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First Armed Robots on Patrol in Iraq

(Updated)

By Noah Shachtman August 02, 2007 | 5:56:00 PM

Robots have been roaming the streets of Iraq, since shortly after the war began. Now, for the first time -- the first time in any warzone -- the machines are carrying guns.

After years of development, three "special weapons observation remote reconnaissance direct action system" (SWORDS) robots have [deployed to Iraq](#), armed with M249 machine guns. The 'bots "haven't fired their weapons yet," Michael Zecca, the SWORDS program manager, tells [DANGER ROOM](#). "But that'll be happening soon."

The [SWORDS](#) -- modified versions of [bomb-disposal robots](#) used throughout Iraq -- were first [declared ready for duty back in 2004](#). But [concerns about safety](#)

kept the robots from being sent over the the battlefield. The machines had a tendency to spin out of control from time to time. That was an annoyance during ordnance-handling missions; no one wanted to contemplate the consequences during a firefight.

So the radio-controlled robots were retooled, for greater safety. In the past, weak signals would keep the robots from getting orders for as much as eight seconds -- a significant lag during combat. Now, the SWORDS won't act on a command, unless it's received right away. A three-part arming process -- with both physical and electronic safeties -- is required before firing. Most importantly, the machines now come with kill switches, in case there's any odd behavior. "So now we can kill the unit if it goes crazy," Zecca says.

As initially reported in [National Defense](#) magazine, only three of the robots are currently in Iraq. Zecca says he's ready to send more, "but we don't have the money. It's not a priority for the Army, yet." He believes that'll change, once the robots begin getting into firefights.

UPDATE: If you're looking for a little robo war porn, here's *Future Weapons'* segment on the 'bot...

(High five: [DT](#))

If these robots kill an innocent civilian, who will be held responsible?

Posted by: Michael Moore | [Aug 2, 2007 12:11:47 PM](#)

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[These American Soldiers](#)

Using this SWORD thing are the most spineless suckhole soldiers next to the Mossad and IDF.

Scaredy cat has to shoot from cover to stir the pot EH?.

It is The most chickenshit thing i have ever seen invented this SWORD bot.

And anyone USING it to KILL...

Live by,DIE BY...

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Masher1 | Fri, 2007-08-03 23:31

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1986

done deal THEN folks. This SWORD thing is not new.

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0090605/>

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OOOOPS! Another one chalked up as collateral damage!

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