**Headline: UK to acquire £30 million worth of New Zealand-made drones to support Ukraine.Date: 23-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/uk-to-acquire-30-million-worth-of-new-zealand-made-drones-to-support-ukraine**

On April 22, 2025, British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer hosted New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon at 10 Downing Street. The two leaders had earlier jointly visited Operation Interflex, where Ukrainian troops are being trained by UK and New Zealand personnel. During the meeting, both sides emphasised the continued importance of long-term support for Ukraine and confirmed their countries' cooperation within the framework of the Coalition of the Willing. Prime Minister Starmer noted New Zealand’s ongoing participation and stated that planning efforts across land, air, regeneration, and maritime domains were progressing. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

The New Zealand company SYOS Aerospace proposes the SA5 UAS, a vertical take-off and landing drone in the sub-25kg category powered by a proprietary 4-stroke gasoline engine. (Picture source: SYOS)

Just before this visit, the UK Prime Minister's Office announced future UK contracts worth £30 million for uncrewed systems manufactured by SYOS Aerospace, a New Zealand company operating out of Hampshire. These drones will be provided to support Ukraine. This procurement forms part of the UK’s assistance package and reflects an area of bilateral industrial cooperation. Prime Minister Starmer also welcomed New Zealand’s recent increase in defence expenditure, and both leaders discussed the broader connection between defence investment, national economic security, and household-level economic outcomes.

SYOS Aerospace produces a family of autonomous uncrewed systems including aerial (UAS), surface (USV), and ground (UGV) platforms. Among these is the SA5 UAS, a vertical take-off and landing drone in the sub-25kg category powered by a proprietary 4-stroke gasoline engine. It provides 8 to 10 hours of endurance. The SA5 integrates SYOS’ AAIMS system for swarm operations, and uses MuV-NaP for GNSS-denied navigation based on optical flow or visual cues. It can operate without preloaded maps and estimate its position using ground movement, functioning in day or night conditions. It is intended for ISR tasks in land and maritime domains, with the ability to land on moving vessels.

The SA200 UAS is another aerial system produced by SYOS. It is an uncrewed helicopter with a 200kg payload capacity and a base range of 230km. With an optional extended fuel tank, it can reach nearly 1000km and operate for more than 8 hours. Designed for ISR, EW, and logistical resupply, the SA200 incorporates aviation-grade and military-standard components. It features anti-jamming and data encryption measures to operate in environments where counter-UAS systems are present.

The SG400 UGV is a 6×6 uncrewed ground vehicle with optional track configurations. It has a payload capacity of 500kg and a maximum range of 230km. It is designed for autonomous operations in logistics, ISR, and route clearance. When equipped with the AAIMS system, the SG400 supports swarm coordination and uses computer vision-based navigation. Communications for beyond-visual-line-of-sight operations include RF, LTE, and satellite links with encryption and up to 16-channel CRPA GNSS.

The SM300 USV is a maritime platform with a payload capacity of 300kg and a range of up to 650 nautical miles. It is used for ISR, EW, signal rebroadcasting, and cargo delivery. Autonomy features include AI-enabled mission planning, computer vision with automatic target tracking, and an interface that allows operator control through a ground control station. Navigation capabilities include CRPA GNSS, satellite communications, visual navigation, and dead reckoning, with the ability to estimate its own position within swarms. SYOS offers integration of the SM300’s autonomy suite into existing surface vessels.

Beyond defence and procurement matters, the two leaders also discussed broader regional issues, particularly the Indo-Pacific. They agreed on the need for coordinated efforts to support stability and address hostile activities in the region. In terms of trade, both welcomed the strong commercial ties between the UK and New Zealand and noted the UK’s recent accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). They concluded their meeting with a commitment to continued engagement and coordination on mutual interests.

**Headline: Italy Modernizes Its Military Intelligence Capabilities with Acquisition of U.S. AeroVironment JUMP 20 VTOL DronesDate: 23-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/italy-modernizes-its-military-intelligence-capabilities-with-u-s-aerovironment-jump-20-vtol-drones**

Italy has taken a major step in modernizing its Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities with the procurement of cutting-edge uncrewed aerial systems from U.S.-based AeroVironment (AV). On April 21, 2025, the Italian Ministry of Defence (MOD) officially announced the award of a $46.6 million contract to AeroVironment for the delivery of its JUMP® 20 vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) medium uncrewed aircraft system (MUAS). This five-year contract encompasses the supply of air vehicles, engineering services, initial sustainment, and on-site technical support, ensuring rapid deployment and operational readiness from the outset. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

The U.S. AeroVironment JUMP 20 VTOL drone, selected by the Italian Ministry of Defence, offers advanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities with vertical takeoff and landing efficiency. (Picture source: U.S. DoD)

The U.S. AeroVironment JUMP 20 is a sophisticated VTOL-capable, fixed-wing MUAS designed specifically for expeditionary operations. It offers a payload capacity of 30 pounds, an impressive endurance exceeding 13 hours, and a maximum operational range of 185 km (115 miles). One of the platform’s most strategic features is its autonomous launch and recovery capability, which eliminates the need for ground personnel during takeoff and landing. This functionality greatly enhances its suitability for dynamic, on-the-move military operations where logistical footprints must remain minimal.

With a Modular Open Systems Approach (MOSA), the JUMP 20 supports seamless integration of new systems, rapid upgrades, and broad mission adaptability. This makes it particularly attractive to modern military forces seeking scalable ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) solutions capable of evolving alongside changing tactical demands. The system’s ability to accommodate multi-payload configurations further enhances its operational flexibility across a wide range of mission profiles.

This acquisition marks a strategic milestone for the Italian Armed Forces, as it replaces their aging fleet of Shadow UAS with a more advanced and adaptable solution. The selection of JUMP 20 followed a rigorous and highly competitive procurement process in which the platform demonstrated its ability to meet or exceed the MOD’s stringent technical and operational requirements. Its selection underscores Italy’s commitment to adopting forward-looking technologies that enhance situational awareness, mission efficiency, and force protection.

Shane Hastings, Vice President and General Manager of Medium UAS at AeroVironment, commented on the agreement, stating: “We are honored to strengthen our partnership with the Italian Ministry of Defence through the delivery of the JUMP 20, a system that enhances their operational capabilities. This contract builds on our history of supporting NATO allies with world-class uncrewed systems, reflecting our unwavering commitment to innovation and mission success.”

The partnership reinforces AeroVironment’s growing role as a trusted supplier of advanced uncrewed systems to NATO member states. As Italy integrates the JUMP 20 into its military architecture, it joins a cadre of forward-thinking defense forces prioritizing autonomous, modular, and mission-flexible UAS solutions. The acquisition of the JUMP 20 not only advances Italy’s ISR capability but also exemplifies the broader trend of investing in intelligent autonomous systems that redefine the future of modern warfare.

**Headline: NATO Moves Forward with Deployment of Drone Wall on Eastern Flank to Counter RussiaDate: 25-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/nato-moves-forward-with-deployment-of-drone-wall-on-eastern-flank-to-counter-russia**

In an article published on April 23, 2025, Newsweek reported on the progress of a large-scale defense initiative taking shape along NATO’s eastern border. Called the “Drone Wall,” this project envisions a continuous network of surveillance drones and counter-drone systems stretching from Norway to Poland—nearly 3,000 kilometers across the Alliance’s eastern flank. In response to Russia’s military aggression in Ukraine and the growing threat of hybrid warfare in the region, this initiative stands as one of the most ambitious and expensive security projects ever considered in Europe.

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The Drone Wall is designed as a fully operational system, structured in layers that include AI-powered reconnaissance drones, ground-based sensors, mobile counter-drone platforms, and satellite surveillance (Picture source: Editing Army Recognition Group)

Led by Germany and supported by six NATO member states—Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Poland, and Norway—the Drone Wall goes beyond a symbolic gesture. It is designed as a fully operational system, structured in layers that include AI-powered reconnaissance drones, ground-based sensors, mobile counter-drone platforms, and satellite surveillance. Its objective is to detect and neutralize threats in real time, whether drone incursions, GPS jamming, or clandestine cross-border activities, while providing NATO forces with timely and accurate intelligence across its most vulnerable areas.

According to Martin Karkour, Chief Sales Officer at Quantum Systems—one of the main German companies involved—“This is not a symbolic wall. This is a real one.” He added that the technology is already available and that the project now depends on political coordination at the EU or NATO level to move forward. Quantum Systems currently manufactures several hundred drones per month, including the Vector and Trinity Pro models, both optimized for long-duration surveillance missions in complex environments.

Germany’s new chancellor, Friedrich Merz, has made defense a national priority, lifting restrictions on military spending and offering strong support to domestic defense firms. This strategic shift reflects a broader trend across Europe, as countries seek to strengthen their strategic autonomy amid growing uncertainty over U.S. security commitments, particularly following the return of Donald Trump to the White House and his continued pressure on NATO members to increase their defense budgets.

The Baltic states, situated on the front line with Russia, are playing a key role in the early phases of the project. In Estonia, the initiative is coordinated through the Estonian Defence Industry Cluster, which brings together several local defense technology firms. Among them, DefSecIntel Solutions has developed the Erishield system—a multi-layered solution that integrates AI, advanced sensors, and mobile counter-drone units to detect and neutralize hostile UAVs. Estonia has allocated €12 million over three years to support the project. Other companies such as Rantelon, Marduk Technologies, and Hevi Optronics are also contributing, aiming to provide full situational awareness along NATO’s eastern border, including the detection of smuggling attempts and hostile aerial surveillance or sabotage operations.

Lithuanian Minister of the Interior Agnė Bilotaitė described the Drone Wall as a “new form of border defense,” stating that it will help protect against provocations by unfriendly countries. Finland and Norway are also engaged, particularly on the northern segments of the frontier, where harsh weather conditions require highly resilient technological solutions.

Work has already started in Poland under the Shield-East program, which includes the construction of 700 kilometers of fortified surveillance infrastructure. This section is among the first concrete steps of the broader project, pending further political decisions at the NATO level to expand and harmonize the overall system.

Often referred to as the “world’s most expensive technological wall,” the project is seen as a major response to the evolving nature of military threats, where drones, electronic interference, and hybrid operations increasingly shape the security landscape. For those leading the Drone Wall initiative, the goal is not only to reinforce NATO’s defensive posture but also to showcase Europe’s capacity to develop and deploy integrated, sovereign technological solutions.

The Drone Wall represents far more than a reaction to the war in Ukraine. It reflects a profound strategic shift in European defense doctrines, combining technological innovation, multinational coordination, and a renewed emphasis on strategic autonomy in the face of an adversary that continues to exploit the gray zones of modern conflict. Complementing this aerial and digital approach, more traditional fortification measures are also being implemented: the Baltic states have announced the construction of over 1,000 concrete bunkers, along with trenches, anti-tank barriers, minefields, and ammunition depots along their borders with Russia and Belarus. Known as the Baltic Defense Line, this initiative aims to reinforce the technological dimension of the Drone Wall with a robust ground-based defensive layer. Together, these systems could reshape the long-term security architecture of NATO’s eastern frontier.

**Headline: Taiwanese Navy Eyes US JUMP 20 Vertical Takeoff Drone to Reinforce Coastal DefenseDate: 24-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/taiwanese-navy-eyes-us-jump-20-vertical-takeoff-drone-to-reinforce-coastal-defense**

As military pressure from China continues to heighten tensions in the East China Sea, Taiwan’s armed forces are intensifying efforts to enhance their surveillance capabilities, early warning systems, and operational resilience. In this context, the Republic of China Navy has expressed growing interest in acquiring the JUMP 20, a fixed-wing vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) drone developed by the US company AeroVironment, as reported by Liberty Times. The system has been in service with Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration since 2022 and reflects the increasing importance of tactical drones in Taiwan’s maritime defense architecture. Taiwan remains the only country aside from the United States and Ukraine to operate this model, highlighting its proactive approach to integrating advanced ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) technologies amid rising hybrid threats.

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Technically, the JUMP 20 offers more than 13 hours of autonomous flight and an operational range of up to 185 kilometers, providing significant strategic depth for reconnaissance and maritime surveillance missions (Picture source: Aeroenvironment)

According to a report published on Thursday, April 24, by the Liberty Times, the Navy is seeking a more advanced version than the one currently operated by the Coast Guard. This upgraded version is expected to better meet the operational and environmental requirements of naval deployments. A key feature of the JUMP 20 is its ability to operate without the need for an airstrip, as it can take off and land vertically from ships or unprepared land sites. This characteristic makes it particularly suited for deployment from surface vessels such as frigates and coastal patrol ships.

Technically, the JUMP 20 offers more than 13 hours of autonomous flight and an operational range of up to 185 kilometers, providing significant strategic depth for reconnaissance and maritime surveillance missions. It can carry a payload of up to 13.6 kilograms, accommodating a wide range of electro-optical, infrared, and multi-mission sensors. Powered by a 190cc EFI engine running on MOGAS fuel, the drone is designed for extended endurance and simplified maintenance. The system can be made operational in under 60 minutes, without the need for launch or recovery equipment, offering rapid tactical deployment.

Its modular architecture supports the integration of advanced payloads such as the ARCAM 45D camera or long-range EO/MWIR systems, combined with onboard image processing, stabilization, and tracking technologies. This open and interoperable design allows for mission-specific configurations, including the detection of mobile targets, identification of maritime activity, or coastal mapping. While the drone is not armed in its standard configuration, its multi-function bay can accommodate specialized payloads such as light electronic warfare modules or communications relays, depending on mission requirements.

The Navy’s interest in enhanced drone systems aligns with a broader modernization strategy driven by the Ministry of National Defense, which has prioritized unmanned aerial systems in response to the growing military capabilities of the People’s Republic of China. ISR platforms like the JUMP 20 serve dual purposes: improving the operational resilience of Taiwan’s forces and ensuring continuous situational awareness across both littoral and broader maritime zones around the island.

