

Armed drones on the European media

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BELGIUM WANTS DRONES

Did Defense force the decision on drone purchase?

23 Mar 2018

De Morgen, Belgium

For months the Belgian government has been studying which drone to buy for the Belgian military. The choice appears to be simple, as only one drone was put forward by the Ministry to the Minister of Defence. Again, US-made. After the Ministry had released a call for proposals, it received three options: Two Israeli and one American. However, only a few weeks later, the chief of staff of the Ministry of Defence was shown a presentation in which the two other options were crossed out while only the US option remained. The other two drones were rejected based on the fact that they could not be certified, but this claim was denied by one of the producers of the drones.

- ▶ <https://www.demorgen.be/binnenland/heeft-defensie-ook-de-miljoenenaankoop-van-drones-naar-haar-hand-gezet-b9d661d4/>

Vandeput defends American drone purchase: “Everything went according to the rules”

28 Mar 2018

Het Laatste Nieuws, Belgium

Minister of Defense Steven Vanderput had to defend the purchase of the US-made ‘SkyGuardian’ drone in the House of Parliament. Last week, the Belgian newspaper ‘The Morning’ revealed that the Air Force had withheld information from the Minister during the drone-acquisition procedure. According to the Ministry of Defense, only the US-made drone could get certified to fly in European airspace, but this claim is countered by two Israeli companies. The parliamentary committee concerned with the acquisition had no choice but to approve the purchase of the only available option: the Skyguardian. The Minister argued that, with regard to the Israeli options, there were technical and compatibility issues too, and that there has not been a final decision on the purchase yet.

- ▶ <https://www.hln.be/nieuws/binnenland/vandeput-verdedigt-aankoop-amerikaanse-drones-alles-verliep-volgens-de-regels-ada01115/>

THE DRONE RACE

Putin's speech: Russia has developed new superweapons, which cannot be traced

1 Mar 2018

Natali Braagaard, TV2, Denmark

Underwater drones and missiles with nuclear warheads are, according to Russian President, Vladimir Putin, some of Russia's new weapons. In a speech Putin announced that the country is testing under water drones, capable of carrying nuclear warheads. Putin stated that the other nations' armaments will be useless compared to Russia's own armament. According to Putin, the new weapons are designed to ensure world peace, and Russia has no intention of attacking other countries.

► <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/udland/2018-03-01-putin-i-tale-rusland-har-udviklet-nyt-supervaaben-der-ikke-kan-spores>

European Union launches a drone-offensive

1 Mar 2018

Matthias Monroy, Netzpolitik, Germany

The European Defence Agency (EDA) has launched a market survey to better understand the range of commercially available solutions which could fulfil potential future requirements for Remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), as well as their potential risks and limitations. Currently, drones have been used only in the EU military mission EUNAVFOR MED in the Mediterranean. The operations take place in front of Libyan waters and play a role in the fight against smugglers.

► <https://netzpolitik.org/2018/europaeische-union-startet-drohnen-offensive/>

Google's AI is being used by US military drone programme

7 Mar 2018

Samuel Gibbs, The Guardian, United Kingdom

Google's TensorFlow AI systems are being used by the US DoD's Project Maven, which uses machine learning and AI to analyze footage shot by US drones. It has already been put into use against the Islamic State. "Military use of machine learning naturally raises valid concerns, we will continue to develop policies and safeguards around the development and use of our machine learning technologies" said Google.

► <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/07/google-ai-us-department-of-defense-military-drone-project-maven-tensorflow>

China airs new generation of war drones

13 Mar 2018

Steffen McGhie, Ingeniøren, Denmark

China is drastically gearing up on the drone front. The first live fire tests of the Cai Hong 4C war drones are currently being conducted. The state-owned Aerospace Science and

Technology Corporation (CASC) is working on the successor to the Cai Hong 4, the largest of the Chinese military's war drones. The Cai Hong 4C is equipped with stronger motors and new electronic reconnaissance equipment, and can carry laser controlled bombs of 100 kg.

▶ <https://ing.dk/artikel/kina-sender-ny-generation-kampdroner-paa-vingerne-211034>

Trump to boost exports of lethal drones to more U.S. allies-sources

20 Mar 2018

Mike Stone and Matt Spetalnick, Reuters, United Kingdom

President Trump will soon lower barriers to sales of smaller hunter-killer drones. He is also seeking to eventually make it easier to export the larger Predator-type armed drones (with a payload of over 500 kg). Export regulations will also be eased for surveillance drones of all sizes. The policy is meant to tackle the growing competition on the overseas market, especially from Chinese and Israeli rivals.

▶ <https://news.trust.org/item/20180320100004-makoq>

Trump wants to reduce the restrictions for exporting armed drones

20 Mar 2018

Europa Press, Spain

Donal Trump wants to reduce the restrictions for exporting armed UAVs. American companies producing drones applied pressure on the Government in order to compete with their Chinese and Israeli competitors, that have less restrictions. The new policy shall reduce the restrictions on the sale of small armed drones, that carry few missiles and can only fly for short distances. The limitations for exporting surveillance drones of all sizes shall be removed. Human rights activists pointed out that a reduction of the restrictions could encourage violence in Middle East and in Southeast Asia.

