prior budgets may be reprogrammed with Congressional approval to support acquisition of autonomous replacements if appropriate.

**(c) Gradual Drawdown:** Legacy systems will be phased out in a manner that avoids any gap in capability. As autonomous replacements come online and prove their effectiveness, corresponding older systems shall be **retired on a one-for-one or capability-equivalent basis.** For example, when an Air Force base stands up a second squadron of autonomous drones that can perform the mission of strike fighters, a squadron of older manned fighters should be earmarked for retirement. By **Year 5**, the Department should aim to have at least 25% of legacy systems (from the enactment baseline) decommissioned or in inactive status, assuming their replacements are operational. By **Year 8**, this should reach roughly 75%. By the end of Year 10, essentially all legacy platforms slated for replacement should be withdrawn from combat roles. Certain legacy systems might be retained in limited numbers in reserve or training units if they have remaining useful life, but the goal is zero active deployment of legacy manned platforms in combat units post-transition.

**(d) Decommissioning Protocols:** The retirement of each system must be conducted safely and cost-effectively. The Department shall follow best practices for demilitarization: sensitive technologies in old systems (like advanced radar or armor) should be either removed for potential reuse or destroyed if they could be exploited by adversaries. Weapons and ammunition associated with decommissioned systems must be properly stored or disposed of. Environmental regulations should be observed when scrapping or recycling old equipment (for instance, disposing of fuel, oil, or hazardous materials in ships). If certain legacy systems can be **converted to target drones or training**

**aids**, that reuse should be considered (as is often done by converting old fighter jets to remotely piloted targets for testing defense systems).

**(e) Disposal, Sales, or Transfers:** In some cases, legacy equipment may still have value to allies or for secondary uses. The Act allows, with appropriate oversight, the **transfer of decommissioned manned systems to allied or partner nations** if consistent with U.S. foreign policy and if those systems still have service life. Such transfers could bolster allies' defenses and make use of equipment the U.S. no longer needs. However, any transfer of combat vehicles, aircraft, or ships removed under this Act must include end-use assurances and should ideally be accompanied by training so recipients can operate them safely. Alternatively, some systems may be offered to domestic agencies (for example, Coast Guard or state National Guards, if suitable) or donated to museums or sold to private companies (demilitarized) for testing, aggressor simulation, or other purposes. All such dispositions should be reported in the annual report.

**(f) Preservation of Critical Legacy Capabilities:** If a particular capability of a legacy system is not yet matched by an autonomous replacement by Year 8 or so, the Secretary of Defense can authorize retaining a minimal number of that legacy system until a replacement is ready. For instance, if by Year 10 there is still no reliable unmanned strategic airlift equivalent to cargo planes, those cargo planes can remain in service under a temporary exemption. These exemptions should be narrow and revisited annually. The Act's intent is not to lose any mission capability; thus, legacy systems act as a **safety net** until their automated successors fully assume the role.

**(g) Budget for Decommissioning:** The cost of retiring systems (dismantling, storage, severance of contracts, etc.) shall be covered by the funds authorized in Section 6 as part of the overall transition budget. The Department should also estimate any savings gained from retiring systems early (for instance, operations & maintenance savings from no longer having to crew and sustain older equipment). Such savings can be reallocated to the transition effort, including covering retraining costs for personnel who operated those systems.

**(h) Reporting:** Each annual report (Section 7) should detail which legacy systems were decommissioned in that year and which are planned for the upcoming year. It should include any notable issues—e.g., if spare parts or munitions for retired systems need disposal, if contractors or bases were affected, etc.

By systematically retiring legacy systems, the U.S. military will avoid the inefficiency of running two parallel forces (manned and unmanned) for longer than necessary, and will reinforce the commitment to the new automated era.