In the event of a Chinese invasion, the JUMP 20 could serve a crucial role in Taiwan’s surveillance and early warning framework. Its ability to maintain discreet, persistent aerial monitoring over sensitive areas, combined with its range, would make it a valuable tool for detecting movements of warships, landing craft, or coastal missile systems. It could also help identify troop concentrations or amphibious preparations in advance, providing real-time intelligence to surface units and command centers. Its capability to operate from austere environments or mobile platforms offers a clear advantage in asymmetric conflict scenarios, especially if airfields were compromised during the early stages of a confrontation.

More broadly, the JUMP 20 could contribute meaningfully to Taiwan’s layered defense strategy. By maintaining surveillance over maritime and aerial corridors, supporting the targeting of precision strikes, and delivering resilient ISR coverage across multiple theaters, the system would serve as a force multiplier. Its ability to adapt sensor configurations to different threat types—including coastal radars, electronic warfare systems, anti-air defenses, or vessel movements—makes it a versatile and hard-to-detect platform. The integration of such capabilities would increase the responsiveness and survivability of Taiwanese forces while improving their capacity to monitor, anticipate, and respond to external threats in an increasingly sensor-driven and technologically advanced operational environment.

**Headline: Russia Trials Satellite Link to Extend Operational Reach of Long-Range DronesDate: 23-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/russia-trials-satellite-link-to-extend-operational-reach-of-long-range-drones**

On April 23, 2025, Russian news agency TASS reported that the design bureau Intelligent Devices (Intelp) has launched testing of the first national real-time satellite communication system developed for tactical long-endurance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). This system is intended to provide Russian UAVs with increased operational autonomy, enabling them to operate beyond the limits of line-of-sight communication or ground-based relays, and thereby significantly expand their range. The initiative is part of a broader strategy to enhance national capabilities in a field that has become crucial for modern conflicts and operations in remote regions such as the Arctic or maritime zones.

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The system operates mainly in the Ku band, integrating a compact 35 cm parabolic antenna with tracking and control modules into a single unit under 8 kg, enabling stable satellite communication for UAVs in motion. (Picture source: Vitaly V. Kuzmin)

Specializing in communication technologies, Intelp has developed a solution compatible with compact and mobile subscriber stations, equipped with a reduced-aperture antenna. According to the bureau’s General Director, Alexander Kondrashina, the system complies with regulatory emission standards while optimizing frequency usage through code compression techniques. He also noted that technology ensures stable connectivity at the edge of coverage zones of geostationary satellites, as well as with future high-elliptical orbit constellations, making it suitable for reliable communications even at high latitudes. This makes it particularly relevant for deployment along the Northern Sea Route and in maritime areas such as the Russian Far East, the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and the Caspian Sea.

Unmanned aviation expert Denis Fedutinov highlighted the significance of this technological development, explaining that satellite communication integration enables UAVs to operate far beyond the range of conventional radio links. He emphasized that the system’s compact size and weight allow for its integration not only on large drones but also on tactical platforms such as the Orion (Inokhodets), Sirius (Inokhodets-RU), Helios-RLD, and future models under development as part of the Altius program. This capability marks a first for the Russian UAV industry.

Technically, the system primarily operates in the Ku frequency band, with a version for the C band also planned. The equipment combines a 35 cm diameter parabolic antenna with a feedhorn, a transceiver, control and positioning modules, and an intelligent tracking system into a single integrated unit. This allows a UAV to maintain communication with geostationary satellites while in motion. The antenna can rotate at up to 200 degrees per second, maintaining a stable connection even on high-speed UAVs or small marine vessels. The total weight of the subscriber station is under 8 kg.

Intelp also stated that the system allows for rapid reconfiguration of communication channel parameters at the software level. With a built-in router, proprietary IP architecture, and a mechanism for optimizing data structure and transmission volume, the system can be easily integrated into any existing data network infrastructure. This adaptability aligns with growing demands for modularity in modern command and control systems.

Compared to conventional systems, this solution offers stable satellite coverage beyond line of sight, including in Arctic regions, due to its compatibility with high-elliptical orbits. Internationally, the United States has maintained leadership in this area for decades, equipping UAVs like the MQ-9 Reaper and RQ-4 Global Hawk with SATCOM links through WGS (Wideband Global SATCOM) satellites. Israel has implemented similar capabilities on its Heron TP drones, while Turkey has equipped its Bayraktar Akinci and Anka UAVs with Ku-band satellite links. China, though less transparent about technical details, has incorporated SATCOM into MALE-class drones such as the CH-5 and is developing its own low-Earth orbit constellations. The United Kingdom is also integrating satellite communication capabilities into its MQ-9B-based Protector RG Mk1.

In response to these global advancements, Russia aims to bridge its gap in satellite communications for UAVs by making such capabilities available to lighter and more versatile platforms. This announcement comes as President Vladimir Putin, during a meeting on UAV development in January, ordered additional funding for accelerating the deployment of low-Earth orbit satellite constellations.

The start of testing for this first satellite communication system for tactical long-endurance UAVs represents a significant step in modernizing Russia’s drone capabilities. Its compact design, software flexibility, and ability to operate in underserved areas position it as a potentially transformative tool in Russia’s UAV operations. It also reflects a broader international trend toward increasingly autonomous drone systems capable of conducting complex missions without reliance on terrestrial infrastructure.

**Headline: Breaking News: Bayraktar TB3 Drone Confirms Naval Strike Capabilities with Four Successful Autonomous Flights from TCG AnadoluDate: 23-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/breaking-news-bayraktar-tb3-drone-confirms-naval-strike-capabilities-with-four-successful-autonomous-flights-from-tcg-anadolu**

On April 22, 2025, Turkish defense company Baykar reached a new milestone in naval aviation with its armed drone Bayraktar TB3, which carried out four autonomous sorties from the TCG Anadolu, sailing in the Gulf of Saros. These tests were part of the “Fully Autonomous Takeoff and Landing Tests from Short-Runway Vessel” campaign, aimed at validating the TB3's ability to take off and land autonomously from a ship with a short runway.

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All four takeoffs and landings on the same day, including one performed at sunset, were executed with the support of artificial intelligence algorithms developed in-house by Baykar. (Picture source: Baykar)

This Turkish-designed combat drone, the first of its kind to demonstrate such a capability, once again confirmed its operational suitability for sea-based missions, operating without the aid of a landing assistance system. All four takeoffs and landings on the same day, including one performed at sunset, were executed with the support of artificial intelligence algorithms developed in-house by Baykar. These tests reinforce the TB3’s potential as an unmanned naval system capable of operating in constrained and complex maritime environments.

The Bayraktar TB3 has been developed by Baykar specifically for deployment from short-runway aircraft carriers, equipped with foldable wings and an autonomous takeoff and landing system. Its Line-of-Sight (LOS) and Beyond-Line-of-Sight (BLOS) communication capabilities allow for remote operation over very long distances, enabling it to perform intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and strike missions. With a wingspan of 14 meters, a payload capacity of 280 kg, a maximum endurance exceeding 21 hours, and a service ceiling of 25,000 feet, the TB3 is configured for a broad range of modern naval air operations, including those conducted abroad.

Operationally versatile, the TB3 is designed to carry six precision-guided munitions, including laser-guided, INS/GPS-guided, infrared-guided, and air-to-air weapons. It is also compatible with a range of interchangeable ISR payloads, such as EO/IR systems with laser designators, multi-mode AESA radar, ELINT sensors, and sonobuoys. Powered by a 170-horsepower turbodiesel engine, the drone combines endurance, deployment flexibility, and strike capability, supporting naval forces in contested environments.

The TB3 first flew from the TCG Anadolu on November 19, 2024, off the coast of Aksaz, followed by a second round of successful flight tests on November 26 of the same year. To date, the drone has accumulated a total of 1,016 flight hours and 42 minutes. Among the most notable trials was the long-endurance flight conducted on December 20, 2023, during which the TB3 remained airborne for 32 hours and covered a distance of 5,700 kilometers, demonstrating significant endurance capability.

The drone has also participated in live-fire tests. On March 25 and 27, 2025, it deployed the UAV-122 supersonic missile developed by Roketsan to engage naval targets. The March 27 strike was particularly notable for targeting a 6-by-6-meter camouflaged structure at low altitude and beyond line of sight, with laser designation provided in-flight by another Turkish drone, the Bayraktar TB2. This test demonstrated the TB3’s ability to operate within a networked drone ecosystem and execute coordinated strikes.

From a technical standpoint, the TB3 is powered by the PD-170 engine, developed domestically by TEI. This engine enabled the drone to reach an altitude of 36,310 feet during a high-altitude performance test conducted on June 25, 2024, at Baykar’s test center in Keşan, Edirne province. Although this places the TB3 among the highest-performing drones in its class, the national altitude record remains with the Bayraktar AKINCI, which reached 45,118 feet.

The integration of domestically developed sensors has also progressed. On March 26, 2024, the TB3 flew for the first time with the ASELFLIR-500, an electro-optical reconnaissance, surveillance, and targeting system developed by ASELSAN. This system, designed to match or exceed the performance of its global counterparts, enhances the TB3’s ability to conduct ISR operations independently.

The Bayraktar TB3 has been developed by Baykar specifically for deployment from short-runway aircraft carriers, equipped with foldable wings and an autonomous takeoff and landing system (Picture source: Baykar)

Thanks to its foldable wing structure and BLOS communication capabilities, the TB3 is optimized for long-range missions from naval platforms. It is designed to perform reconnaissance, surveillance, targeting, and strike missions against overseas targets, contributing to the expansion of maritime deterrence capabilities.

The integration of a drone such as the Bayraktar TB3 aboard a short-runway vessel like the TCG Anadolu marks a significant shift in Turkish naval doctrine. By providing an uncrewed aerial strike and surveillance capability from the sea, this system enables extended operations without relying on conventional carrier groups or forward land bases. This becomes particularly valuable in restricted or contested areas, where the ability to deploy armed drones from sea platforms can provide immediate tactical advantages while reducing risk to personnel.

Strategically, the TB3 significantly broadens the operational reach of the Turkish Armed Forces. With its endurance, modular payloads, and ability to operate from austere maritime environments, it opens the door to missions such as maritime interdiction, preemptive strike, and persistent ISR in key areas like the Eastern Mediterranean, Aegean Sea, and Black Sea. In combination with other networked UAVs, the TB3 contributes to a distributed and resilient combat architecture, enhancing Türkiye’s ability to counter modern anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) threats and conduct long-range power projection.

Baykar has developed all of its systems using self-funded resources since launching its R&D programs in 2003. In both 2023 and 2024, the company recorded $1.8 billion in export revenue, representing 83% and 90% of its annual turnover, respectively. It ranks among Türkiye’s top ten exporters across all industries.

As a global leader in armed drone systems, Baykar has signed export agreements with 36 countries: 34 for the Bayraktar TB2 and 11 for the Bayraktar AKINCI. The company has been named Türkiye’s top defense and aerospace exporter for multiple years, accounting for one-third of the sector’s exports in 2023 and one-quarter in 2024. With the ongoing success of the TB3 aboard the TCG Anadolu, Baykar continues to position itself as a key player in shipborne unmanned aviation, advancing its strategy of domestic innovation and international expansion.

The Bayraktar TB3 thus emerges as a pivotal system in the evolution of Turkish naval air capabilities. Its recent performances illustrate its technological maturity and potential to equip naval forces with a UCAV system capable of autonomous operations from sea-based platforms. Through successful flight tests, domestically developed propulsion and sensors, and a well-established export presence, the TB3 strengthens Türkiye’s profile in the field of next-generation maritime drones.

**Headline: Kratos Equips its Stealth Drone XQ-58 with Landing Gear to Enhance Deployment Flexibility and ReusabilityDate: 22-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/kratos-equips-its-stealth-drone-xq-58-with-landing-gear-to-enhance-deployment-flexibility-and-reusability**

On April 15, 2025, Kratos officially unveiled via its X (formerly Twitter) account a rendering of a new version of its XQ-58A Valkyrie stealth drone equipped with a retractable tricycle landing gear. This announcement marks a significant development in the Valkyrie program, which had so far prioritized operations fully independent of runways for both launch and recovery. The presentation of this conventional configuration reflects a clear intent by Kratos to broaden the operational options of the system for the U.S. armed forces, particularly within the scope of future phases of the U.S. Air Force’s Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program, and potentially the U.S. Navy.

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The Valkyrie may therefore appeal not only to the U.S. Air Force, but also to the U.S. Marine Corps, which continues development of its MUX-TacAir program aimed at supporting the F-35B in strike and intelligence roles. (Picture source: Kratos)

Originally designed to be launched using disposable boosters mounted on ground ramps and recovered by parachute, the XQ-58A was notable for its ability to operate without relying on airfield infrastructure, a key advantage in high-intensity conflicts or expeditionary deployments. Kratos had previously proposed a containerized launch system concept and, in 2024, introduced a trolley-based launch platform allowing operations from conventional runways. The model revealed in April 2025 constitutes the third launch-and-recovery method developed by the company, this time following a CTOL/HTOL (Conventional/Horizontal Take-Off and Landing) configuration.

The released visual shows a tricycle landing gear system, featuring a nose wheel and two main wheels, with integrated protective doors in the fuselage. The nose gear appears to retract forward behind two trapezoidal hatches, while the main gear legs fold laterally into bays beneath the fuselage. Aside from this new equipment, the airframe remains consistent with the original design. Kratos has not yet disclosed any technical specifications distinguishing this version from previous ones, such as maximum takeoff weight, speed, or range.

The integration of landing gear addresses a growing operational need for flexibility. When asked about the modification, Kratos told that converting runway-independent drones to CTOL/HTOL configurations was “technically” feasible, but the broader goal was to offer multiple Valkyrie variants to support a wider range of mission scenarios. According to Steve Fendley, President of Kratos’ Unmanned Systems Division, the addition of landing gear allows conventional take-off and landing while reducing internal payload volume, though without impacting external hardpoints.

