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Arctic Sentinels 2035: AI and the Evolving Future of War

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In 2035, a convoy of Joint Light Tactical Vehicles — the most cutting-edge terrain vehicles, controlled by the most elite U.S. unit operating in the polar regions, Arctic Dominion Command — advanced cautiously along Elliott Highway out of Livengood, Alaska.

Blanketed in whiteout conditions, the area posed significant navigational challenges. Yet Staff Sgt. Lopez advanced seamlessly through the harsh arctic twilight, thanks to the augmented reality and artificial intelligence capabilities in her vehicle's heads-up display (HUD). A luminous outline revealed the path ahead, cutting through the snowstorm with digital precision.

Suddenly, a sharp chime from the HUD shattered the

silence — an alert from the convoy's advanced sensor drone. Sitting beside Lopez, 1st Lt. Kay tapped the glass to address the alarm.

"This one's sourced from the drone," he noted, his voice tense. "I'm surprised it still works with the electromagnetic interference we've been expecting."

"The extreme cold drastically reduces battery efficiency," Lopez replied, keeping her eyes on the barely visible road. "And the drone's high computing demands for scanning the area seriously drain its power. We should switch its processing load to the vehicle's onboard computer to conserve what's left of its battery life."

Kay nodded in agreement.

“Good call,” he said. “Hudley, reroute drone processing to vehicle mainframe and maintain passive monitoring mode.”

The vehicle’s AI, affectionately known by the squad as “Hudley,” quickly complied. The adjustment allowed the drone to maintain its critical functions without added energy expenditure.

“What’s the situation, Hudley?” Lopez asked. “Just a glitch, or something we need to worry about?”

“Actually, uh — ” Kay paused, zooming in on the display.

“It’s a *person*!” exclaimed Sgt. Stoll from the back seat. He quickly prepared for potential engagement, adjusting the feed to the mounted auto-gun.

Stoll wore an augmented reality headset, which overlaid crucial tactical information directly into his field of vision. The headset displayed the intervals between the vehicles in their convoy, enhancing spatial awareness. It showed the distance and direction to the human figure, complete with an AI-assisted targeting reticle that aided in accurate threat assessment and engagement if necessary.

Lopez adjusted the vehicle’s speed.

“Who would be out here in this?” she asked.

Her concern was evident as she initiated a new convoy protocol.

“Let’s widen our intervals,” she said. “If it’s an ambush, we must minimize the convoy risk.”

The convoy’s AI-driven systems seamlessly coordinated the other vehicles.

Stoll, monitoring the situation through his augmented reality headset, nodded in understanding. He nudged his battle buddy, Spc. Swift, who was assigned to transmissions. It was a silent cue, telling Swift to promptly inform the entire convoy of the tactical adjustment.

Swift checked the transmission fidelity and updated the crew: “All units, we’re increasing intervals for potential ambush.”

As they drew near the figure, the drone relayed a detailed analysis to inform the Soldiers in the convoy about the decisions they faced. It scanned the stranger’s face using sophisticated computer visual algorithms, evaluating micro-expressions to gauge sentiment and stress levels. Simultaneously, it analyzed the figure’s voice signal patterns, searching for auditory cues that matched friendly or hostile indicators — parameters the machine learning models were extensively trained to detect.

Kay swiped the imagery onto his device, analyzing the figure through enhanced AI capabilities.

“Hudley can’t make an ID, but there are no hostile indicators — yet,” he observed cautiously. “We need to verify if this is a threat or just a civilian caught out here.”

A sudden burst of static interrupted them.

“Sir, intel suggests this could be an enemy decoy,



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testing our response capabilities in this sector,” a voice crackled urgently from the radio. “We’re advised to proceed with maximum caution. Do we engage or hold back for more intel?”

“We’ll take lead and make contact with the target,” Kay decided swiftly.

Stoll immediately relayed to each gunner team: “Keep your weapons up and sensors on alert while we engage. Take no unnecessary risks; keep your distance. If it’s a trap, we’ll be ready.”

With renewed focus, Lopez edged her vehicle forward, her eyes darting from the HUD to the snowy expanse. As they drew closer, the figure became visible — a lone silhouette against the stark white backdrop. Cloaked in nondescript, snow-laden attire, the figure raised its hands slowly as the convoy approached.

Lopez lowered her window, the biting cold rushing into the cabin.