## Section 10. Personnel Transition: Reemployment and Retraining Programs

**(a) No Service Member Left Behind – Job Guarantee:** The Department of Defense shall ensure that **no active-duty service member or Department of Defense civilian employee is involuntarily unemployed as a result of this Act's implementation.** All personnel positions rendered unnecessary by the automation of functions will be managed through a combination of retraining, reassignment, and transition assistance. The guiding principle is that the brave men and women who have served will **share in the benefits** of this technological advancement, either by moving into new high-tech roles within the military or by transitioning successfully into civilian careers that value their skills.
**(b) Transition Planning Office:** Within the ADTC, the **Training & Personnel Division** (per Section 5(c)) will work closely with the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to execute a comprehensive personnel transition program. Each service branch will appoint a Transition Coordinator to identify impacted personnel and coordinate their futures on a case-by-case basis. Starting immediately, the Department will survey which military occupational specialties (MOS) or billets are likely to be phased out (for example, manned aircraft pilots, tank drivers, ship engineers, etc.) and how many individuals this might affect over the 10-year period. Based on this, a **Human Capital Transition Plan** shall be formulated within 1 year of enactment, with updates every year after.
**(c) Retraining and Education Programs:** The Act authorizes the expansion of existing programs and the creation of new ones to retrain service members for needed roles. For those staying in the military, new career fields in maintaining and managing autonomous systems will be a major avenue. Affected personnel will be offered training as: drone operators or mission supervisors (transitioning pilots and aircrew to remote operation roles), robotics technicians (transitioning mechanics to maintaining unmanned vehicles), data analysts for AI systems, cybersecurity specialists guarding the new networks, and other technical roles. In essence, many will be shifted from operating old platforms to supporting the new automated force. Training pipelines at institutions like service technical schools, the Defense Acquisition University, and partnership programs with civilian tech companies will all be leveraged.
For those who do not transition to a new military role, the DoD will partner with the Department of Labor, Department of Education, and Department of Veterans Affairs to provide educational benefits and job placement assistance. **Every service member whose billet is eliminated will be guaranteed access to retraining in high-demand fields – whether within DoD or in the civilian sector of their choice – at no cost to them.** This could be through an expanded GI Bill, or a new scholarship program specifically for tech and engineering education as it relates to AI, cybersecurity, aerospace, etc. The Act specifically highlights emerging civilian sectors like **cybersecurity, artificial**

**intelligence development, robotics, aerospace, renewable energy infrastructure, and advanced manufacturing** as target industries for retraining placement, in line with national economic needs. These fields correspond to where military skillsets (discipline, technical aptitude) will be highly valued and where the economy is creating jobs, ensuring veterans can transition smoothly.

**(d) Placement and Employment Services:** The Department of Defense will enhance its career assistance programs (such as the Transition Assistance Program - TAP) with a specialized focus on those affected by automation. This includes career counseling, resume workshops for tech industries, and direct recruiting partnerships. The **SkillBridge** program (which allows service members to intern with private companies in their last months of service) can be scaled up, prioritizing companies in the tech and defense sectors who are keen to hire veterans with technical backgrounds. The Act encourages partnerships with major technology companies, defense contractors, and government agencies (like Department of Homeland Security's cybersecurity teams, NASA, etc.) to create a pipeline for outgoing military personnel to these organizations. The **goal is guaranteed placement**: ideally, every person leaving the service due to these changes has a confirmed job or continuing education slot by the time they take off the uniform.

**(e) Incentives and Benefits:** Service members who choose to re-train for a new role within the military will be offered incentives such as reenlistment bonuses or special duty pay for entering critical new fields (for example, an experienced tank crewman who retrains as a robotics technician might get a bonus to encourage retention of their expertise in the new capacity). For those transitioning out, the Act authorizes funding for **relocation assistance** (if their new job is in a different location), extended eligibility for military housing or healthcare for a period during the transition (recognizing that some may separate earlier than planned), and counseling for families as well. Veterans moving to civilian life under these circumstances will also receive priority in federal hiring (as per existing veterans' preference laws, which this Act reinforces for those with automation-related separations).

**(f) Use of National Guard and Reserve:** In some cases, active personnel whose roles are ending might be offered the option to transfer to the Reserve components or National Guard in a capacity where their experience with legacy systems can still be useful in the short term (for example, instructing or helping maintain remaining legacy equipment through the end of its life, or serving as a surge force if needed). This can ease the transition for individuals not ready to fully leave service and allows the military to **retain institutional knowledge** a bit longer. However, these opportunities will be balanced with the overall drawdown strategy.

