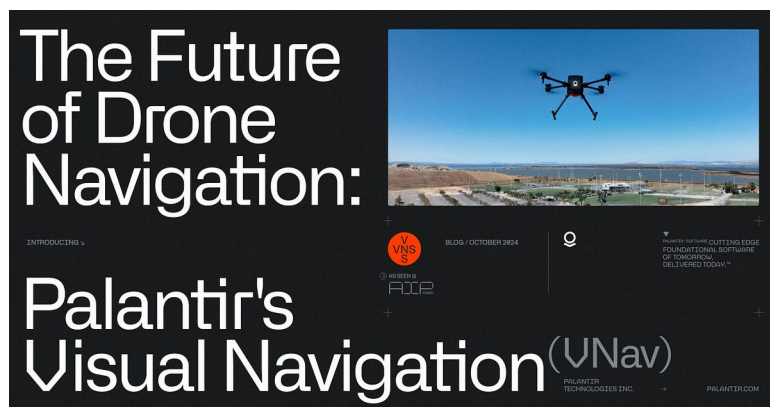


Artificial Intelligence on the Battlefield: How Palantir Supports Ukrainian Defense and Where the Limits Lie

By Frank , 25 May 2026

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By Frank Dumon

Kyiv, May 2026 – In the four-year war against Russia, Ukraine has evolved into a global testing ground for military technology. One of the most influential, yet controversial, players in this field is the American technology company Palantir Technologies. Although unfounded accusations regarding the company's role have been made in the past, factual reports indicate that Palantir is primarily used for data-driven decision-making, air defense, and planning deep strikes on legitimate military targets. Nevertheless, the use of AI in warfare raises pressing legal questions: who is responsible if an algorithm makes a mistake?

An 'Operating System for War'

Since the summer of 2022, Palantir has been supplying its software platforms to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence. What began with the 'Gotham' platform for integrating

intelligence data has grown into an extensive collaboration. According to CEO Alex Karp, the Ukrainian armed forces, with the help of Palantir technology, have built "one of the most important and adaptive attack planning systems in the world."

The systems are deployed in three crucial ways:

1. Analysis of Air Attacks: AI helps process radar data to identify Russian drones and missiles.
2. Intelligence Analysis: Combining satellite imagery, drone footage, and human sources into a single operational picture.
3. Deep Strike Planning: Selecting and prioritizing logistical and military targets far behind enemy lines.

A notable development is the Ukrainian system 'Delta'. Developed together with NATO, experts now consider it more advanced than the original American [Palantir software](#). While Western armies still work with data systems from the Cold War era, Ukraine possesses a real-time, AI-driven platform perfected during four years of intensive warfare.

The Legal Dilemma of the 'Autonomous Drone'



The greatest concern among lawyers and human rights organizations is not so much Palantir's software itself, but the rise of Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), or 'killer robots'. Although Palantir's systems currently mainly provide decision support, the step toward fully autonomous weapons is small. A widely discussed example is the Ukrainian 'Spider Web' operation in June 2025. During this attack on Russian airbases, long-range drones equipped with AI were used. The idea was that the AI would take over targeting if radio communication was disrupted. However, because the AI had not been trained on scenarios involving civilians on the runway (such as mechanics or firefighters), the system could not account for this 'unexpected' presence in its calculations.

This example illustrates the core of the problem: International Humanitarian Law, established in the Geneva Conventions, requires that a distinction be made between civilians and combatants during an attack, and that collateral damage is proportional. An AI cannot make this assessment in the same way a human can.

Who is Responsible for the Algorithm?

According to current international law, the answer to this question is clear: the human. "A fully autonomous system is not possible. That would be unlawful," state French legal advisors to the military in a recent analysis. Even if an AI pulls the trigger, the commander or political leader who deployed the system remains responsible for the consequences. AI has no legal personality. An algorithm cannot be taken to court for war crimes. The chain of responsibility must always be traceable back to a human decision-maker. However, this principle is under pressure. The speed of AI-driven warfare can lead to 'intellectual laziness', where commanders simply 'agree' with AI-generated target lists without verifying their legality.

Call for Regulation

Within the United Nations, pressure is growing to establish clear rules. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a legally binding treaty on autonomous weapons systems, ideally by 2026. He states that it is "morally repugnant" to let machines make decisions about life and death. Non-governmental organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Stop Killer Robots warn of 'digital dehumanization', where algorithmic biases (for example, regarding skin color or movements of people with disabilities) can lead to misidentifications and civilian casualties.

