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Technology Doesn't Change the Need for Legal Protection

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[The Opinion Pages](#)ROOM *for* DEBATE**Technology Doesn't Change the Need for Legal Protection**

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Technology is playing a greater role in law enforcement — from robots to “[predictive policing](#)” software to “[shot spotter](#)” technology — and it can increase efficiency in investigations and offer better protection to both police and the public.

The Fourth Amendment protects citizens against unreasonable seizures, so any use of force (deployed by robot or human) must be reasonable in light of the circumstances.

During a time of heightened tensions over policing, however, policy makers must scrutinize the implementation of technological devices, particularly those that can involve the use of deadly force. And police departments with access to this equipment must be trained and adhere to clear guidelines.

The Fourth Amendment protects citizens against unreasonable seizures, so any use of force (deployed by robot or human) must be reasonable in light of the circumstances. This protection does not change with more advanced technology.

Reports indicate that use of deadly force was justified in the Dallas case because the suspect posed imminent danger to police and bystanders. He reportedly told police he intended to kill more officers.

In most cases, though, technology should help avoid killings, which deprive the suspect and society of a full legal resolution.

Human beings remain responsible for any tactical decisions that are made, and legitimate concerns exist that certain devices or methods will be used disproportionately on disenfranchised groups. We will never be able to divorce human error or implicit bias from the uses of technology. What's more, before police begin to use of robots or other technologies they must consult with the communities they serve.

The use of the robot in Dallas comes on the heels of many civil rights and advocacy organizations criticizing the nation's police departments for their increased militarization.

During this critical time, police departments and communities must begin to build trust and strengthen relationships. The responsible use of military and technological devices and transparency regarding guidelines for their uses should be a top concern of those who make rules for using police robots in the future.