**(g) Civilian DoD Employees:** The Act's provisions apply similarly to civilian defense employees whose jobs may be affected (for instance, depot workers specialized in older systems, or pilots in civilian roles). They will be offered retraining to work on new systems or other DoD roles, or assisted in finding new employment. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is encouraged to facilitate lateral transfers of skilled DoD civilians into other federal agencies that need technical talent.

**(h) Progress Reports on Personnel Transition:** As part of the annual report to Congress, the Department must include data on how many personnel (military and civilian) were transitioned in the prior year, the types of retraining/education provided, and the success rate of job placements. It should highlight any shortfalls (e.g., if there is an excess of a certain skill with not enough jobs, or a geographic concentration issue) so that additional resources can be directed as needed. Congress intends that the workforce transition be as important a measure of success as the technological transition.

By investing in its people, the Armed Forces will honor the service of those who enabled past capabilities while preparing them for the future. **Automation will "require reducing certain specialties, re-skilling many service members, and creating entirely new job families,"mwi.westpoint.edu and this Act treats that not as a side effect but as a core component to manage proactively.** Many of these service members will become the technicians, AI supervisors, and cyber defenders that the new force and the broader economy critically needmwi.westpoint.edu. In doing so, the Act ensures that the transition to an automated military strengthens the nation's workforce rather than undermines it.

## Section 11. International Engagement and Security Cooperation

**(a) Leadership in Setting Global Norms:** The United States shall actively seek to shape international norms and rules concerning autonomous military systems, using its transition experience as a basis for informed leadership. The Department of State, in coordination with the Department of Defense, is encouraged to launch a diplomatic initiative around the responsible use of military AI and robotics. This includes engaging allies, partners, and even competitors in dialogue to **manage the global implications of automated warfare**. The goal is to prevent misunderstanding, arms races, and unlawful use of these technologies worldwide. As noted in Section 2(a)(4), the world community is increasingly alarmed by the advent of lethal autonomous weapons, as evidenced by the 2024 UN resolution calling for action on this issueasil.org. The U.S. will respond by guiding the conversation, rather than reacting to others' proposals.

**(b) Arms Control and Treaties:** The United States will assess the feasibility of new international agreements or confidence-building measures specifically on autonomous weapons. This could range from formal treaties (for example, an agreement on prohibiting fully autonomous anti-personnel weapons that lack any human oversight) to voluntary codes of conduct. U.S. representatives shall participate constructively in forums such as the United Nations Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Group of Governmental Experts on LAWS, which has been deliberating on this issueasil.org. The policy of the United States, however, will be to ensure any international framework still allows for the **legitimate and responsible development of autonomous systems** that can uphold international law — in other words, to ban truly irresponsible uses (like autonomous systems that cannot discriminate targets) but not to ban autonomy outright. If future negotiations suggest a two-tiered approach (banning some systems, regulating othersasil.org), the U.S. will bring to the table its technical expertise and the lessons learned from ADTC's rigorous testing program to inform what is practical and verifiable.

**(c) Allied Collaboration:** The Department of Defense and Department of State shall work closely with NATO allies, treaty partners (such as Australia, Japan, South Korea), and other friendly nations to coordinate the transition to automated defense capabilities. Many U.S. allies are also investing in military AI and drones; interoperability is crucial. The U.S. will share, as appropriate, certain technologies or standards to ensure that our autonomous systems can operate in coalition (for instance, compatible communication protocols for drones or shared identification friend-or-foe systems to prevent incidents). Joint working groups may be established with key allies on specific topics like **AI ethics** (many allies have similar concerns about keeping humans in control), **technical standards** for safety, and combined training exercises involving autonomous units. Additionally, where allies are not as advanced in automation, the U.S. can assist in capacity building – for example, including allied officers in ADTC training programs or demonstrations. This will help mitigate any capability gap between a fully automated U.S. force and allies' forces, so that coalition operations remain smooth.

