



Written by [David Kelly](#) on May 25, 2023

Military Needs to Prepare for Neurocognitive Warfare

The future is now, and all U.S. military forces need to be prepared for future conflicts that include not only hypersonics, quantum technology, drone-based swarms, and AI-enabled systems, but also clandestine non-kinetic weapons, according to a military expert.

In an Army [blog post](#), Robert McCreight, a retired national security specialist and former Army special operations officer, shared his deep concerns over non-kinetic threats (NKT) that “consist of silent, largely undetectable technologies capable of inflicting damaging, debilitating, and degrading physical and neural effects on its unwitting targets.” He noted that “this covert threat is best understood as something to be invoked via rapid surprise attack or as a stealthy forerunner to a massive kinetic follow-on attack.”



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On the Army Training and Doctrine Command’s Mad Scientist blog, McCreight questioned the military’s preparedness:

The challenge is whether a determined and patient covert enemy can inflict strategic damage non-kinetically before we can recognize the attack, resist it, or recover from it. In effect, do we really know our weaknesses and security gaps?

McCreight shared “Pearl Harbor, the 1959 Sputnik launch, and the 9-11 attacks” as examples of “strategic shock and surprise” to illustrate our past “blind spots, arrogance, and hubris” in defense planning that our enemies exposed.

“Here strategic warning took a vacation, and we witnessed the carnage and loss of geopolitical prestige as we slept or dreamed. Enemies with a keen knowledge of our weaknesses and flawed smugness or misplaced confidence can out-manuever our defense lapses,” declared McCreight. He then asked, Are we protected against the comprehensive and diverse nature of NKT now and in the future?

NKT weapons involve the use of “lasers, cyber, directed energy and related technologies.” Traditional kinetic weapons are used to “kill, destroy, maim and obliterate enemies.”

McCreight shared that modern militaries could face NKT that can produce three kinds of strategic effects: A lightning decapitation strike against leaders; a covert, undetected surprise attack to disable leadership; and insidious ongoing attacks that degrade leadership analysis, defensive systems, and strategic warning.

The decapitation scenario involving NKT could affect our power grid, satellites, IT communications, and



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other networked security systems. McCreight wrote that “a well-orchestrated NKT lightning decapitation scenario against leadership and infrastructure” would “reflect the infamous Sun Tzu quote, ‘the acme of skill is to win a war without firing a shot.’”

A covert, undetected surprise attack disabling leadership includes a neurological attack targeting leadership. This type of focused NKT attack would target neurological vulnerability, devastating “thought and related cognitive functions, disconnecting command from its daily management of defense systems, and silently nullifying all electronic, IT, communication, satellite, cyber and interlinked systems.” Absent strategic warning, “NKT is the death blow.”

The third NKT scenario “features an unfolding series of attacks that is so subtle and gradual that its victims have trouble reporting that they are targets of an attack at all. Further, the nebulous neurological symptoms they complain about cannot be uniformly evaluated by experienced neuroscientists because this set of symptoms has never been seen before.”

McCreight warned that future soldiers “reliant on exoskeletons, modified diet, cyborg add-ons, special biophysical interventions, AI augmentation, and other technologies” would not be a match for NKT technologies that could “nullify many of those presumptive upgrades in warfighter protection and agility or covertly dilute warfighter resilience[,] reducing those extra enhancements and rendering our troops defenseless.”

Of major concern are “[NeuroStrike](#)” weapons, which “target the vulnerabilities of our Central Nervous System (CNS), neuromechanics,” and inner-ear and balance systems. The result is covert, silent, and undetected invasive degradation of cognitive functions, perception, brain functions, reasoning, judgment, and decision-making. “It is effective and debilitating, leaving its victims unable to perform normal brain functions for many years,” wrote McCreight.

McCreight summed up the threats, stating:

Enemies with NKT systems can target our neurobiological and physiological vulnerability[,] and their principal bullseye is our civilian and military leadership. This tactic enables the waging of an invisible war on the ground, disabling and degrading key infrastructure and military and societal leadership for net strategic effect.

With NKT being “sixth dimension warfare existing well apart from the Land, Sea, Air, Cyber, and Space Domains,” McCreight stated, we need to have “NKT embedded in our defense.” “Full spectrum NKT technologies exploiting cyberspace, nanospace, genomic space, outer space, and neurospace will require tested technology, unique capabilities, and validated operational systems,” he added.

In his “clarion call to the U.S. defense establishment to recognize that NKT (and especially Neurostrike weapons)” exists, McCreight makes this final observation:

NKT technologies are truly game changing, instrumentally redefining our understanding of strategic leverage and dominance. The use of NKT technologies as a covert prelude to kinetic hostilities, or as a silent companion to prolonged long-term erosion of strategic infrastructure and defense systems’ operational integrity, is both valid and disturbing. It represents a paradigm shift away from successively more complex, costly, and sophisticated kinetic systems. If U.S. leadership ignores its strategic effect on future warfare, we find a fatal error.



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