This technical development also reflects a shift in industrial positioning. Although Kratos was not selected for the first increment of the CCA program—awarded to General Atomics with the YFQ-42A and Anduril with the YFQ-44A—the company remains engaged with upcoming increments, which are expected to introduce more stringent requirements and potentially reopen competition. The release of this rendering thus occurs in a strategic context in which Kratos seeks to reinforce its relevance in the collaborative combat drone segment. The Valkyrie may therefore appeal not only to the U.S. Air Force, but also to the U.S. Marine Corps, which continues development of its MUX-TacAir program aimed at supporting the F-35B in strike and intelligence roles.

Kratos has also confirmed that it is working on a version tailored to the Marines’ specific requirements, designated MQ-58B, which would include electronic warfare capabilities intended to suppress enemy air defenses. This version would enhance interoperability with short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) F-35B aircraft, aligning with multi-domain naval air operations. The drone is already used in experimental contexts by the U.S. Air Force and Marine Corps as part of research, development, and concept validation efforts.

From a tactical standpoint, the introduction of landing gear brings operational advantages. Unlike previous configurations, the CTOL/HTOL model does not require rocket boosters for launch or parachutes for recovery, simplifying pre-flight procedures and enabling faster mission turnaround. Kratos had previously indicated that the trolley-based launch system increased fuel and payload capacity by several dozen percent, enhancing both endurance and range.

This new variant may also draw the interest of the U.S. Navy. Although the Navy is still defining the parameters of its own CCA requirements, it has shown interest in Boeing Australia’s MQ-28 Ghost Bat, developed with the Royal Australian Air Force, which could also be adapted into a carrier-capable variant with an arrestor hook. In 2021, the Navy had already requested concepts for operating XQ-58 drones from mobile maritime bases such as Expeditionary Sea Base ships, including potential variants with landing gear.

Kratos is also considering international markets for the Valkyrie, leveraging its experience with aerial target drones already delivered to foreign customers for training, testing, and technology development. The CTOL/HTOL configuration could open up further export opportunities, particularly among armed forces seeking a modular, semi-expendable, and lower-cost alternative to strategic drones.

the official unveiling of the XQ-58A equipped with landing gear reflects Kratos’ intent to align with the evolving requirements of collaborative air combat. This new variant expands the Valkyrie’s operational roles by combining runway-based deployment, reusability, and compatibility with U.S. force employment doctrines. Its adaptable architecture may enhance the system’s competitiveness in future CCA program phases and appeal to partner nations modernizing their combat drone fleets.

**Headline: MQ25 Stingray First Carrier Based Refueling Drone Enters Production for US Navy and Attracts US Air ForceDate: 22-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/navy-news/2025/mq25-stingray-first-carrier-based-refueling-drone-enters-production-for-us-navy-and-attracts-us-air-force**

On April 17, 2025, the Congressional Research Service published a detailed brief on the MQ-25 Stingray program, marking a new and significant phase in the modernization of the U.S. Navy's carrier-based aviation capabilities. This document, submitted to the U.S. Congress, outlines the progress made in the program and provides a forward-looking assessment of what is expected to become the first carrier-based unmanned aerial refueling and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) platform.

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Designed for seamless integration into evolving tactical architectures, the MQ-25 reflects a convergence of strategic needs between the Navy and Air Force. (Picture source: Boeing)

The MQ-25 Stingray is an unmanned aerial refueling aircraft developed by Boeing for the U.S. Navy, designed to extend the combat range of carrier-based aircraft such as the F/A-18 Super Hornet, EA-18G Growler, and F-35C Lightning II. With a fuel transfer capacity estimated at 15,000 pounds delivered at distances beyond 500 nautical miles from an aircraft carrier, the MQ-25 addresses a long-standing operational gap within U.S. Navy carrier air wings. Currently, F/A-18E/F Super Hornets must be diverted from combat roles to perform aerial refueling. By introducing an autonomous refueling drone, the Navy aims to optimize the combat availability of its manned assets while expanding the operational radius of the carrier air wing. In its Fiscal Year 2025 budget request, the U.S. Navy allocated $898 million to procure three initial aircraft and continue research, development, testing, and evaluation (RDT&E) efforts. The full program of record includes 76 aircraft—67 for operational deployment and nine for testing.

Boeing has applied its extensive experience in carrier aviation—spanning back over 90 years from the Douglas TBD Devastator to today’s F/A-18E/F—to the development of the MQ-25. In 2018, the company was awarded a contract to produce engineering development model (EDM) aircraft. The Boeing-owned T1 test asset, which first flew in 2019, accumulated approximately 125 flight hours and successfully conducted aerial refueling missions with three aircraft types: F/A-18, E-2D Hawkeye, and F-35C. In 2021, the T1 was integrated aboard the USS George H.W. Bush, demonstrating its deck handling capabilities. This early phase laid the groundwork for five EMD aircraft currently under production—alongside one static test unit—at Boeing’s facility in St. Louis, Missouri. The first flight of an EMD unit is scheduled for December 2025. To support scale-up, Boeing plans to relocate production to MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, Illinois, by the end of 2025 as the program moves toward full-rate production.

At the Farnborough International Airshow in July 2024, Boeing confirmed that the Navy was preparing to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the low-rate initial production (LRIP) phase in the second half of 2024, with a contract expected by mid-2025. In parallel, Boeing is investing in the development of a new ground control system and software architecture that would allow F/A-18 Super Hornets or E-2D Hawkeyes to remotely command the MQ-25 during its missions. This system is designed specifically to meet Navy integration requirements and to operate with next-generation control stations.

In a significant expansion of the program’s scope, Boeing also introduced a land-based variant of the MQ-25 at the Air & Space Forces Association’s Air Space & Cyber Conference on September 16, 2024. Known as the MQ-25 LBV (Land-Based Variant), this model was developed internally with input from the U.S. Air Force to support future refueling needs in contested environments. The LBV features a wingspan extended to 92 feet—compared to 75 feet on the carrier-based version—eliminating the need for folding mechanisms and increasing wing fuel storage by 40%. Digital modeling enabled Boeing to optimize the configuration, which now includes two 3,000-pound external pylons capable of carrying additional refueling equipment or mission payloads.

The MQ-25 LBV retains a hose-and-drogue refueling system and is intended to support Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) as part of the Air Force’s broader Next-Generation Aerial Refueling System (NGAS) strategy. The variant may also be adapted for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), electronic warfare, and airborne early warning roles. An image presented during the 2024 conference depicted the LBV receiving fuel from a KC-46 tanker. Its design remains compatible with existing probe-equipped aircraft.

Together, the naval and land-based versions of the MQ-25 represent a cross-service enabler for distributed operations. Designed for seamless integration into evolving tactical architectures, the MQ-25 reflects a convergence of strategic needs between the Navy and Air Force. As other global military powers develop similar capabilities, the MQ-25 Stingray stands to become the first fully operational system of its kind—marking a pivotal shift in autonomous aerial refueling and multipurpose unmanned systems in 21st-century aerospace strategy.

**Headline: Marines Surpass 1,000 MQ-9A Flight Hours As Capabilities ExpandDate: 23-04-2025URL: https://www.asdnews.com/news/defense/2025/04/23/marines-surpass-1000-mq9a-flight-hours-as-capabilities-expand**

**Headline: Heven Acquires Zepher Flight Labs, Expanding Hydrogen Drone CapabilitiesDate: 25-04-2025URL: https://dronelife.com/2025/04/25/heven-acquires-zepher-flight-labs-expanding-hydrogen-drone-capabilities/**

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April 25, 2025 by Miriam McNabb Leave a Comment

Hydrogen-powered drone developer Heven has announced the acquisition of Zepher Flight Labs (ZFL), a move that enhances the company’s ability to deliver flexible, mission-ready drone systems. Heven, based in Miami, is a recognized leader in hydrogen-powered unmanned aerial systems (UAS).

The acquisition will support Heven’s strategy to expand its modular and adaptable UAS fleet. By integrating Zepher’s technology, Heven aims to build drones with greater endurance, rapid deployment capabilities, and improved usability in both defense and commercial sectors.

“This acquisition strengthens our position in the market and underscores our commitment to providing the most advanced and reliable drone solutions,” said Bentzion Levinson, CEO of Heven. “With the addition of ZFL, Heven will be able to offer even more versatile systems tailored to meet the needs of our customers in defense, security, and commercial sectors.”

Zepher Flight Labs is well known for its lightweight VTOL drones, which are designed for quick field deployment and easy repair. These features align with Heven’s goals of building a drone fleet that is durable, efficient, and adaptable to a range of missions.

“We are excited to join the Heven family,” said Adam Stolz, CEO of ZFL. “Our complementary capabilities will allow us to accelerate the development of drone technologies, and together, we will continue to push the boundaries of what is possible in unmanned flight.”

ZFL’s team will integrate with Heven’s engineers and designers, enabling a collaborative approach to future product development. The combined teams will focus on expanding Heven’s roadmap with new drones that meet rising demands for long-range, long-endurance capabilities.

The acquisition follows a series of major initiatives from Heven. In February, the company launched Raider, a hydrogen-powered platform capable of flying for over 10 hours and carrying payloads up to 50 pounds. Heven also partnered with Mach Industries to scale U.S. drone production and introduced Heven Border Solutions, a system aimed at securing borders with persistent aerial surveillance.

The addition of ZFL is expected to accelerate product development and help Heven deliver enhanced solutions for both military and commercial customers.

About Heven

Founded in 2019, Heven builds hydrogen-powered drones engineered for endurance and adaptability. Designed for complex missions, Heven drones operate efficiently and reliably across a range of challenging environments.

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**Headline: Certo Aerospace Raises £3M to Accelerate UK Flight Trials of Large Uncrewed HelicoptersDate: 23-04-2025URL: https://dronelife.com/2025/04/23/certo-aerospace-raises-3m-to-accelerate-uk-flight-trials-of-large-uncrewed-helicopters/**

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April 23, 2025 by Miriam McNabb Leave a Comment

Certo Aerospace Ltd, a British aerospace company based in Somerset, has announced the successful raise of over £3 million in new capital through an equity placement. The company will use the funds to accelerate the development and testing of large uncrewed air systems (UAS), designed to reduce risk-to-life in defense missions and expand the role of drones in humanitarian and disaster relief operations.

Certo’s flagship aircraft, the CAPSTONE Vertical Take Off and Landing (VTOL) drone, is the largest drone currently flying regular missions in the United Kingdom. The drone uses a coaxial rotor system with two contra-rotating 5-meter blades and no tail rotor. This design improves energy efficiency and maximizes lift by eliminating the tail rotor, which typically uses up to 20% of a helicopter’s energy.

With a range of 300 miles and a flight endurance of up to eight hours, CAPSTONE can carry 300 kilograms in combined payload and fuel—matching its own dry weight. These capabilities place it among the most advanced VTOL aircraft in its weight category under UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) GROUP 3 regulations, which includes drones with a maximum take-off weight of 600 kilograms.

The CAPSTONE UAV is currently undergoing flight trials with multiple government agencies across southwest England. Testing takes place at several former military airfields, including sites previously operated by the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, and the Army. The drone is designed to launch from both land and sea platforms, filling a gap between small multi-rotor drones and manned helicopters in terms of range and payload.

The latest equity raise exceeded expectations, reflecting growing investor confidence in the platform. “At our pre-deal valuation of £16m, we’re delighted that our original target amount was significantly oversubscribed,” said Certo’s Managing Director Justin Tooth. “This allowed us to expand the raise so that we can now further accelerate the UK flight trials of our 600kg VTOL CAPSTONE UAS and we are delighted to be showcasing two of our flying prototypes at the Future Lab exhibition at Goodwood Festival of Speed.”

This round of funding follows over $5 million in support from the U.S. Department of Defense in recent years. Certo is actively positioning the CAPSTONE platform for both UK and U.S. defense and civil UAS programs.

Certo’s chairman Jonathan Tate noted, “This raise was boosted in part by strong industry tailwinds in defence and autonomous technologies, but our impressive flying videos on social media also really helped. Investors swiftly saw that CAPSTONE is more than just another drone; it’s a highly capable, long-range multi-role unmanned helicopter.”

Certo Aerospace will showcase CAPSTONE at the 2025 Goodwood Festival of Speed, taking place July 10–13. The drone will be featured in the event’s Future Lab exhibition, presented by Randox and curated by Lucy Johnston. Future Lab highlights global innovations in space, AI, robotics, and health under the theme “Technology for a Better World.” British astronaut Tim Peake will return as the Future Lab Ambassador. Final tickets for the event are available at goodwood.com.

Read more:

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**Headline: Quantum Systems and RENK Gears Private Ltd. (RENK India) conclude strategic partnership in IndiaDate: 25-04-2025URL: https://www.suasnews.com/2025/04/quantum-systems-and-renk-gears-private-ltd-renk-india-conclude-strategic-partnership-in-india/**

Quantum Systems GmbH, the European market leader for real-time unmanned aerial intelligence solutions, and RENK Gears Private Ltd., (RENK India), a subsidiary of RENK Group AG, a leading provider of drive solutions for military and civilian use, signed a Memorandum of Understanding today in India for a strategic partnership.

The signing took place in Bengaluru, located in the Indian state of Karnataka, where the two technology leaders were joined by Bavaria’s State Minister Dr. Florian Herrmann. RENK Gears Private Ltd. and Quantum-Systems GmbH aim to cooperate more closely in the future in the areas of research and development, production, software development, and digitalization.

Both companies recently identified India as a key growth market.

Dr. Florian Herrmann, Bavaria’s State Minister, said: “Bavaria and India complement each other perfectly: the state of Karnataka is considered the Silicon Valley of India and Bavaria the Silicon Valley of Germany. Bavaria focuses on high-tech and research like no other federal state. With the Bavarian High-Tech Agenda, we are investing over 5.5 billion euros in science and the associated technology transfer to the economy – to turn good ideas into jobs. With success: companies from all over the world are coming to Bavaria – and Bavarian companies are expanding all over the world. We are therefore particularly pleased about the new international cooperation between Renk India and Quantum Systems. The areas of armaments, aerospace, AI and quantum computing are major fields of the future. As the Free State of Bavaria, we want to be at the forefront of innovation in these technologies worldwide and thus secure long-term value creation and prosperity for Bavaria. To this end, we also held a large reception in Bangalore today at the end of our trip to India to network with international business representatives. Networking and partnership are more important than ever in a global world in turmoil.”

