

RMPP - Discussion Collaboration 1 - Summary Post

The ACM case study of Automated Active Response Weaponry looks at the ethical dilemma faced by engineers who work in the field of technology and the military. Q Industries, an international company, was responsible for manufacturing autonomous vehicles equipped with weapons for military and law enforcement use. Initially, these vehicles were designed to use tear gas and acoustic weapons for physical defence against protesters, but later, the design was extended to include lethal weapons such as target shooting and explosives. This move led to protests from the engineers at Q Industries, who felt that this use of lethal weapons went against their ethical principles. The company sued the engineers for breaching their employment contract, leading to a conflict between ethical considerations and the legally binding nature of an employment agreement.

The case brings up important points related to ethics in technology, specifically the ethical principles defined by the ACM Code of Ethics (ACM Ethics, 2018) and the BCS Code of Conduct (BCS, 2022). According to the ACM (ACM Ethics, 2018), computing professionals are ethically bound to act in the best interest of the public and to avoid harm, while the BCS code of conduct (BCS, 2022) states that “computing professionals must have due regard for public health, privacy, security, wellbeing of others and the environment”. In this case, the engineers felt that their ethical obligations to the public took priority over their employment agreement, but it also highlights the need for computing professionals to understand the limitations of their ethical obligations in the context of the law (Marcu et al., 2020).

The case also raises questions about the responsibilities of technology professionals in ensuring the ethical use of their products and the importance of considering the

ethical implications of technology in addition to its functionality (Albrechtslund, 2007). It highlights the need for technology professionals to have a clear understanding of what they consider to be "good" in making ethical decisions and the importance of attending ethics seminars to help make these decisions (Mitchell, 2018). In conclusion, the case serves as a reminder that technology professionals must balance their obligations to their employers with their ethical obligations to society.

References

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