“Identify yourself!” she shouted over the howling wind.

The figure hesitated, then shouted back, a tinge of desperation in the faint voice: “Medical officer from UDC! I’m not armed!”

Stoll kept his hand near the auto-gun controls, watching the display, ready to respond.

Swift prepared to relay updates back to the convoy.

“Verify his story,” Lopez commanded, her gaze fixed on the supposed medic.

As Swift communicated with headquarters, switching to secure low-signal protocols in the face of the storm, additional data from the drone streamed in — no additional heat signatures, no electronic disturbances indicative of an ambush. At least for the moment, it seemed the figure was truly alone.

“HQ confirms no known operations in this sector,” Swift relayed, brow furrowed.

Kay muttered to himself, “It could be a deserter or a lost operative.”

Considering the AI-integrated sensor data and the unit analyst’s assessment predicting a 93% mission success, Lopez suggested bringing the man in.

Kay nodded in agreement.

“We’re bringing him aboard for interrogation. Keep security tight,” Lopez instructed, signaling the convoy to secure the perimeter.

The man approached slowly, each step cautious, his breath visible in the freezing air.

“Thank you,” he gasped as he climbed into the vehicle, his body trembling from either cold or fear.

As they set off toward their forward operating base with their unexpected detainee, the vehicles returned to tight formation, every Soldier on high alert. The mission had shifted from a routine patrol to an unexpected encounter with potential intelligence implications. The convoy’s AI systems continued monitoring the surrounding area for signs of ambush or pursuit. They were ready to react immediately.

In the tactical vehicle’s confined space, wrapped in a thermal blanket, the man offered no resistance. His eyes darted around, taking in the faces of his rescuers — or captors.

The Arctic Dominion Command forces faced risks on every mission, but integrating AI into their operations gave them the edge needed to navigate these uncertainties. The intelligence blended combat readiness with strategic caution.

As the convoy settled into their base’s secure confines, the crew’s veterans gathered in the dimly lit briefing room for the after-action review. The walls, lined with state-of-the-art digital displays and equipment, hummed softly in the background — starkly contrasting with the sparse military outposts of decades past.

Among them sat Sgt. Maj. Harris, a grizzled veteran with more than three decades of service. He leaned back against his chair, a reflective look crossing his weathered face.

“You know, when I first joined up, we were using analog radios that crackled more than they spoke,” he began, his voice tinged with nostalgia and amusement. “I had to keep smacking them on the side just to get a clear sentence out. And here we are now, with heads-up displays, AI that talks back to you, and drones that scout and fight alongside us.”

He glanced around at the younger Soldiers, their faces lit by the soft glow of digital maps and data feeds streaming live from the field.

“This mission today,” he continued, “showcased just how far we’ve come. Hudley didn’t just guide us through that storm with digital precision; it potentially saved lives with its quick analysis and data relay followed by your sound choices. We trusted those systems to enhance our understanding of mission variables in real time, see things we couldn’t, to make data-informed calls faster than we ever have before.”



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A nod of agreement passed around the room as the others reflected on the day's events — detecting the lone figure in the blizzard, the tense approach, and the subsequent discovery he was a medical officer, not an enemy combatant.

"It's a different breed of soldiering," Harris concluded, his gaze settling on the newest recruits. "The battlefield's changed.

"We used to feel every bump in the road, every shift in the wind. Now, AI smooths those bumps and predicts the shifts. But you all made some critical and wise decisions in applying our technology.

"Lopez, you and the lieutenant's choice to manage your drone system's battery power enabled that device to maintain coverage over our people, increasing survivability throughout the entire mission.

"Sgt. Stoll, your direction to adjust the sensors to a higher alert setting showed you understood the stakes of the

mission and how to optimize our technology to support.

"More so, Spc. Swift, you adjusted the data transfer protocol to accommodate for the weak signal environment and reliably transmitted immediate situational updates to base.

"We must continue to keep pace and integrate our techcraft abilities, apply this new way of thinking. Today was a good day. We adapted, we learned, and most importantly, we trusted — trusted in our technology, trusted in our skills, and trusted in each other. That's the future of warfare."

As the meeting ended, the Soldiers filed out, each lost in thought about the evolving nature of their role in this high-tech military landscape.

Harris stayed behind a moment longer, looking over the maps that no longer represented just geography but data points, predictions, and possibilities: a new era of human-machine-integrated combat. ■

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