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CONNECTING THE DOTS:
IEDS AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Over the course of the next 10 years, emerging technologies will enable terrorist groups to exploit new weaknesses and adopt new means of perpetrating attacks. For example, the convergence of 3D printing and the global proliferation of IED knowledge (facilitated largely by the Internet) could enable terrorist groups to construct bombs in the form of everyday objects.

However, the biggest – and most overlooked – new trend in terrorism may be "smart" delivery systems. IED detonation has been controlled by mobile phones for some time now, and the detection of these trigger mechanisms has been deployed as a countermeasure. However, as advances are made in artificial intelligence, these **IEDs could begin to operate on their own to achieve programmed or learned objectives.**

3D printing is not the only technology that could merge with smart delivery: Autonomous cars are coming faster than we think. By 2026, according to a World Economic Forum study, they will make up 10 percent of U.S. automobiles on the road and are expected to (eventually) reduce auto fatalities by 80 to 90 percent – with some experts anticipating that more widespread usage could cause the automobile insurance industry to become obsolete.

However, a networked and autonomous/intelligent automobile fleet also introduces new risks. Terrorist attacks could be carried out somewhat crudely by programing the target coordinates into the vehicle and loading the passenger and cargo spaces with explosives. If the car is perceived as arriving to pick up someone, little attention may be paid to the fact that it is empty – and there would be no driver acting suspiciously to tip someone off. A more sophisticated approach could be that of "teaching" a fleet of cars to bypass certain safety protocols and or to intentionally malfunction in timed but spontaneously dangerous ways that endanger or take the lives of their passengers on a mass scale.

The likely convergence of IEDs and artificial intelligence raises a number of compelling questions:

- What are the likely everyday items that lend themselves to 3D printing and have utility as a "smart" IED host?
- What avenues exist or will develop for violent actors to get access to advanced 3D printing capability?
- How will the auto insurance, autonomous car manufacturing and other related industries adapt to the nefarious use of autonomous cars?
- What types of countermeasures and safeguards (cyber and otherwise) should be developed now in order to get ahead of these developments?
- What other technological convergences that are ripe for misuse by violent actors are being overlooked by industry leaders and policymakers?

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