We affirm, Resolved: The benefits of the United States federal government's use of offensive cyber operations outweigh the harms.

Our first argument is that offensive cyber operations, or OCOs for short, substitute deadly conventional warfare.

Cyberspace has become a new frontier of war. Lotrionte of Georgetown in 2012 explains that states can now conduct a war without ever needing to engage in kinetic military operations.

Brenner of Vanderbilt University details that cyberwarfare is an appealing option for nations because of the relative conservation of human and non-human resources. She furthers that cyberattacks will inflict far less damage than kinetic attacks, accomplishing geopolitical goals without ever suffering any casualties. Thus, it is more preferable for countries to transition to this less costly means of warfare.

That's why Finkelstein of the University of Pennsylvania in 2015 finds that empirically, the US has been shifting from kinetic targeting strategies to cyber operations.

For example, in June, Al Jazeera reported that Trump ordered a retaliatory military attack against Iran after it shot down a drone, but then called it off. Instead, Trump authorized cyber commands to carry out a cyber attack on Iran. Not only would this attack have left 150 civilians dead, but it would have escalated tensions to the point of an all out war against Iran.

The benefit of cyberwarfare thus stems from what they remove.

Conventional war is the most lethal means of combat. Crawford of Brown in 2018 quantifies nearly 500 thousand people have been killed through traditional US kinetic operations in the past 20 years.

Thus, the alternative of cyber warfare is substantially less lethal for the international arena, as the US would not have to resort to on the ground warfare when it isn't necessary.

Our second argument is combatting terrorism.

On the ground, the organization of ISIS is on its last legs. Nanniga of the International Center of Counter-Terrorism reports this year that from 2015 to 2018, the caliphate has "lost over 95% of its territory."

Unfortunately, ISIS is trying to find ways to resurrect.

Wedeman of CNN writes this October that new leaders are likely to take power, even after the death of Abu al-Baghdadi, the leader and founder of the organization

This is because terrorists are shifting their operations to cyberspace. The Atlantic Council in 2019 finds that ISIS is currently extremely reliant on the web, and cyberspace is "essential to ISIS's survival as an organization."

Problematically, Raston of NPR in 2019 explains that ISIS has managed to do something no other terrorist organization has done before: It has turned the Web into a weapon. ISIS routinely launches attacks, spreads propaganda and recruits militants online. [For example, this year, 82% of the ISIS militants captured in Bangladesh were recruited online.]

Fortunately, ISIS's attempts at resurrecting through cyberspace have been suppressed by the federal government's usage of cyber operations.

Lamothe of the Washington Post in 2019 reports that our offensive cyber operations were used to "[destroy] or [disrupt] computer networks used by the militant group to recruit fighters and communicate inside the organization."

This has been largely effective, as Lamothe continues that "cyber strikes culminated in the [structural] destruction of [ISIS]" on a devastating scale. He concludes that while military operations took down most of the terrorist organization, the only way to keep ISIS contained is "with a task force that combines...cyber weapons."

Eric Rosenbach, a cyberwarfare expert, explains that "this is exactly the type of operation that we should be doing," because these terrorist organizations are pivoting more towards the information environment. Traditional methods of military operations just won't cut it, as the terrorists are becoming more adept.

The structural takedown of ISIS is crucial. Jamieson of NBC News reports that at its height, ISIS killed tens of thousands of civilians, displaced millions, and kept thousands more as slaves.

The only way that you can keep such a dangerous organization contained is through our usage of offensive cyber operations.

Because our international security must be maintained, we are very proud to affirm.