**(d) Risk of Proliferation and Misuse:** The U.S. will lead international efforts to prevent the proliferation of highly lethal autonomous weapons to rogue states or non-state actors (terrorists, insurgent groups). Through intelligence and export controls, the U.S. will track the spread of drone and AI technology that could be used maliciously. Diplomatic efforts will encourage major technology exporters (like China, Israel, Russia, European Union countries) to adopt responsible export policies — ideally agreeing not to export the most dangerous autonomous weapon systems or to insist on safeguards if they do. The Wassenaar Arrangement (which governs export controls on dual-use goods) or

other multilateral regimes could be avenues to insert provisions about AI weapons. The Act supports the idea that **global rules of the road** should be established so that automated systems do not lower the threshold for war or enable atrocities. For instance, the U.S. could champion an agreement that any autonomous weapon must have a human-supervised override, or push for a ban on autonomous biological weapon delivery systems, etc.

**(e) Avoiding Escalation and Accidents:** One international challenge of automated militaries is the potential for **unintended escalation** – e.g., autonomous systems from two rival nations interacting could lead to a crisis if not carefully managed. The Department of Defense is directed to engage in military-to-military dialogues (especially with other great powers like China and Russia) on protocols for interactions between autonomous platforms. This could include "incidents at sea" agreements updated for unmanned vessels, or rules for intercepts between unmanned aerial vehicles. By establishing communication channels or pre-agreed behaviors (like frequency deconfliction or signals that an autonomous vehicle is in a safe mode), the U.S. can reduce the chance of accidental conflict sparked by robotic systems. If, for example, an American crewless ship encounters a Chinese one, both sides should have a clear understanding of how to signal peaceful intent or how to avoid collisions – those understandings need to be negotiated beforehand.

**(f) Sharing the Benefits Peacefully:** The U.S. will also explore ways that the technologies behind military automation can have **peaceful or non-military applications** that benefit global security. For example, autonomous aircraft could be used for disaster relief delivery, demining robots to clear explosive remnants of war, or AI systems to improve cybersecurity for critical infrastructure. Through initiatives like Foreign Military Financing or Defense Trade, the U.S. can assist partner nations in acquiring autonomous systems for defensive or humanitarian purposes under proper controls. By doing so, the U.S. demonstrates that automation in military context can reduce human suffering (by taking soldiers out of harm's way and by aiding civilians in crises), which can build international goodwill and leadership legitimacy.

**(g) Monitoring and Reciprocity:** As the U.S. reduces its human military footprint via automation, it will monitor how other militaries respond. If adversaries accelerate dangerous deployments (for example, a rival deploys autonomous lethal robots at its borders in a way that threatens instability), the U.S. should be prepared to address that via diplomatic pressure or, if needed, adjust its own posture. The Act thus instructs the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community to include analyses of other nations' autonomous weapons programs in their regular threat assessments to Congress. International engagement is a two-way street: while we encourage others to act responsibly, we must be aware of and ready for those who may not.

**(h) Reporting on International Engagement:** The annual report will have a section summarizing international outreach and any agreements or frameworks progressed in the preceding year. It will note any concerns raised by allies or the international community about the U.S. program and how they were addressed. (For instance, some allies might worry about compatibility or about legal issues; the U.S. can reassure by showing its ethical protocols).
By taking initiative internationally, the United States can help ensure that the transition to automated militaries globally does not lead to chaos or unchecked proliferation, but rather occurs under a regime of law and mutual understanding. The Act intends for the U.S. to **"manage global implications of automated warfare"** by being a norm-setter and coalition leader, consistent with our interests and values.