▶ <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-trump-planea-rebajar-restricciones-exportacion-drones-armados-20180320152622.html>

China testing tank drones

21 Mar 2018

Handelsblatt, Germany

China has revealed it is testing unmanned tanks that can potentially feature artificial intelligence-based systems, as the country looks to revolutionise its armed forces. China's military has previously shown off small reconnaissance robots, drone aircraft and a driverless lorry that could form unmanned supply convoys, but this was the first report of an apparent unmanned tank.

▶ <http://www.handelsblatt.com/politik/international/militaer-china-testet-erste-ki-faehige-drohnen-panzer/21094814.html>

Seoul is working on its own combat reconnaissance drone

26 Mar 2018

Niezależna, Poland

South Korea is about to start operating its own drones: the KUS-FS, equivalent of the Reaper. The new unmanned combat aerial vehicle is a result of cooperation of the Korean Air Aerospace Division and of the Agency for Defense Development. The first flight of the prototype took place in 2012. It can carry weapons weighting up to 500 kg. The Korean army will use the drones to shoot on overground targets.

▶ <http://niezalezna.pl/220822-seul-pracuje-nad-wlasnym-dronem-bojowo-rozpoznawczym>

NEED FOR REGULATION

Portugal still debating the need for a drone regulation

1 Mar 2018

Público, Portugal

The government of Portugal will adopt soon a series of measures regarding the use of commercial drones. Under the new set of laws, all owners of commercial drones will be required to enroll in a national registry. In addition, the measure establishes that drone users can record videos only if people in the images are not recognizable. The main goal of these measures is the protection of citizen privacy.

- ▶ <https://www.publico.pt/2018/03/01/sociedade/noticia/governo-preve-aprovar-este-mes-em-conselho-de-ministros-diploma-sobre-drones-1805007>

Italy will soon have a company dedicated to drone air traffic management

12 Mar 2018

Wired, Italy

Enav, the company responsible for air traffic services in Italy, is looking for an industrial partner to team up with for the creation of a drone operational branch. The branch will be in charge of registering and monitoring 100% of the drone air traffic. This newly founded drone company is part of Enav's five year investment plan worth 650 million euros. Gartner analysts predict that by 2020 the drone market will be worth over 11 billion dollars.

- ▶ https://www.wired.it/economia/business/2018/03/12/droni-enav-italia/?utm_campaign=wired&utm_medium=marketing&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1520877080

An app to fight drone intrusion at airports

26 Mar 2018

MF Dnes, Czech Republic

The Air Navigation Services of the Czech Republic, a state-run air control service provider, is developing an app for drone users that should prevent drone intrusions at airports, that ground more and more flights every month. Amateur drone users should be registered on a voluntary basis, in exchange for the registration they should have access to some (yet undisclosed) flight information they could not get elsewhere. Air controllers could monitor more easily drone traffic around airports.

- ▶ https://ekonomika.idnes.cz/drony-letiste-naruseni-provozu-kolize-pilot-mobilni-aplikace-kontrola-1ns-/ekonomika.aspx?c=A180326_201739_ekonomika_pmk

How to integrate drone traffic into the city

27 Mar 2018

Bernard Wuthrich, Le Temps, Switzerland

As 100.000 UAVs fly across Switzerland's skies and members of parliament are calling for an unequivocal federal legislation on the matter, the traffic controller agencies Skyguide

and AirMap are developing a monitoring system that combines blockchain technology, geo tracking, digital flight data and enhanced connectivity between pilots. The system will enter its trial phase in June 2018.

- ▶ <https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/integrer-drones-cite>

Drones shall respect privacy and security

23 Mar 2018

La Vanguardia, Spain

The European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) proposed a series of simple but effective measures for regulating air traffic of small drones in Europe. The proposal will help the European Commission to adopt the regulation. Based on EASA's proposal, air traffic security will be ensured by the combination of a series of operational limits, the evaluation of the drone technical conditions and the level of proficiency of the remote pilot.

- ▶ <https://seguros.lavanguardia.com/2018/03/23/los-drones-deberan-respetar-la-privacidad-y-la-seguridad/>

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WHEN DRONES HELP

Forensics helps understand the drone warfare

3 Mar 2018

Osman Kibar, Dagens Næringsliv, Norwegian

(Video) Forensic architecture, a UK based firm, is using computer technologies in an effort to lay down the territorial, urban, and architectural dimensions of drone warfare. Its main goal is to explore potential connections between spatial patterns and the numbers of casualties in the battlefield, especially civilian casualties.

► <https://www.dn.no/magasinet-utgaven/dn-magasinet-2018-03-03/1>

Drones join war on songbird trappers at Cyprus military bases

24 Mar 2018

Ben Farmer, The Daily Telegraph, United Kingdom

Police on British military bases in Cyprus have used drones and night vision goggles to turn the tide in a campaign against illegal trappers killing hundreds of thousands of songbirds. Officers working with forces personnel estimate they have cut the number of migratory songbirds caught in trappers' nets by as much as 70 per cent.