“The cooperation is another strong signal for our location and underscores the ‘Make in India’ ambitions of the RENK Group,” said Praveen Mohan, Managing Director of RENK Gears Private Ltd.

India offers Quantum Systems a highly attractive strategic environment for sustainable growth. The country’s defense and security spending is steadily increasing, accompanied by massive investments in high-tech and infrastructure projects. As a geopolitically important player with major civil and military challenges, India is an exciting market for ISR drone technology and aerial intelligence services.

The RENK Group has maintained business relations in India for decades, as the country has been a strategic partner for Germany. The company is currently significantly expanding its production capacities in India for gearboxes, slide bearings and couplings for military and civilian applications. By 2025, a new roughly 7,000-square-meter production site for military and civilian applications will be built in India.

Quantum Systems also has a long-standing history of doing business in the region and is an established partner for India, including in the areas of land surveying and cadastral registration. In the future, the company will also be active in India for other government agencies.

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By Craig Hoyle2025-04-22T15:29:00+01:00

EDGE’s Swiss subsidiary Anavia has demonstrated what its parent company describes as a “complex flight profile” with an HT-100 unmanned air vehicle for the Brazilian armed forces and police.

Recently conducted from the Brazilian army’s Restinga da Marambaia site near Rio de Janeiro, the activity “showcased the HT-100’s aerial prowess in rapidly and reliably delivering actionable tactical intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance data in real-time”, EDGE says.

Source: EDGE

Swiss-developed HT-100 can carry a 60kg payload, with maximum 6h flight endurance

The United Arab Emirates’ defence house says the test flight involved demonstrating “a 15-minute readiness time from system activation to take-off”. Once airborne, the rotorcraft performed manoeuvres including “hovering, low-speed and low-altitude flight, figure-eight manoeuvres, and circular orbits”, spanning within- and beyond-visual line-of-sight operations.

With a maximum payload of 60kg (132lb) and a flight endurance of up to 6h, the vertical take-off and landing HT-100 is described by its developer as “a rapidly deployable alternative to manned rotorcraft for intelligence and data-gathering missions”.

Powered by a 20shp (15kW) turbine engine, it has an airframe length of 2.82m (10ft 9in), rotor diameter of 3.75m and can be operated at altitudes up to 13,100ft.

“For the defence and public security requirements in Latin America, the HT-100 offers a key solution across a range of operational contexts tailored to the region’s unique challenges,” says Tiago Silva, chief executive of EDGE’s Latin America office.

Anavia chief executive Jon Andri Joerg says the company’s goal is to “offer armed forces and security agencies a reliable and highly capable platform that performs with precision, even in the most demanding environments”.

EDGE holds a majority stake in Anavia, with its HT-100 and larger HT-750 systems both on order for the UAE’s armed forces. Deliveries are due to begin later this year under Abu Dhabi’s 200-unit contract, which was signed in late 2023.

2025-05-02T16:56:00Z By Craig Hoyle

Unmanned air vehicle (UAV) producer Tekever is to invest over £400 million ($532 million) to boost its activities in the UK and add more than 1,000 employees to its workforce.

2025-05-02T14:11:00Z By Craig Hoyle

When Portugal signed for five Embraer C/KC-390 tactical transports in July 2019, it was taking something of a gamble by becoming the first export buyer for the Brazilian-built type – but its air force’s 506 Squadron is now flying high with the Brazilian-built airlifter.

2025-05-02T10:26:00Z By Craig Hoyle

The UK Royal Air Force (RAF) has introduced to service its “first of a new family of autonomous collaborative platforms”, which it claims will revolutionise operations in contested environments.

2025-05-01T23:40:00Z By Ryan Finnerty

In a sweeping overhaul of the service’s force structure, senior Pentagon officials have directed the US Army to end procurement of “obsolete” and “outdated” aircraft platforms, including the Boeing AH-64D and General Atomics MQ-1C Gray Eagle uncrewed aerial vehicle.

2025-04-30T02:46:00Z By Greg Waldron

The US government has cleared the possible sale of Raytheon AIM-120 Advanced Medium-Range Air-to-Air Missiles (AMRAAMs) to Poland.

2025-04-29T13:38:00Z By Craig Hoyle

Norway has taken delivery of its first Konsgberg-produced Joint Strike Missile, ahead of the weapon’s full integration with the Lockheed Martin F-35.

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**Headline: British jammer drone opens door to unmanned wingmen in combatDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2025/05/02/british-jammer-drone-opens-door-to-unmanned-wingmen-in-combat/**

Featured:

ROME — The U.K. has launched a new jammer drone it says will fly into the battle space ahead of F-35s and Typhoons and jam and bamboozle enemy radar.

The RAF StormShroud, which went into operation on Friday, is based on the 100km range AR3 drone built by British-Portuguese firm Tekever, which has been used in Ukraine.

On board, the StormShroud carries the BriteStorm stand-in jammer supplied by Leonardo UK, which is designed to block enemy radar or spoof it, creating “ghost” jet signatures.

The new asset “means for the first time, the RAF will benefit from high-end electronic warfare without needing crew to man it, freeing them up for other vital frontline missions,” the UK government said in a statement.

“This is a seminal moment for the RAF to maintain our advantage in air combat and national security,” said RAF Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton.

An initial investment of £19 million ($25 million) by the RAF will see Tekever produce “hundreds” of platforms in the UK this year, the firm said.

The rail-launched AR3, which has a maximum operating weight of 25kg boasts 16 hour endurance and a cruise speed of up to 90kmh.

Tekever’s AR3 and AR5 drones have flown 10,000 hours in Ukraine.

“In a further vote of confidence in Britain’s defense industry, British-Portuguese tech company Tekever, who manufacture the drones in the U.K., plan to invest a further £400 million over the next 5 years across the U.K. and create up to 1,000 more highly skilled jobs,” the British government said.

The 2.5kg BriteStorm, which is about the size of six Coke cans, including its transmit and receive modules and antenna, uses Leonardo’s Digital Radio Frequency Memory (DRFM) technology to digitally capture enemy radar signals.

Leonardo has said that traditional, large manned aircraft carrying stand-off jammers must fly further back in the battle space and are less effective.

Operated by the RAF’s 216 Squadron, the StormShroud is designed to be expendable. Describing the BriteStorm, Leonardo said, “On its return, BriteStorm is rapidly reprogrammable for subsequent missions, but if destroyed in the defense of higher-value or crewed platforms, its loss would be tolerable.”

The drone marks a step towards the collaboration between manned and unmanned aerial platforms – an ambition of the UK-Italian-Japanese GCAP fighter program, which envisages swarms of drones flying alongside fighters.

The RAF said that it was determined to bring such technologies to the front line fast.

“Lessons learned from the war in Ukraine have boosted StormShroud’s production and it’s taken just a year from the Urgent Capability Requirement (UCR) being endorsed to delivering the new capability, significantly reducing program time and costs,” the service said.

Tom Kington is the Italy correspondent for Defense News.

Defense News © 2025

**Headline: Air Force starts ground testing Anduril collaborative combat aircraftDate: 01-05-2025URL: https://www.defensenews.com/air/2025/05/01/air-force-starts-ground-testing-anduril-collaborative-combat-aircraft/**

Featured:

The Air Force has started ground testing its first Anduril-made semiautonomous drone wingmen known as collaborative combat aircraft, which could be flying within months.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Allvin announced the beginning of the ground testing phase in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, Thursday morning. It included a video of hangar doors opening dramatically to reveal Anduril Industries’ YFQ-44A, which the company previously referred to as Fury.

“This is a huge milestone and another step toward first flight and rapid delivery [of CCAs] to our warfighters,” Allvin said. “These unmanned fighters are going to be badass!”

Now that ground testing of Anduril’s CCA has begun, the company said in a statement, it expects to start flying the YFQ-44A this summer.

“Together, Anduril and the United States Air Force are pioneering a new generation of semi-autonomous fighter aircraft that will fundamentally transform air combat,” said Jason Levin, Anduril’s senior vice president of air dominance and strike. “YFQ-44A delivers highly capable, mass-producible, and more affordable fighter capability at the speed and scale required to stay ahead of the threat.”

The Air Force also said it wants to locate the first aircraft readiness unit for CCAs at Beale Air Force Base in California. That unit will be in charge of “provid[ing] combat aircraft ready to deploy worldwide at a moment’s notice,” the service said in a statement.

The Air Force in April 2024 announced it had selected Anduril and General Atomics to design, build and test the first iteration of CCAs, which will fly alongside aircraft such as the F-35 and the Next Generation Air Dominance fighter now known as the F-47.

CCAs will use autonomous software to fly themselves with minimal direction from the pilots they accompany, and will be able to carry out missions such as airstrikes, intelligence gathering and reconnaissance, electronic warfare, or serving as decoys to lure enemies away from crewed aircraft.

The Air Force has suggested it could have a fleet of about 1,000 CCAs, and said they will be cheaper than traditional fighters. The service wants them to extend the service’s reach at a time when pilots and advanced fighters are in short supply.

Allvin also said on social media that the Air Force’s CCA strategy heralds “a new way of acquisition,” that focuses on quickly iterating new designs instead of sustaining existing models for decades.

“Our new mantra needs to be ‘built to adapt’ rather than ‘built to last,’” Allvin said in the post.

Those comments underscore remarks Allvin made in June 2024, in which he said the Air Force wanted to keep CCA missions simple and costs down, so they can be fielded in large numbers and replaced after a decade or so with fresh models. Allvin also suggested CCAs could be modular and heavily adapted with new technologies to keep them relevant.

Ground testing of General Atomics’ YFQ-42A has not yet begun. In a statement, the company said, “We remain on schedule to test and fly YFQ-42 in the coming months.”

Allvin said in the Air Force’s statement that the beginning of ground tests for the Anduril CCA “bridges the gap between design and flight” and reduces the risk that comes from integrating a new system. He also said both Anduril and General Atomics are meeting or exceeding key milestones, and innovative design and acquisition strategies are speeding up the process for fielding CCAs.

“We’re moving fast because the warfighter needs this capability,” Allvin said. “CCA is about delivering decisive advantage in highly contested environments. … These aircraft will help us turn readiness into operational dominance.”

An advantage of pilotless CCAs is that they will not have to be flown daily to maintain pilots’ readiness, the Air Force said.

That means the readiness unit planned for Beale would be able to keep CCAs in a “fly-ready status” and flown minimally, the service said, which will require a “substantially lower” number of support airmen such as maintainers than other aircraft require.

The Air Force plans to make a decision in fiscal 2026 on which of the two CCA versions to move into production. Also that year, the service expects to start developing the second so-called “increment” of CCAs, which it hopes will have a broader suite of missions it can be used for and integrate cutting-edge technology.

Stephen Losey is the air warfare reporter for Defense News. He previously covered leadership and personnel issues at Air Force Times, and the Pentagon, special operations and air warfare at Military.com. He has traveled to the Middle East to cover U.S. Air Force operations.

Defense News © 2025

**Headline: Algeria shoots down Malian UAV, escalating tensionsDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.defenceweb.co.za/aerospace/aerospace-aerospace/algeria-shoots-down-malian-uav-escalating-tensions/**

A Malian unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), or drone, shot down over the border in Algeria has escalated tensions between the two countries as they take different approaches toward Tuareg groups living along their shared border.

Algerian forces shot down the Turkish Akinci drone in early April after it crossed into Algerian airspace near the border community of Tin Zaouatine, a remote town deep in the Sahara that is a base for Tuareg rebels fighting Mali’s ruling junta. Malian officials claim the drone crashed 10 kilometers inside their border.

Tin Zaouatine was where Tuaregs in July 2024 killed 47 Malian soldiers and 84 Russian mercenaries belonging to the former Wagner Group, now known as Africa Corps, who fought with Malian forces.

The drone dispute is the latest escalation in tensions between Algeria and Mali, which began with Mali’s coups in 2020 and 2021. Relations deteriorated when Mali’s military rulers invited Russian mercenaries into the country in 2021 to help fight Tuareg rebels, whom Mali has labeled as terrorists.

Experts believe Mali hosts 1,000 to 1,500 Russian mercenaries. The junta calls the mercenaries trainers, but as shown in Tin Zaouatine, they frequently join the military in military operations.

Analyst Constantin Gouvy with the Clingendael Institute told Al Jazeera that Russian mercenaries’ strategy against suspected terrorists in Mali features “wanton violence against civilians.”

Algeria opposes Mali’s use of Russian mercenaries and the junta’s decision to treat the Tuaregs as terrorists. Algeria worries that Mali’s armed confrontations with Tuaregs in the Tin Zaouatine area — confrontations often made worse by the brutality of Russian mercenaries — could lead the fighting to expand into Algeria, which has its own Tuareg population.

Before the Malian junta overthrew its government, Algeria spent more than a decade mediating between the democratically elected Malian government and Tuareg rebels. Those negotiations produced the Algiers Accords in 2015. Mali’s ruling junta withdrew from the accords in 2023. It accuses Algeria of harboring the same Tuareg groups the junta is fighting.

Algeria recently deployed troops along its border with Mali to guard against infiltration by armed militants coming from Mali and its neighbors in the Alliance of Sahelian States (AES), Burkina Faso and Niger.

Mali called the destruction of the drone premeditated. In a joint statement, AES nations said Algeria’s action against the reconnaissance drone “prevented the neutralization of a terrorist group that was planning terrorist acts against the AES.”

“AES leaders’ council sees the shooting down of [a] Malian military operated drone as hostile against all members of AES and as treacherous action tending in some way to foment terrorism and destabilize the region,” Malian Foreign Minister Mali Abdoulaye Diop said in a statement.

In response to the drone incident, Mali and its AES allies pulled their ambassadors from Algeria. Algeria followed suit. A few days later Algeria and Mali closed their airspace to each other.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) called for calm amid the rising tensions between Algeria and Mali. Mali and its AES allies left ECOWAS in January, but ECOWAS nations that border the AES remain on alert as violence permeating the Sahel threatens to spread south.

