

# SAN FRANCISCO POLICE CAN NOW USE LETHAL ROBOTS TO FIGHT CRIMINALS

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The San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) can now use robots to “incapacitate or disorient a violent, armed, or dangerous subject who presents a risk of loss of life.”

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On Tuesday, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved the use of such lethal robots to save lives during violent situations.

“We live in a time when [unthinkable mass violence](#) is becoming more commonplace. We need the option to be able to save lives in the event we have that type of tragedy in our city,” San Francisco Police Chief William Scott said in a release on Thursday.

The robots are remotely controlled and operated by SFPD officers who are specially trained to use them.

These robots can be used to handle bomb situations, hazardous materials incidents, and other cases where officers need to keep a safe distance before securing the scene. The robots can also deliver an explosive charge to breach a structure containing a violent or armed subject, according to the release.

However, these robots would only be used to save or prevent further loss of innocent lives. Only the chief of police, assistant chief of operations, or deputy chief of special operations may authorise the use of robots as a potentially deadly force option.

“The use of robots in potentially deadly force situations is a last resort option,” Scott said.

There are early instances where robots have been used for policing and security purposes.

In July 2016, Dallas police used a robot to bomb and kill an attacker who had fatally shot five

police officers and wounded several more in a violent standoff. This was the first deliberate use of an armed robot by the American police in such a situation.

The American Knightscope security robot equipped with infrared cameras, microphones, and license plate readers, can patrol independently. The unit costs \$7 an hour to rent, which is lower than the rate for deploying human security guards.

In 2017, Dubai Police launched the world's first Robocop to coordinate with the public and fight crime. In places like malls or tourist spots where the robot is deployed, people can use a touchscreen on its chest to report a crime, pay traffic fines, or chat in Arabic or English.

The robot's built-in cameras will stream video to the police command centre.

However, robots raise new issues and challenges when it comes to regulating the police.

"Police robots raise special questions because of the powers we entrust to the police. How we design, regulate, or even prohibit some uses of police robots requires a regulatory agenda now to address foreseeable problems of the future," University of California, School of Law, said earlier in a separate statement.

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