Conclusion



The reality is that AI is already inextricably linked to the battlefield in Ukraine. [Palantir](#) acts as a powerful catalyst, converting data into action and giving Ukraine a technological advantage in its defense against the Russian invasion. However,

current technology finds itself in a gray area. The law was prepared for the weapons of the 20th century, but must now contend with the algorithms of the 21st century. As long as 'adequate human control' remains, AI systems can be legally deployed. Once that control disappears, and algorithms become fully autonomous, there is a risk of violating the laws of war, for which there is currently no definitive international answer.

Palantir Shareholder Letter - May 4, 2026

Key Message: Palantir claims unprecedented financial growth and a unique, dominant position in the artificial intelligence (AI) market, particularly in defense and government services. The letter portrays a company in a "phase shift" that allegedly leaves competitors far behind.

Financial Highlights (First Quarter 2026)

- Revenue: \$1.63 billion – an 85% increase compared to a year earlier.
- Profit: \$871 million – more than four times that of Q1 2025.
- Efficiency: Revenue per employee rose to \$1.5 million on an annualized basis.
 - Critical note: This growth is accompanied by a shrinking sales team, indicating a strategy of high operational efficiency at the cost of employment in that sector.

The Growth Engine: The United States

- Total US Revenue: \$1.3 billion – a 104% increase, meaning the US market now accounts for 79% of total revenue.
- Commercial (US): \$595 million (+133%).
- Government (US): \$687 million (+84%), primarily from defense and intelligence agencies.
 - Critical note: The significant growth in government revenue is largely attributable to the adoption of Palantir's Maven Smart System by the Pentagon. This AI system for target selection has now become an official program of the US military.

Strategic Positioning

- Palantir claims that "virtually all AI workflows that actually create value – especially on the battlefield – are built on Palantir".
- The company sees a critical difference between itself (based on "reality" and "ontology") and "AI slop" (the wasteful and superficial use of AI by competitors). Palantir's AIP (AI Platform) would be the only reliable basis for AI in high-risk environments.
- CEO Alex Karp states that if the US "asks someone to face danger for our country, they deserve the best AI capabilities."

Context and Critical Considerations

1. Legal and ethical tensions: Palantir's growth coincides with a growing societal debate about the risks of AI in warfare. Critics warn that AI systems like Maven can generate targets at a speed (for example, one target every 86 seconds) that makes human verification ("a human in the loop") impossible, effectively turning the commander into a "human rubber stamp".

2. Responsibility: Palantir emphasizes that final responsibility for the use of its technology lies with the military customer. The British head of Palantir stated in a BBC interview that "it is up to military organizations to decide how the output of AI is used". This protects Palantir legally but does not resolve the ethical issue of responsibility for erroneous, lethal attacks.

3. Market dominance and ethics: Palantir's profit explosion occurred during a period when a competitor (Anthropic) was placed on a risk list by the Pentagon because it imposed ethical restrictions on the use of its AI for autonomous weapons. This shows that there is strong market pressure to deliver military AI without ethical brakes.

Conclusion of the letter: [Palantir](#) is in an exceptional growth phase and is strengthening its position as essential infrastructure for both the US government and business. The mission – strengthening Western, particularly American, national security – remains unchanged and profitable. This text is a direct summary of Palantir's official letter to its shareholders. In an objective article, this information should be presented as the company's viewpoint, not as independently established fact. Therefore, where relevant, critical notes and context from external sources have been added to provide a complete and balanced picture.

Sources:

<https://www.palantir.com/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alex_Karp

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Thiel

Alex Karp is a member of the steering committee of [Bilderberg Meeting](#). He also participates in the [Munich Security Conference](#).

Dutch MEP [Sophie in 't Veld](#) tracks the close proximity between Alex Karp and his company Palantir with EU leaders like [Ursula von der Leyen](#) and [Margrethe Vestager](#), noting that when the EU delegation visited Washington in 2019, the only private company they contacted was Palantir. In June 2022, he was the first CEO of a major

Western company to meet president [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#) after [Russia invaded Ukraine](#).

<https://youtu.be/tZVx3BTkLI>