ECOWAS member states urged Algeria and Mali to “de-escalate the tension, foster dialogue and use regional and continental mechanisms to settle differences.”

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**Headline: AATI launches rapidly deployable AiRangerX UAS platformDate: 01-05-2025URL: https://www.militaryaerospace.com/uncrewed/article/55287032/aati-launches-rapidly-deployable-airangerx-uas-platform**

STERLING, Va. - Advanced Aerospace Technologies, Inc. (AATI) in Conshohocken, Pa., has launched AiRangerX, a fully certified and rapidly deployable version of its AiRanger system, designed to operate within the National Airspace System and internationally.

AiRangerX serves as a surrogate platform for the company’s AiRanger uncrewed aerial system (UAS), allowing government and commercial partners to conduct mission simulations, training, and system evaluations without the need for full system deployment. The platform includes AI-powered autonomy, long-range beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations, advanced sensor integration, and real-time command and control capabilities.

"AiRangerX represents a breakthrough in how our customers and partners access and experience the AiRanger platform," said Chris Kluckhuhn, CEO of AATI. "With this surrogate system, we can now deliver complete demonstrations and mission capability evaluations in record time—anywhere on the globe."

American Aerospace's drones granted first FAA waiver for BVLOS commercial operation

AATI officials said AiRangerX is intended for defense, homeland security, infrastructure monitoring, and emergency response applications. The system replicates the operational architecture of the flagship AiRanger UAS, providing users the ability to assess uncrewed aerial capabilities under real-world conditions.

The company said AiRangerX can be deployed globally within weeks, removing traditional barriers to system evaluation and adoption. Key features include live demonstrations of autonomy, command and control, and sensor integration. The system also enables interoperability testing with existing networks and mission workflows.

AiRangerX can simulate live data from electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR), thermal, radar, and other advanced payloads, allowing operators to evaluate operational effectiveness across a range of mission scenarios, including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), border security, and disaster response.

**Headline: US Marine Corps to deploy three new types of loitering munitions into infantry battalions by early 2026Date: 01-05-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/us-marine-corps-to-deploy-three-new-types-of-loitering-munitions-into-infantry-battalions-by-early-2026**

As reported by National Defense on April 29, 2025, the U.S. Marine Corps is scheduled to receive the first units of its Organic Precision Fires-Light (OPF-L) loitering munitions in January 2026 for initial end-user evaluation. Two battalions will be equipped with the systems, which are intended to provide rifle squads and platoons with an individually operated, man-portable loitering munition capable of engaging beyond-line-of-sight targets. Full-scale fielding is expected to take place by the end of 2026. The systems are being developed under the OPF-L program, which is part of a broader initiative to provide organic precision strike capabilities at the small-unit level. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

Loitering munitions are used to strike concealed or mobile targets with minimal exposure of higher-value platforms and may include capabilities such as real-time target identification, programmable flight paths, and abort or return-to-base procedures. (Picture source: US Marine Corps)

Three companies, AeroVironment, Anduril Industries, and Teledyne FLIR, were selected by the Department of Defense in April 2024 through an open competition from a group of eight vendors. Each company was awarded an initial contract under an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) agreement, with values of $8.9 million, $6.4 million, and $12 million respectively. The combined ceiling of the IDIQ contract is $249 million.

A loitering munition, also referred to as a suicide drone, kamikaze drone, or exploding drone, is a weapon system that basically combines features of a drone and a guided missile. It is typically designed to remain airborne for a period of time while searching for a target, then attack by crashing into the target and detonating an onboard warhead. These systems can be manually controlled or semi-autonomous and may be recoverable if the target is not engaged. Loitering munitions are used to strike concealed or mobile targets with minimal exposure of higher-value platforms and may include capabilities such as real-time target identification, programmable flight paths, and abort or return-to-base procedures. Some are designed for tactical deployment at the squad level and others for integration into larger vehicle or naval platforms.

Teledyne FLIR will deliver the first 127 OPF-L systems for testing and evaluation in the summer of 2025. Its system consists of a vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) quadrotor drone platform designed to be recoverable and reusable. The company has indicated that the system has undergone testing against both mobile and stationary targets, including dismounted personnel and vehicles. The contract includes a five-year base period and a three-year option. Teledyne FLIR published a computer-generated image of its VTOL system, showing low-altitude flight operations in urban terrain. The design aims to operate within what has been described by the company as the “Atmospheric Littoral,” referring to low-altitude, unobstructed airspace used by tactical ground units.

Anduril Industries is also providing a VTOL solution with a quadrotor platform. According to the company, its system integrates previously tested technologies including tracking and guidance capabilities, return-to-base functionality, and terminal engagement features. Unlike its previous fixed-wing systems such as the Altius 700, which was selected by U.S. Special Operations Command for the Maritime Precision Engagement Munition program, Anduril’s OPF-L submission marks a shift toward rotor-based designs. The Marine Corps has stated that VTOL and fixed-wing platforms may be deployed in parallel, with no current plan for a down-select process, provided that all systems meet performance and certification requirements. A Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) spokesperson stated that VTOL and fixed-wing loitering munitions are viewed as complementary capabilities and that the service is seeking non-developmental systems for qualification and testing during fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

AeroVironment will provide its Switchblade 300 Block 20 as a fixed-wing entry to the OPF-L program. The Block 20 model includes an Explosively Formed Penetrator (EFP) warhead for armor penetration, improved target attack angles, extended flight endurance, longer radio range, and increased battery life. The Switchblade 300 system has been in operational use since 2012. AeroVironment has stated that over 6,000 units have been produced and tested. The company confirmed its readiness to produce and deliver initial orders under the contract and to meet subsequent production demands. According to the firm, the Switchblade 300 is designed for launch from a tube and supports engagement of both static and moving targets beyond line of sight. The Marine Corps acquisition documentation calls for OPF-L systems that are man-portable and composed of the loitering munition, ground control station, training simulator, and associated equipment.

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According to Marine Corps statements during the April 2025 Modern Day Marine conference, the OPF-L program addresses the need for a responsive, squad-level precision strike capability. Maj. Gen. Farrell Sullivan noted that the initial two battalions will deploy with the systems as part of an end-user evaluation. Col. Sean Hoewing acknowledged that the service is behind in fielding uncrewed aerial systems but emphasized that industry is now responding to urgent requirements for organic precision fires. The Marine Corps has stated that the next steps involve clearly documenting requirements and ensuring that program offices are adequately resourced to deliver these systems. Col. Scott Cuomo noted that the service will require new military occupational specialties and unit formations to integrate these technologies, while Col. Erick Clark stated that the use of loitering munitions fits within existing Marine Corps combined arms practices. Marine officials have further emphasized that the systems will be distributed to smaller units to reduce dependence on external air support.

The OPF-L program is one component of the Marine Corps’ wider transformation under Force Design 2030. The 2023 annual update explicitly stated that the OPF program is progressing too slowly and directed the acceleration of procurement and training for both Infantry (OPF-I) and Mounted (OPF-M) variants. The Infantry Battalion Experimentation (IBX) effort included 13 force-on-force trials across multiple environments and led to a revised battalion structure increasing from 735 to 811 Marines. Changes included all-weather surveillance and additional anti-armor and indirect fire capabilities. The Corps mandated implementation of the new battalion structure by September 2023. For OPF-M, Mistral Inc. and UVision were selected in 2021 to integrate their Hero 120 system onto vehicles including the JLTV, Light Armored Vehicle-Medium, and the Long Range Uncrewed Surface Vessel. A 2019 Request for Information (RFI) indicated that the OPF-M was intended to expand indirect fire capacity and provide organic fires to maneuver units.

The Marine Corps’ official RFI for OPF-L, identified as M67854-22-I-1043, outlined detailed technical expectations. These include a minimum munition range of 10 kilometers, a total system weight under 55 pounds, and programmable behaviors such as mission abort, loss-of-link, and GPS-denied operation. Systems must provide loitering and strike capabilities against anti-personnel and anti-materiel targets, and integrate uplink/downlink communications, GPS guidance, and ground control stations with preflight and inflight programming functionality. Additional requirements include endurance metrics, system reliability, launch method, warhead type, camera and sensor capabilities, manufacturing readiness, and supply chain resilience. The RFI requested technical readiness level justification, unit cost estimates by component, and production scalability projections for fiscal years 2023–2028.

Officials such as Travis Bowden have acknowledged challenges in adapting commercial drone lessons from Ukraine to Marine expeditionary environments, citing battery storage on ships and climate variability as operational factors. (Picture source: US Marine Corps)

Recovery and reuse were identified as preferred but not mandatory features. Systems are expected to select safe ditch zones and include fail-safe procedures. Integration from Navy facilities, ships, and aircraft is part of the program’s goals. Marine Corps officials have also emphasized the need for electromagnetic resilience, mission planning autonomy, and supportability under expeditionary logistics constraints. Data collected from responses to the RFI have been used to inform acquisition strategies and future procurement planning.

In the broader context, the Marine Corps has conducted experiments with loitering munitions since at least 2018, when the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory tested a single operator managing six drones. Subsequent iterations explored expanding control to 15 drones per operator, combining kinetic and electronic warfare capabilities. In 2022, combat modeling conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School simulated a Marine company’s defense of an expeditionary base using OPF munitions. The analysis indicated that a minimum of 10 anti-armor OPF systems were required to engage an enemy mechanized company, with diminishing returns after 18 units. The study also found that early engagement with mixed munition types was more effective than synchronized mass fires. Under certain scenarios, platoons suffered over 30 percent casualties but remained capable of achieving their objectives. The modeling also revealed challenges in fire support deconfliction, identification of friendly and enemy UAS in congested airspace, and synchronization of effects. Javelin teams were particularly vulnerable due to proximity during operations. The study suggested that disaggregating anti-armor specialists could improve survivability.

The Marine Corps has also been exploring logistical applications of drones. The TRV-150C Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System can deliver 150-pound payloads over nine miles and has been fielded in limited numbers. Personnel from logistics units have been tasked with operating the drone, which has prompted new procedures for deconflicting airspace and addressing system repair in field conditions. Marine officials have noted that current systems for tracking unmanned and manned aircraft do not integrate effectively and highlighted the need for improved situational awareness tools. Repairs currently rely on contractor support, but training programs may eventually include in-unit repair capabilities such as motor replacements and micro-soldering.

As of early 2025, the Marine Corps plans to deploy OPF-L systems to squads by fiscal year 2027. Officials such as Travis Bowden have acknowledged challenges in adapting commercial drone lessons from Ukraine to Marine expeditionary environments, citing battery storage on ships and climate variability as operational factors. Bowden noted that logistical chains, weather conditions, and electromagnetic spectrum limitations may prevent large-scale swarming, though scalable deployment remains part of the long-term plan. He also emphasized that targeting, communications, and munitions development must progress concurrently to achieve fully integrated targeting processes at the squad level.

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According to Marine Corps statements during the April 2025 Modern Day Marine conference, the OPF-L program addresses the need for a responsive, squad-level precision strike capability. Maj. Gen. Farrell Sullivan noted that the initial two battalions will deploy with the systems as part of an end-user evaluation. Col. Sean Hoewing acknowledged that the service is behind in fielding uncrewed aerial systems but emphasized that industry is now responding to urgent requirements for organic precision fires. The Marine Corps has stated that the next steps involve clearly documenting requirements and ensuring that program offices are adequately resourced to deliver these systems. Col. Scott Cuomo noted that the service will require new military occupational specialties and unit formations to integrate these technologies, while Col. Erick Clark stated that the use of loitering munitions fits within existing Marine Corps combined arms practices. Marine officials have further emphasized that the systems will be distributed to smaller units to reduce dependence on external air support.

The OPF-L program is one component of the Marine Corps’ wider transformation under Force Design 2030. The 2023 annual update explicitly stated that the OPF program is progressing too slowly and directed the acceleration of procurement and training for both Infantry (OPF-I) and Mounted (OPF-M) variants. The Infantry Battalion Experimentation (IBX) effort included 13 force-on-force trials across multiple environments and led to a revised battalion structure increasing from 735 to 811 Marines. Changes included all-weather surveillance and additional anti-armor and indirect fire capabilities. The Corps mandated implementation of the new battalion structure by September 2023. For OPF-M, Mistral Inc. and UVision were selected in 2021 to integrate their Hero 120 system onto vehicles including the JLTV, Light Armored Vehicle-Medium, and the Long Range Uncrewed Surface Vessel. A 2019 Request for Information (RFI) indicated that the OPF-M was intended to expand indirect fire capacity and provide organic fires to maneuver units.

The Marine Corps’ official RFI for OPF-L, identified as M67854-22-I-1043, outlined detailed technical expectations. These include a minimum munition range of 10 kilometers, a total system weight under 55 pounds, and programmable behaviors such as mission abort, loss-of-link, and GPS-denied operation. Systems must provide loitering and strike capabilities against anti-personnel and anti-materiel targets, and integrate uplink/downlink communications, GPS guidance, and ground control stations with preflight and inflight programming functionality. Additional requirements include endurance metrics, system reliability, launch method, warhead type, camera and sensor capabilities, manufacturing readiness, and supply chain resilience. The RFI requested technical readiness level justification, unit cost estimates by component, and production scalability projections for fiscal years 2023–2028.

Officials such as Travis Bowden have acknowledged challenges in adapting commercial drone lessons from Ukraine to Marine expeditionary environments, citing battery storage on ships and climate variability as operational factors. (Picture source: US Marine Corps)

Recovery and reuse were identified as preferred but not mandatory features. Systems are expected to select safe ditch zones and include fail-safe procedures. Integration from Navy facilities, ships, and aircraft is part of the program’s goals. Marine Corps officials have also emphasized the need for electromagnetic resilience, mission planning autonomy, and supportability under expeditionary logistics constraints. Data collected from responses to the RFI have been used to inform acquisition strategies and future procurement planning.