## Section 12. Implementation Timeline and Effective Date

**(a) Effective Date:** This Act and the authorities contained herein shall take effect **immediately upon enactment**. All deadlines and timeframes described in this Act (such as the 180-day mandates, annual report schedule, and the 10-year transition period) will be calculated from the date of enactment.
**(b) 10-Year Transition Period:** The period of fiscal years 2026 through 2035 (assuming enactment in 2025 and starting with FY2026) is hereby designated as the covered transition period for achieving a fully automated military. Key benchmarks within this period include: initial capability milestones at 3 years in, midterm review at 5 years, major force structure shift by 8 years, and full implementation by 10 years, as detailed in earlier sections. If enactment occurs mid-fiscal year, the current fiscal year shall be counted as year 1 for scheduling purposes to maintain the roughly 10-year window.
**(c) Final Review and Sunset:** At the conclusion of the 10th year after enactment, the Comptroller General (GAO) shall produce a final assessment report for Congress evaluating the outcomes of the Military Automation Transition Act. This report will verify which objectives were met, any shortfalls, cost effectiveness, and the overall impact on U.S. military capability and personnel. Following this assessment, Congress may determine whether any provisions of this Act need extension or modification. Unless extended by Congress, the special authorities and organizational structures created by this Act (such as the ADTC and any extraordinary procurement authorities granted) shall expire at the end of the transition period + wind-down (as noted for ADTC in Section 5(e)). Routine functions will then be absorbed back into the Department's normal organization.
**(d) Regulatory Authority:** The President and the Secretary of Defense are authorized to promulgate such directives, regulations, and guidance as

necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act. This includes updates to the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) to accommodate new procurement models for autonomous systems, personnel policy adjustments, and interagency agreements for the execution of retraining programs, among others.

**(e) Conforming and Superseding Provisions:** Existing laws or portions of laws that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are superseded to the extent of the inconsistency for the duration of this Act. For instance, any statutory requirement for certain units to maintain a minimum number of personnel can be waived if those personnel are replaced by autonomous systems per this Act's plan. However, nothing in this Act is intended to negate standing laws on military conduct, procurement integrity, or international treaty obligations—those remain in force and the implementation of this Act must work within those bounds, except where this Act explicitly provides new authority.

**(f) Savings Clause:** If any provision of this Act is held invalid, the remainder shall not be affected. The provisions of this Act are severable, so that the failure of any specific section (due perhaps to legal challenge or impracticality) will not derail the overall intent to transition to an automated military.

**(g) Reporting Continuity:** Requirements for reporting to Congress (Section 7 and others) shall continue throughout the transition period. Should the transition not be fully complete by the end of the 10-year period (due to unforeseen circumstances), the Department shall continue to provide annual progress reports until Congress directs otherwise, even if formal authorities sunset.

**(h) Budgeting Provision:** The President's future budget submissions for the Department of Defense for each fiscal year in the transition period shall clearly denote the funding requested pursuant to this Act (the "Military Automation Transition Fund") to ensure visibility. Likewise, Congressional budget and appropriations committees should, to the extent possible, mark these funds distinctly.

By setting these timelines and conditions, Section 12 ensures that the execution of the Military Automation Transition Act is time-bound, accountable, and adaptable. The clock starts now for the United States to usher in a new era of defense – one that uses cutting-edge autonomous technology to protect the nation, while carefully managing the consequences of this transformation on society and global stability.

**Sources:** The provisions and requirements of this Act are informed by defense analysis and expert recommendations on military automation, including an Atlantic Council assessment which noted that **personnel are the most expensive item in the defense budget and that automation, while not guaranteed to cut costs, will increase readiness and effectiveness of the force**atlanticcouncil.orgatlanticcouncil.org. The Act also reflects the insights

of military futurists who argue that **autonomy will reshape the workforce, necessitating re-skilling and new specialties**mwi.westpoint.edu, and addresses concerns raised by ethicists and international bodies regarding **lethal autonomous weapons and the need for human oversight and updated laws**asil.orgatlanticcouncil.org. Furthermore, the commitment to cybersecurity in the Act is driven by findings that **AI-enabled systems are uniquely vulnerable to cyber attacks and require proactive defenses**europeanleadershipnetwork.org. Finally, the funding and technology strategies draw on current Department of Defense initiatives to develop unmanned systems (such as the Navy's unmanned ships and the Army's robotic vehicles) which aim to **augment combat power at lower cost and risk**armscontrol.orgarmscontrol.org. This Act synthesizes those analyses into a concrete legislative blueprint for a more automated, effective, and responsible U.S. military.