

Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri



Abstract

**HUMAN RIGHTS, MEDICAL ETHICS AND
ENHANCEMENT TECHNOLOGIES IN MILITARY
CONTEXTS**

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In an ever uncertain world, yet characterized by a unique convergence of interests and cooperation agreements between industry, research institutes and military institutions the hypothesis of an ever more engineered soldier far from the ordinary citizen comes forward. A soldier to whom enhancing technologies are applied, that is "strategies to create human capabilities that go beyond normal biological variability, through changes in human function", including surgery, genetic modifications, neuronal stimulation, enhancing drugs.

The NBC, assuming the shared grounds of the repudiation of war, expresses a general judgment of ethical disvalue on the particular topic of enhancement technologies in the military. Many of these technologies represent a risk that goes beyond the limits set by international laws as regards to military activities and war, both for the individuals, civilians and military, who are subject to them and for the opponents,.

The Committee is aware that on the one hand the technological evolution and on the other military needs, will lead to the adoption of some of these technologies. Concerned by these developments, the NBC considers necessary the establishment of a strong conviction that some fundamental bioethical principles cannot be disregarded as regards to the technologies in this field: the principle of dignity and physical, mental and ethics integrity of the soldier, the principle of non-maleficence, the principle of autonomy, the principle of equality. The Committee thus recommends, at national and international level, the establishment of multi-disciplinary committees similar to ethics committees, composed not only by the military, in order to control at various levels the compliance with these principles, controlling the trial protocols, the methods of obtainment of informed consent and the reversibility/non-reversibility of the effects. On the background, outlines the difficult balance between the duty of obedience and secrecy the military is obliged to and the respect of fundamental rights.