In the broader context, the Marine Corps has conducted experiments with loitering munitions since at least 2018, when the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory tested a single operator managing six drones. Subsequent iterations explored expanding control to 15 drones per operator, combining kinetic and electronic warfare capabilities. In 2022, combat modeling conducted at the Naval Postgraduate School simulated a Marine company’s defense of an expeditionary base using OPF munitions. The analysis indicated that a minimum of 10 anti-armor OPF systems were required to engage an enemy mechanized company, with diminishing returns after 18 units. The study also found that early engagement with mixed munition types was more effective than synchronized mass fires. Under certain scenarios, platoons suffered over 30 percent casualties but remained capable of achieving their objectives. The modeling also revealed challenges in fire support deconfliction, identification of friendly and enemy UAS in congested airspace, and synchronization of effects. Javelin teams were particularly vulnerable due to proximity during operations. The study suggested that disaggregating anti-armor specialists could improve survivability.

The Marine Corps has also been exploring logistical applications of drones. The TRV-150C Tactical Resupply Unmanned Aircraft System can deliver 150-pound payloads over nine miles and has been fielded in limited numbers. Personnel from logistics units have been tasked with operating the drone, which has prompted new procedures for deconflicting airspace and addressing system repair in field conditions. Marine officials have noted that current systems for tracking unmanned and manned aircraft do not integrate effectively and highlighted the need for improved situational awareness tools. Repairs currently rely on contractor support, but training programs may eventually include in-unit repair capabilities such as motor replacements and micro-soldering.

As of early 2025, the Marine Corps plans to deploy OPF-L systems to squads by fiscal year 2027. Officials such as Travis Bowden have acknowledged challenges in adapting commercial drone lessons from Ukraine to Marine expeditionary environments, citing battery storage on ships and climate variability as operational factors. Bowden noted that logistical chains, weather conditions, and electromagnetic spectrum limitations may prevent large-scale swarming, though scalable deployment remains part of the long-term plan. He also emphasized that targeting, communications, and munitions development must progress concurrently to achieve fully integrated targeting processes at the squad level.

**Headline: US Marine Corps to deploy three new types of loitering munitions into infantry battalions by early 2026Date: 01-05-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/us-marine-corps-to-deploy-three-new-types-of-loitering-munitions-into-infantry-battalions-by-early-2026**

As reported by National Defense on April 29, 2025, the U.S. Marine Corps is scheduled to receive the first units of its Organic Precision Fires-Light (OPF-L) loitering munitions in January 2026 for initial end-user evaluation. Two battalions will be equipped with the systems, which are intended to provide rifle squads and platoons with an individually operated, man-portable loitering munition capable of engaging beyond-line-of-sight targets. Full-scale fielding is expected to take place by the end of 2026. The systems are being developed under the OPF-L program, which is part of a broader initiative to provide organic precision strike capabilities at the small-unit level. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

Loitering munitions are used to strike concealed or mobile targets with minimal exposure of higher-value platforms and may include capabilities such as real-time target identification, programmable flight paths, and abort or return-to-base procedures. (Picture source: US Marine Corps)

Three companies, AeroVironment, Anduril Industries, and Teledyne FLIR, were selected by the Department of Defense in April 2024 through an open competition from a group of eight vendors. Each company was awarded an initial contract under an Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) agreement, with values of $8.9 million, $6.4 million, and $12 million respectively. The combined ceiling of the IDIQ contract is $249 million.

A loitering munition, also referred to as a suicide drone, kamikaze drone, or exploding drone, is a weapon system that basically combines features of a drone and a guided missile. It is typically designed to remain airborne for a period of time while searching for a target, then attack by crashing into the target and detonating an onboard warhead. These systems can be manually controlled or semi-autonomous and may be recoverable if the target is not engaged. Loitering munitions are used to strike concealed or mobile targets with minimal exposure of higher-value platforms and may include capabilities such as real-time target identification, programmable flight paths, and abort or return-to-base procedures. Some are designed for tactical deployment at the squad level and others for integration into larger vehicle or naval platforms.

Teledyne FLIR will deliver the first 127 OPF-L systems for testing and evaluation in the summer of 2025. Its system consists of a vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) quadrotor drone platform designed to be recoverable and reusable. The company has indicated that the system has undergone testing against both mobile and stationary targets, including dismounted personnel and vehicles. The contract includes a five-year base period and a three-year option. Teledyne FLIR published a computer-generated image of its VTOL system, showing low-altitude flight operations in urban terrain. The design aims to operate within what has been described by the company as the “Atmospheric Littoral,” referring to low-altitude, unobstructed airspace used by tactical ground units.

Anduril Industries is also providing a VTOL solution with a quadrotor platform. According to the company, its system integrates previously tested technologies including tracking and guidance capabilities, return-to-base functionality, and terminal engagement features. Unlike its previous fixed-wing systems such as the Altius 700, which was selected by U.S. Special Operations Command for the Maritime Precision Engagement Munition program, Anduril’s OPF-L submission marks a shift toward rotor-based designs. The Marine Corps has stated that VTOL and fixed-wing platforms may be deployed in parallel, with no current plan for a down-select process, provided that all systems meet performance and certification requirements. A Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) spokesperson stated that VTOL and fixed-wing loitering munitions are viewed as complementary capabilities and that the service is seeking non-developmental systems for qualification and testing during fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

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**Headline: New GA-ASI MQ-9A ER Drone Enters Service with US Marines Enhancing Intelligence CapabilitiesDate: 30-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/army-news/2025/new-ga-asi-mq-9a-er-drone-enters-service-with-us-marines-enhancing-intelligence-capabilities**

The U.S. Marine Corps has officially inducted a next-generation intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) platform into its operational structure with the delivery of the MQ-9A Reaper® Block 5 Extended Range (ER) Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS), developed by General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI). Delivered on April 22, 2025, the aircraft is now in the hands of Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1 (VMX-1) at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, where it will undergo extensive operational evaluation. This milestone represents a significant leap in the Marine Corps' pursuit of long-endurance, persistent ISR capabilities, tailored for the modern battlefield. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

U.S. Marines integrate the new GA-ASI MQ-9A ER drone into VMX-1 operations, enhancing persistent surveillance and maritime domain awareness. (Picture source: GA-ASI)

While the MQ-9A Reaper is not new to the Marine Corps—having already fielded 18 units—the latest Block 5 ER variant introduces major upgrades that align perfectly with the Corps’ Force Design 2030 initiative. This modernization effort emphasizes distributed lethality, maritime operations, and advanced autonomous capabilities. The MQ-9A ER fits squarely within this vision, offering a platform that is more than a surveillance tool—it’s a strategic force multiplier.

At the core of the MQ-9A ER’s value is its extended endurance, achieved through field-retrofittable wing-borne fuel pods and reinforced landing gear, allowing flight times of over 30 hours. This capability enables the U.S. Marines to maintain constant aerial coverage across vast operational theaters without the need for forward-deployed basing. Such persistence is particularly crucial in the Indo-Pacific region, where geography demands long-range ISR and communication relay capabilities for distributed forces operating from expeditionary advanced bases (EABs).

The drone is equipped with a cutting-edge sensor suite that includes Full-Motion Video (FMV), Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), Moving Target Indicator (MTI), and Maritime Mode Radar. These systems allow the MQ-9A ER to detect, track, and analyze targets across land and sea, delivering real-time intelligence that supports precision strike coordination, battle damage assessment, and operational command and control. In an age of peer and near-peer threats, where adversaries deploy mobile and camouflaged units, this persistent overwatch capacity is an essential advantage.

Reliability is another cornerstone of the MQ-9A ER’s design. The drone features a fault-tolerant flight control system and a triple-redundant avionics architecture, engineered to meet and exceed the reliability standards of manned aircraft. These features make it suitable for austere or contested environments where conventional support infrastructure may be limited.

The integration of the MQ-9A ER into VMX-1's operational framework is more than a simple platform deployment; it represents a shift in how the Marine Corps develops and validates operational concepts. VMX-1 is responsible for testing the aircraft in realistic scenarios, shaping tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) that will allow it to operate seamlessly as part of the broader Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). These efforts will ensure that the MQ-9A ER can support a wide array of missions, including ISR overwatch, electronic warfare coordination, and maritime domain awareness, all while maintaining connectivity within a joint force network.

The arrival of the MQ-9A ER illustrates the Marine Corps’ commitment to expanding its ISR architecture with mature, scalable systems capable of operating across multiple domains. The decision to field this platform reflects confidence in its potential to transition from acquisition to real-world capability development. The Corps aims to move rapidly from testing to operational integration, ensuring new capabilities reach the field quickly and effectively—meeting the challenges of modern conflict environments head-on.

With two more MQ-9A ERs scheduled for delivery before the end of 2025, the Marine Corps is rapidly solidifying its unmanned ISR architecture. The new Reaper ER is more than an aircraft—it is a strategic asset designed to give Marines a decisive edge in both high-intensity conflict and grey-zone operations. In a battlespace where information dominance can determine mission success, the MQ-9A ER delivers unmatched persistence, survivability, and flexibility.

This latest entry into service reflects a broader shift in U.S. military doctrine, where autonomous systems, long-endurance ISR platforms, and multi-domain integration are no longer optional—they are essential. For the U.S. Marines, the MQ-9A ER is not just a new tool in the arsenal; it is a transformative capability that enhances awareness, agility, and effectiveness across the full spectrum of operations.

**Headline: General Atomics YFQ-42 Combat Drone to Begin Ground Testing to Enhance Range Survivability of US Stealth FightersDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/general-atomics-yfq-42-combat-drone-to-begin-ground-testing-to-enhance-range-survivability-of-us-stealth-fighters**

On May 1, 2025, General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) confirmed that the development of its new YFQ-42A combat drone is progressing according to schedule, as part of the U.S. Air Force’s Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program. Coinciding with the official launch of the ground testing phase by the Department of the Air Force, the company announced that flight tests are expected in the coming months and that a full-scale model of the drone will be publicly exhibited during the Beale Air and Space Expo beginning June 7. This milestone follows the designation of Beale Air Force Base in California as the site for the first operational support unit dedicated to the CCA fleet, marking a key step in the transformation of U.S. airpower.

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Designed for interoperability with F-22 and F-35 fighters, the YFQ-42A features a dorsal air intake, elongated fuselage, V-tails, and internal bays capable of carrying AIM-120 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles (Picture source: GA-ASI)

The YFQ-42A is one of two platforms selected for the CCA program’s first experimentation phase, alongside the YFQ-44A developed by Anduril Industries. Officially designated as a prototype under the “YFQ” nomenclature, the YFQ-42A is derived from the XQ-67A demonstrator created for the Air Force Research Laboratory’s Off-Board Sensing Station program. It is part of General Atomics’ Gambit family of systems, which focuses on software modularity, long-endurance, and integration into collaborative combat architectures. Designed for interoperability with F-22 and F-35 fighters, the YFQ-42A features a dorsal air intake, elongated fuselage, V-tails, and internal bays capable of carrying AIM-120 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles. This configuration is intended to ensure low observability while providing additional payload capacity and onboard mission processing in contested environments.

Current ground tests are evaluating propulsion systems, avionics integration, autonomy modules, and control systems. These assessments are intended to mitigate technical risks ahead of the flight testing phase, scheduled to begin by the end of 2025. The first YFQ-42A unit entered production in 2024, following the successful maiden flight of the XQ-67A on February 28 of the same year. The YFQ-42A effort is part of the broader Next Generation Air Dominance (NGAD) program, which aims to ensure U.S. air superiority in the coming decades.

Operational roles envisioned for the YFQ-42A include direct coordination with crewed aircraft, carrying additional munitions, and supporting intelligence gathering and electronic warfare missions. The drone is currently designed for conventional takeoff and landing, although future variants may adopt air-launch or ground-based deployment methods independent of runways. The platform is also expected to feature a modular autonomy system capable of rapid adaptation to evolving operational theaters, in line with the U.S. Air Force’s Agile Combat Employment (ACE) strategy, which promotes decentralized and flexible force deployment.

The estimated unit cost ranges from $25 to $30 million, significantly lower than current-generation manned fighters, allowing greater operational risk tolerance without considering the drone expendable. The U.S. Air Force anticipates producing up to 1,000 CCA units, with a planning ratio of two drones per crewed fighter, thereby increasing tactical mass while reducing logistical and manpower requirements. The YFQ-42A is initially expected to support air-to-air missions, supplementing the limited internal weapons capacity of stealth fighters. Additional capabilities, including precision strike, electronic warfare, and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance), may be introduced in future iterations.

A full-scale mockup of the YFQ-42A was first unveiled at the Air, Space & Cyber Conference in September 2024. The CCA program’s selection process began in January 2024 with five competing vendors: General Atomics, Anduril, Lockheed Martin, Boeing, and Northrop Grumman. In April 2024, General Atomics and Anduril were selected to proceed with testing under Increment 1, ahead of a final decision scheduled for fiscal year 2026. The U.S. Congress allocated approximately $8.9 billion for the CCA program over the 2025–2029 period, including a $557.1 million transfer from the NGAD manned platform account following a delay in that program’s contract award.

In summary, the YFQ-42A represents a central component of the CCA initiative, aiming to reshape U.S. combat aviation. With its modularity, integration with stealth fighters, and expanded mission potential, this drone developed by General Atomics reflects the U.S. Air Force’s move toward more agile, autonomous, and cost-efficient systems suited for high-intensity operations in the 21st century. Its first public appearance in June 2025 at Beale Air Force Base will mark a significant step toward operational implementation of this new generation of collaborative air capabilities.

**Headline: Brazil strengthens strategic autonomy with first fully indigenous jet-powered drone ATD-150Date: 30-04-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/brazil-strengthens-strategic-autonomy-with-first-fully-indigenous-jet-powered-drone-atd-150**

On March 29, 2025, the Brazilian company Nest Design Aerospace presented the ATD-150, described as the country’s first 100% indigenously designed jet-powered unmanned aircraft. The system has been developed specifically to serve as an aerial target for the Brazilian Armed Forces and is also being considered for export to international users. According to the manufacturer, the ATD-150 is intended to replicate advanced aerial threats in training environments and aims to enhance operational readiness by providing a domestic solution for simulated combat exercises and system testing. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

The ATD-150 integrates a Miss Distance Indicator (MDI) for recording the proximity of intercept attempts, and features passive RF signal augmentation, real-time video transmission capability, and an infrared (IR) signature. (Picture source: Nest Design Aerospace)

According to available information, the ATD-150 has a maximum takeoff weight (MTOW) of up to 150 kilograms and a maximum payload capacity of 15 kilograms. It can operate at altitudes between 10,000 and 15,000 feet, with a service ceiling of 20,000 feet. Under flight conditions of FL150 and ISA+35, it achieves a cruise speed of Mach 0.6. The propulsion system is the TM TJ-200 turbojet engine, developed in Brazil by Turbomachine. The UAV runs on Jet A-1 or aviation kerosene. Nest Design Aerospace states that this configuration enables the ATD-150 to function as a high-speed, jet-powered target suitable for complex and realistic threat simulations during training operations and air defense exercises.

The main mission profile of the ATD-150 includes applications such as air strike training, air-to-air engagement training, air defense system preparation, and cruise missile threat simulation. It is also intended to support intelligence data collection and the evaluation of defense weapon systems. The UAV is equipped with a number of onboard features designed to simulate adversary behaviors and characteristics. These include pre-programmed waypoint navigation, a smoke generator to increase visibility during tracking exercises, and automated evasive maneuver routines. It also integrates a Miss Distance Indicator (MDI) for recording the proximity of intercept attempts, and features passive RF signal augmentation, real-time video transmission capability, and an infrared (IR) signature. Piloting can be conducted manually or through semi-autonomous or fully autonomous control modes, depending on mission requirements.

Nest Design Aerospace characterizes the ATD-150 as a fully Brazilian initiative, conceived, engineered, and assembled within the national defense industrial base. According to the company, the program reflects an effort to establish a national capability in the field of jet-powered aerial target drones, offering a resource for training and system validation that does not rely on foreign platforms. The aircraft is also described as a system supporting multiple configurations and intended to meet the operational needs of armed forces preparing for advanced air threats.

As part of its promotional and industry engagement efforts, Nest Design Aerospace participated in LAAD 2025, a major defense and security exhibition held in Rio de Janeiro. The company reported that its team engaged with suppliers, potential partners, and clients during the event. Nest Design Aerospace noted that the ATD-150 attracted attention at the exhibition, with many participants reportedly already familiar with the platform. According to the company, this exposure helped reinforce its goal of advancing new strategic collaborations and increasing the visibility of its aerial target program within both national and international defense sectors.

Nest Design Aerospace also released material announcing that the ATD-150 is approaching its initial operational phase. According to the company, all development activities, ranging from component integration and functional testing to performance verification, are progressing toward what it describes as a significant milestone in national aviation. Additional video materials were released, highlighting the design and testing phases of the program. The company stated that further updates and detailed views of the UAV are expected in the near future.

Propulsed by the TM TJ-200 turbojet engine, developed in Brazil by Turbomachine, the ATD-150 can achieves a cruise speed of Mach 0.6. (Picture source: Nest Design Aerospace)

Brazil’s earliest documented effort to build a jet-powered UAV was the CBT BQM-1BR, developed in 1983 by Companhia Brasileira de Tratores (CBT) in cooperation with the Department of Aerospace Science and Technology. Intended for military and civilian applications, including reconnaissance, attack, and agricultural tasks, the aircraft featured a turbojet engine (Tietê JT2) mounted in a nacelle on the rear fuselage. It had a length of 3.89 meters, a wingspan of 3.18 meters, and a maximum takeoff weight of just over 90 kilograms. It could reach speeds of up to 560 km/h and a service ceiling of 6,000 meters. Despite an initial plan by the Brazilian Air Force to acquire 20 units, only two were built, and the project was discontinued due to national political and economic conditions. Separately, Brazil’s aerospace research institutions have also worked on jet propulsion systems such as the 14-X scramjet engine, developed by the Institute of Advanced Studies (IEAv) as part of the PropHiper program. First flight-tested in December 2021, the scramjet was integrated into a hypersonic demonstrator vehicle that reached an apogee of 160 kilometers after launch from the Alcântara Space Center. Although designed primarily for space and defense applications, the 14-X illustrates ongoing interest in advanced air-breathing propulsion systems within Brazil.

Several other UAVs have been developed in Brazil, focusing on propeller-driven platforms for tactical, surveillance, and mapping roles. The SantosLab Carcará, first flown in 2009 and currently used by the Brazilian Navy, is a lightweight UAV designed for operation by a single soldier in restricted environments. It offers autonomy between 60 and 95 minutes and includes a payload option for infrared sensors or zoom cameras. The FT Sistemas FT-100 Horus is another small UAV, used by both the Brazilian Army and Navy, with an operational range of up to 15 kilometers and endurance of up to two hours. In 2015, three FT-100s were exported to an undisclosed African military customer, making it the first Brazilian UAV known to have been sold abroad. At the MALE level, the Avionics Services Caçador was developed from the Israeli IAI Heron with technology transfer and partial ownership by IAI Brasil. With a wingspan of 16.6 meters, a takeoff weight of 1,270 kilograms, and endurance of 40 hours, the Caçador features a service ceiling of 9,100 meters and is equipped for multi-role operations.

Privately owned XMobots has also contributed to Brazil’s UAV industry through systems designed primarily for civilian and mapping purposes, based on nationally developed technology. Its first UAV, the Apoena 1000B, conducted aerial monitoring over the Amazon and supported surveying at the Jirau hydroelectric plant from 2010 to 2013. The Apoena series includes UAVs with endurance of up to 8 hours and payload capacities of 10 kilograms. Later developments include the Nauru 500A (flight autonomy of 5.5 hours, payload of 15 kilograms), which in 2013 became the first private UAV in Brazil to receive an Experimental Flight Certificate from ANAC. The Echar 20A, launched the same year, was Brazil’s first UAV with automatic launch and landing. Other systems such as the Avibras Falcão (with a payload of 150 kilograms and over 16 hours of endurance) and the Atobá XR by Stella Tecnologia, which has a cruise speed of 370 km/h and endurance of up to 35 hours, are designed for ISR and strike missions. The Atobá XR, developed from the earlier Atobá reconnaissance drone, integrates AESA radar, EO/IR sensors, SATCOM, and three hardpoints.

The main mission profile of the ATD-150 includes applications such as air strike training, air-to-air engagement training, air defense system preparation, and cruise missile threat simulation. (Picture source: Nest Design Aerospace)

**Headline: Exclusive: Iran to Begin Sea Trials of Second Oil Tanker Converted into Combat Drone Launch ShipDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://armyrecognition.com/news/navy-news/2025/exclusive-iran-to-begin-sea-trials-of-second-oil-tanker-converted-into-combat-drone-launch-ship**

According to information released on Mehdi H.'s X (formerly Twitter) account on April 30, 2025, Iran is preparing to launch sea trials of its newest forward base drone-launcher ship, IRIS Kurdestan (442), signaling another strategic milestone in the evolution of its naval forces. Like its predecessor, the IRIS Makran (441), the Kurdestan is a converted crude oil tanker—originally known as Tabukan (IMO: 8917467)—which has undergone an extensive transformation to support expeditionary naval operations. The conversion has been carried out by the Iran Shipbuilding & Offshore Industries Complex Co. (ISOICO), a major naval industrial entity located near Bandar Abbas. This move reflects a deliberate shift in Iranian maritime doctrine, focused on asymmetric capabilities and strategic power projection. Follow Army Recognition on Google News at this link

IRIS Kurdestan (442) seen ahead of its maiden sea trials—converted from a crude oil tanker into a forward base ship capable of launching combat drones and supporting long-range naval missions. (Picture source: Mehdi H. X account)

The vessel, built in 1992, measures approximately 183 meters in length with a beam of 32.23 meters. It had an original gross tonnage of 29,506 and a deadweight tonnage of 45,425. Before being acquired by Iran, the ship operated under the flag of Togo. The technical specifications highlight the ship's capability to be repurposed into a sizable floating base: its substantial tonnage and length provide ample space for equipment, personnel, and operational modules. Its wide beam offers inherent stability, a crucial attribute for UAV operations and helicopter landings at sea.

The transformation of Tabukan into IRIS Kurdestan involves significant structural modifications to support its new role as a forward base ship. Most visibly, the upper deck has been redesigned to incorporate a large helipad, suitable for helicopter and UAV operations. This addition aligns with Iran’s broader strategy of enhancing its naval reach through the adaptation of civilian maritime infrastructure into military platforms. The deck has also been cleared and potentially reinforced to accommodate modular mission containers, logistics support systems, and mobile command-and-control facilities.

The internal reconfiguration of the vessel is believed to include maintenance workshops, accommodations for a large crew, storage for fuel and ordnance, and facilities for launching and recovering unmanned aerial systems. While not designed for direct combat, Kurdestan will serve as a mobile logistics and support hub, extending the Iranian Navy’s operational radius into distant maritime zones without the need for shore-based resupply.

This approach mirrors the earlier conversion of the IRIS Makran, which has already demonstrated the value of such platforms by serving as a mobile sea base capable of supporting a broad spectrum of operations including UAV missions and special forces deployments. These converted vessels enable Iran to exert sustained naval presence and influence in areas of strategic interest such as the North Indian Ocean, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and the Red Sea.

Iran’s motivation for developing forward base ships like the Kurdestan stems from the structural limitations of its conventional naval force. Without aircraft carriers or a fleet of modern blue-water warships, Tehran has focused on innovative, cost-effective solutions. Repurposing large commercial tankers into multi-role naval platforms allows Iran to circumvent technological and economic barriers while still achieving strategic depth and reach.

From a geopolitical and military perspective, the commissioning of the Kurdestan introduces a new dimension of complexity for regional and international naval forces, particularly the United States and its allies. These vessels act as force multipliers, enabling the deployment of ISR assets, electronic warfare tools, special operations forces, and asymmetric attack systems such as UAVs and loitering munitions. Their hybrid civilian-military nature also presents a legal and tactical challenge—blurring the lines of engagement in crowded maritime corridors.

Emerging threats to the U.S. and allied forces stem directly from this growing Iranian naval capability. These forward base ships pose strategic challenges in several ways. First, their ability to operate in international waters near key chokepoints—such as the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, or even the Red Sea—creates a persistent presence that can be leveraged for power projection or disruption of commercial traffic. Their unclear status—neither purely military nor commercial—makes them harder to classify and track under international maritime law.

Second, they significantly bolster Iran’s asymmetric warfare toolkit. From these platforms, Iran can deploy UAV swarms, launch electronic warfare attacks, or support hybrid operations using proxy naval units like Houthi maritime forces. These capabilities can directly threaten U.S. and allied surface ships, commercial shipping routes, and even critical undersea infrastructure. With the proliferation of loitering munitions and long-endurance UAVs, these sea bases could stage persistent surveillance and precision attacks against targets of opportunity.

Finally, these vessels can serve as intelligence hubs—relaying targeting data, monitoring maritime traffic, and jamming communications or GPS signals. In contested maritime environments, the presence of Kurdestan and ships like it will force U.S. and allied navies to maintain higher levels of readiness and response flexibility. The sea trials and eventual operational deployment of this ship will be closely monitored by regional actors and NATO maritime commands, as it may represent a shift in Iran’s capacity to contest and disrupt Western naval superiority in increasingly wider maritime domains.

The addition of the Kurdestan reinforces Iran’s commitment to maritime expansion and highlights its ability to innovate under sanctions and resource constraints. While these converted tankers lack the firepower of modern warships, they are strategic assets capable of reshaping regional maritime dynamics. For Western forces, adapting to this threat will require enhanced surveillance, flexible deterrent options, and stronger maritime partnerships across the Gulf and Indian Ocean region. The sea trials of IRIS Kurdestan may prove to be a pivotal development in assessing Iran’s future naval posture.

**Headline: European drone training sites mushroom in nod to Ukraine war tacticsDate: 28-04-2025URL: https://www.c4isrnet.com/global/europe/2025/04/28/european-drone-training-sites-mushroom-in-nod-to-ukraine-war-tactics/**

Featured:

MILAN — Drone tactics emerging from the war in Ukraine have inspired other European countries to intensify their military-experimentation campaigns, with a new crop of testing facilities designed to test the small aircraft in war-like conditions.

Estonia inaugurated its first drone training center, located in the western part of the Baltic country, last week. The facility is meant to enhance the unmanned systems training of the Estonian Defense Forces and NATO allied units.

“The experience from the war in Ukraine shows that drones and unmanned systems are crucial in modern combat – developing Estonia’s defense capabilities requires that we elevate our drone training,” Estonia’s Defense League quoted Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur as saying.

The site, which cost roughly €5 million ($5.7 million) and was financed by Luxembourg, covers 1,300 square meters and includes classrooms, storage, equipment maintenance areas as well as accommodations, according to Estonian public broadcaster ERR.

It will seek to integrate and draw from Ukraine’s wartime expertise in drone warfare as well as NATO’s to offer key infrastructure for national forces and industry players.

An increasing number of European states are following similar steps in attempts to trial drones in real-world scenarios to test their performance and reliability.

Obstacles to be expected in actual conflict include bad weather and enemy jamming of control signals, for example.

Earlier this month, Denmark announced the creation of a new drone centre at the Hans Christian Andersen airport in Odense to serve as a training site for the Danish military.

The airport already has another testing facility. Dubbed the UAS Denmark Test Center and launched in 2013, it focuses on training personnel in beyond-visual-line-of-sight, or BVLOS, flight zones.

In March, the Danish government said it would dedicate $110 million to the new section, building on lessons from the Ukraine war. By 2026, approximately 100 Danish drone operators are expected to be training there, as reported AFP.

In another example, ZenaTech, a company headquartered in Canada that specializes in artificial intelligence, announced in January that it was setting up a BVLOS drone trial facility in Turkey.

“The facility will serve as a product testing site for the company’s subsidiary ZenaDrone 1000 model drones designed for the U.S. defense branches and NATO – it will be fully set up and operational during the first quarter of 2025,” ZenaTech said in a statement.

As part of Finland’s recently published national drone strategy, the country will seek to prioritize investments in drone infrastructure, specifically large-scale laboratories and open-air test sites. The document cites Finnish Arctic conditions as a unique and challenging testing environment.

In 2024, the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation, known as Eurocontrol, conducted a survey of 31 civil and military test centers across member states to report on their capabilities and the challenges.

A majority of the respondents were from the European UAS Test Centres Alliance, which comprises 35 organizations from over 17 countries, that seek to enhance and support the development of the drone ecosystem and leverage synergies between the different sites.

The three main operational concerns faced by the facilities were listed as airspace integration, technical reliability, and privacy. The non-operational ones included flight approval by authorities and funding.

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**Headline: U.S. Army Selects Near Earth Autonomy and Honeywell to Retrofit Black Hawks for Autonomous LogisticsDate: 29-04-2025URL: https://dronelife.com/2025/04/29/u-s-army-selects-near-earth-autonomy-and-honeywell-to-retrofit-black-hawks-for-autonomous-logistics/**

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April 29, 2025 by Miriam McNabb 2 Comments

The U.S. Army has selected Near Earth Autonomy (Near Earth) to lead a $15 million project to develop and field an optionally piloted contested logistics solution. The program will retrofit UH-60L Black Hawk helicopters with advanced autonomy kits. Funded by Army Program Executive Office, Aviation (PEO Aviation), the project is a collaboration between Near Earth and Honeywell.

The program’s goal is to create a logistics platform capable of 24/7 high-tempo operations without the need for onboard crews, remote pilots, or continuous data links. This minimizes risks to personnel while increasing operational tempo and throughput.

The initiative also sets the foundation for a repeatable, scalable retrofit process. This allows the Army to modernize legacy rotary-wing aircraft quickly, without long acquisition cycles. The UH-60L is the first target, but the design will support adaptability across multiple airframes.

Central to the retrofit is Near Earth’s deterministic autonomy architecture, called Captain. Captain ensures mission assurance even in degraded environments, such as areas without GPS or reliable communications.

Captain enables safe flight and hazard avoidance without human pilots or live remote control. The system uses a Modular Open Systems Approach (MOSA) to ensure modularity, affordability, and easy upgrades.

Near Earth’s long history in autonomous aviation supports the program’s foundation. In 2010, the company completed the world’s first fully autonomous helicopter flight for the U.S. Army’s Combat Medic Evacuation program. Near Earth also developed autonomy systems for the Office of Naval Research’s Autonomous Aerial Cargo/Utility System (AACUS) program, demonstrating uncrewed helicopter cargo deliveries in hazardous environments.

“This program is a significant step forward for Army logistics and autonomy,” said Sanjiv Singh, CEO of Near Earth. “We’re proud to bring our proven helicopter autonomy experience to bear and excited to see it operationalized at scale to support soldiers in the field.”

Honeywell is collaborating closely with Near Earth to deliver an affordable, scalable, and certifiable solution. Honeywell’s contributions draw from their existing avionics platforms, including flight decks, Compact Fly-by-Wire systems, and navigation technologies.

“Our avionics provides a modular, certifiable foundation that aligns with both today’s operational tempo and tomorrow’s autonomy goals,” said Matt Milas, President, Defense & Space, Honeywell Aerospace Technologies. “Whether for piloted, optionally piloted, or fully autonomous aircraft, our systems scale to meet evolving military needs with a certifiable foundation.”

Honeywell’s technologies are engineered for both retrofitting existing aircraft and supporting next-generation uncrewed systems. The solutions are built to meet today’s mission demands while enabling long-term advancements toward autonomous flight.

Near Earth began working toward an autonomous Black Hawk in 2021. Their autonomy systems have already powered more than 10,000 flights across over 140 different airframes, including those from Airbus, Bell, Boeing, Kaman, and Leonardo.

Through this new program, the Army and Near Earth will develop operational procedures for autonomous logistics flights. A series of flight tests will lead to a mature, mission-ready product that improves the Army’s ability to operate in contested, complex environments with greater speed, scale, and safety.

Near Earth Autonomy builds technology that enables aircraft to take off, fly, and land safely with or without GPS. Their systems support aerial mobility for both commercial and defense partners. By bridging aerospace and robotics, Near Earth provides solutions that improve the efficiency, performance, and safety of drones and helicopters of all sizes. Learn more at nearearth.aero.

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Miriam McNabb is the Editor-in-Chief of DRONELIFE and CEO of JobForDrones, a professional drone services marketplace, and a fascinated observer of the emerging drone industry and the regulatory environment for drones. Miriam has penned over 3,000 articles focused on the commercial drone space and is an international speaker and recognized figure in the industry. Miriam has a degree from the University of Chicago and over 20 years of experience in high tech sales and marketing for new technologies. For drone industry consulting or writing, Email Miriam.

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Informatika says

May 1, 2025 at 7:00 am

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Administrasi Bisnis says

April 29, 2025 at 9:33 pm

How will the collaboration between the Army and Near Earth enhance autonomous logistics capabilities in contested and complex environments?

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Near Earth Autonomy builds technology that enables aircraft to take off, fly, and land safely with or without GPS. Their systems support aerial mobility for both commercial and defense partners. By bridging aerospace and robotics, Near Earth provides solutions that improve the efficiency, performance, and safety of drones and helicopters of all sizes. Learn more at nearearth.aero.

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Miriam McNabb is the Editor-in-Chief of DRONELIFE and CEO of JobForDrones, a professional drone services marketplace, and a fascinated observer of the emerging drone industry and the regulatory environment for drones. Miriam has penned over 3,000 articles focused on the commercial drone space and is an international speaker and recognized figure in the industry. Miriam has a degree from the University of Chicago and over 20 years of experience in high tech sales and marketing for new technologies. For drone industry consulting or writing, Email Miriam.

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Informatika says

May 1, 2025 at 7:00 am

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Administrasi Bisnis says

April 29, 2025 at 9:33 pm

How will the collaboration between the Army and Near Earth enhance autonomous logistics capabilities in contested and complex environments?

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**Headline: Denmark Launches DKK 53.7 Billion Defence Procurement: Calls for Tech InnovatorsDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.suasnews.com/2025/05/denmark-launches-dkk-53-7-billion-defence-procurement-calls-for-tech-innovators/**

We invite defense tech manufacturers and innovators to participate in two major procurement initiatives launched by the Danish Ministry of Defence: 1. Acceleration Fund – focused on strengthening Denmark’s military capabilities 2. Industry Fund for Ukraine – focused on supplying fully developed and ready-to-deliver equipment to Ukraine Who should apply: • Ukrainian and international defense tech companies • Developers of drones, C-UAS, air defense systems, autonomous and unmanned platforms, logistics, communications, cybersecurity, and soldier equipment • Companies with ready-to-produce solutions • Entities with or seeking joint ventures with Danish partners Timeline and Funding: • Acceleration Fund: 50 billion DKK (2025–2033) • Industry Fund for Ukraine: 3.7 billion DKK (2024–2026) • Priority area: drones (500 million DKK allocated in 2025–2026) What’s required: • Product description and technical specs • Estimated price and delivery time • Company ownership details and Danish subcontractors (if any) • Submission is open on a rolling basis You will receive a unique submission ID and can update your proposal at any time. Let’s work together to strengthen European defense and provide timely support to Ukraine. Interested in applying? Reach out – we are ready to assist with submissions and partner matchmaking in Denmark.

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**Headline: AVILUS is a Certified Drone Operator (LUC)Date: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.suasnews.com/2025/05/avilus-is-a-certified-drone-operator-luc/**

Ismaning, Germany – May 2nd, 2025 – We are pleased to announce that AVILUS has been certified by the German Federal Aviation Office (Luftfahrtbundesamt, LBA) as a Light UAS Operator (LUC) in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2019/947, Annex Part C. This makes us the third company in Germany to receive this prestigious certification.

Holding a Light UAS Operator Certificate (LUC) allows drone operators to self-authorize new flight areas or with advanced privileges to self-adjust procedures, drone types, or operational methods independently from the Federal Aviation Office. Unlike a standard Operational Authorization (OA) granted by the Federal Aviation Office, the LUC transfers authorization privileges to the operator, which can be continuously expanded over time in coordination with the authority (Advanced Privileges).

“I am proud of this result,” shared Serçin Höhndorf, our Safety Manager, “but more importantly, I see it as the beginning of a continuous improvement journey.”

Obtaining a Light UAS Operator Certificate (LUC) requires the establishment of similar organizational roles, bodies, and structures as those needed for an Air Operator Certificate (AOC). The structure resembles that of an airline and requires, in addition to nominated personnel (postholders), management systems (MS) for safety (SMS), compliance (CMS), and for managing the granted privileges (PMS).

As part of the certification process, all our postholders were interviewed in detail by the Federal Aviation Office. The two-day audit covered not only the company’s organizational structure, personnel, and processes, but also the regulatory compliance of our flight activities.

“This certification opens a whole new chapter in our company’s story—and we are proud to be part of it,” said Daniel Beck, a member of the Flight crew.

AVILUS sees itself as both a manufacturer and operator of a new class of drones. The LUC certification not only recognizes the quality of our operations but also enables significant growth of our flight services – “Drone as a Service.”

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**Headline: Zephyr sets world-record for longest continuous flight, flying 67 days in stratosphereDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.suasnews.com/2025/05/zephyr-sets-world-record-for-longest-continuous-flight-flying-67-days-in-stratosphere/**

Nairobi, Kenya: AALTO HAPS Ltd. (“AALTO” or “the Company”), an Airbus subsidiary based in Farnborough, UK, has set a world-record for global aviation with its Zephyr High Altitude Platform Station (HAPS). Designed, manufactured and operated by AALTO, Zephyr concluded 67 days, 6 hours and 52 minutes of continuous flight in the stratosphere on 28 April 2025. This surpassed Zephyr’s previous flight record of 64 days in 2022, and breaks the world-record for longest flight duration that has stood for half a century.

After launching from its AALTOPORT in Kenya on 20 February 2025, Zephyr conducted connectivity payload testing before transiting to Australian airspace. During this transit, Zephyr navigated 7 different flight information regions, the most ever recorded by a HAPS. In addition, the aircraft crossed the Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) twice – a demonstration of Zephyr’s stability and performance during changing weather conditions in southern and northern hemispheres.

The record-breaking flight terminated safely over a designated aviation sanctuary area in the Indian ocean. Relevant authorities were promptly notified by AALTO.

After a decade of stewardship by Airbus Defence and Space, Zephyr has established itself as the leading HAPS platform in the world. Zephyr’s most recent record-breaking flight was facilitated by a regulatory framework in Kenya, led by the Kenya Space Agency and Kenya Civil Aviation Authority. With the support of its regulators, shareholders and partners, AALTO is preparing to commercialise HAPS services with initial targeted entry-into-service in Japan during 2026.

Hughes Boulnois, Chief Executive Officer of AALTO, commented: “AALTO and Zephyr are at the forefront of innovation in aerospace. With this new world-record flight, we have pushed the boundaries again for the burgeoning HAPS industry and aviation globally with a solar-powered, stratospheric aircraft. Stewarding the most advanced HAPS, we have demonstrated our capabilities that are valuable for commercial and government partners. Our focus for 2025 is continuing to integrate HAPS into the space, defence and connectivity ecosystems: progressing the commercial phase for this pioneering technology.”

Pierre-Antoine Aubourg, Chief Technology Officer, added: “Zephyr is a unique aircraft. Its performance during this flight underlines its technological robustness, compliance with flight procedures and safety models. Zephyr’s flight envelope is the most advanced in global HAPS, enabling safe and reliable performance and maximum oversight by AALTO and regulatory authorities. As we proceed to commercial services, we will continue to break new ground for aviation safety and performance.”

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**Headline: Primoco UAV Reports Excellent Financial Results for 2024: revenue, profit and cash in the hundreds of millionsDate: 02-05-2025URL: https://www.suasnews.com/2025/04/primoco-uav-reports-excellent-financial-results-for-2024-revenue-profit-and-cash-in-the-hundreds-of-millions/**

Primoco UAV SE, a Czech manufacturer of unmanned aerial vehicles, announces its financial results for 2024. The company recorded consolidated revenues of CZK 471 million, an EBITDA profit of CZK 147 million, and maintained a strong operating margin. Primoco continued to operate debt-free, generating a free cash flow of CZK 231 million.

“The year 2024 marked a period of intense work. With our successful entry into the main market of the Prague Stock Exchange, we symbolically completed our journey from a Czech startup to a company delivering on its global ambitions through a truly unique product,” said Primoco CEO Ladislav Semetkovský.

Primoco’s flagship aircraft, the Primoco One 150, remains the only medium-heavy unmanned aerial vehicle certified to NATO STANAG standards. STANAG certification enables NATO member states to acquire and deploy the aircraft without the need for additional testing. This certification comes at a critical time as NATO’s European members move to increase their defense budgets significantly. The Primoco One 150 also holds civilian certification for operation over densely populated areas, broadening its commercial applications and deployment in security, fire brigade and other emergency response missions.

Among the company’s key milestones in 2024 was securing its largest-ever contract: a CZK 450 million agreement to deliver 24 Primoco One 150 aircraft. “This contract is significant not only for its size but also because each aircraft delivered opens the door to long-term partnerships, including training, servicing and future fleet expansion based on the positive experience with the One 150,” said Semetkovský.

Although revenues stabilized at nearly half a billion CZK levels last year after rapid growth in the previous period, management views this as characteristic of the industry, remaining optimistic about future prospects and demand. “Interest in unmanned aerial vehicles continues to rise globally, driven by security needs and civilian applications. Given the complexity of our industry, closing each transaction from initial contact to delivery typically spans years rather than months. However, the number of our active negotiations at various stages of development multiplied in 2024,” said Semetkovský.Primoco made significant investments during the year to support anticipated demand. The company acquired land in the industrial zone of Písek and completed project documentation for a new production, service, control and training center, set to commence construction in 2026 following the building permit approval. Located near Primoco’s airport, the facility will feature advanced robotics and automation and ultimately triple Primoco’s production capacity to 300 aircraft annually.

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