► <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/24/drones-join-war-songbird-trappers-cyprus-military-bases/>

China busts smugglers using drones to transport smartphones: state media

30 mar 2018

Reuters, United Kingdom

Customs officers busted a group of criminals using drones to smuggle smartphones from Hong Kong to Shenzhen. Authorities arrested 26 suspects who used drones to fly two 200-meter (660-foot) cables between Hong Kong and the mainland to transport refurbished iPhones with a total value of 500 million yuan (\$79.8 million).

► <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-crime-smartphones-smugglers/china-busts-smugglers-using-drones-to-transport-smartphones-state-media-idUSKBN1H60BT>

DANGEROUS OPERATIONS

Italy asks for the truth on the drone strike that killed aid worker

7 Mar 2018

Stefania Maurizi, La Repubblica, Italy

An Italian judge refused to shut down an investigation on the death of an Italian aid worker, and asked the United States to deliver every document regarding the military operation that caused his death. Giovanni Lo Porto was kidnapped by Al Qaeda in Pakistan in January 2012. Three years later, while held hostage in Afghanistan, he was killed in a drone strike ordered by the Obama administration.

- ▶ https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/generale/2018/03/07/news/caso_lo_porto_l_italia_agli_usa_dicano_la_verita_sulla_guerra_dei_droni_-190726049/

Nerve gas in Salisbury, drones in Syria: is there a moral difference?

9 Mar 2018

Sergei Skripal, The Guardian, United Kingdom

For governments to go about the world killing people without judicial process offends every international law, even if not much can be done about it.

Since they are considered risk-free (to our side) and “hyper-asymmetric”, drones can go anywhere, at anyone’s bidding. In comparison, Putin’s attempted murder of a former Russian spy in Salisbury is not such a big deal.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/mar/09/nerve-gas-salisbury-sergei-skripal-drones-syria-difference>

States are finding new ways of killing enemies abroad

15 Mar 2018

The Economist, United Kingdom

Throughout the 20th century, targeted assassinations have become more and more popular as a weapon of war, waging it without actually declaring it and without sending armies across borders. The policy of hunting down and killing enemies abroad is often seen as a violation of international and humanitarian law. Recently, these “targeted preventions” have been increasingly carried out by armed drones.

- ▶ <https://www.economist.com/news/international/21738876-they-have-produced-new-legal-justifications-well-states-are-finding-new-ways-killing>

Terrorists, civils, targets: how drones decide whom to kill?

16 Mar 2018

Lukasz Michalik, Wp, Poland

US army’s missions are more and more controversial from a moral point of view. One of the collaterals of using drones is killing innocent people. The US programme Skynet analyses data from mobile phones and creates lists of targets for drones. Ahmad Zaidan, head of Al-Jazeera in Islamabad, was put on such a list. Logically, the drone should have killed him but a military officer decided to withdraw the decision. However, between 600

and 1100 have been killed by US drones in Pakistan. Drones dehumanize wars.

- ▶ <https://tech.wp.pl/terrorysci-cywile-cele-jak-drony-decyduja-kogo-zabic-6230764266997889a>

Us plan to use drones against North Korea

23 Mar 2018

Mike Stone, Reuters, United Kingdom

The U.S. Missile Defense Agency saw its 2018 budget jump to its highest level on record at \$11.5 billion, as the agency's head said he was exploring the use of armed drones to counteract North Korea. Once a ballistic missile is launched towards U.S. territory, the drones would be in position to shoot it down after it blasts off during the missile's "boost phase" and before it exits the Earth's atmosphere.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pentagon-missiledefense/u-s-missile-defense-agency-budget-boosted-to-11-5-billion-idUSKBN1GZ065>

Israel uses drones to drop tear gas on Gaza marchers

31 Mar 2018

Der Spiegel, Germany

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) used drones to drop tear gas canisters on the unarmed Palestinian civilians taking part in the Great March of Return in Gaza on Friday. As tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered at five locations along the eastern borders of the Gaza Strip, the occupation IDF used live ammunition and tear gas to disperse them, as well as the occasional artillery and tank shells.

- ▶ <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/drohneneinsatz-im-gazastreifen-israel-nutzt-drohnen-gegen-demonstranten-a-1200729.html>

CONTINUA>>

THE FUTURE OF DRONES

Will the near future see air combat between drones and airplanes?

14 Mar 2018

Edouard Pflimlin, Le Monde, France

Until now, armed drones, including the ones France is using, have been mainly employed to kill terrorists. But there has also been a high number of civilian deaths, the so-called collateral damage. This scenario could change with the introduction of a new generation of drones equipped with air-to-air missiles, enabling drones to engage in aerial warfare and target all kinds of fighter aircrafts.

► <http://robots.blog.lemonde.fr/>

Researchers develop robotic arm for drones

15 Mar 2018

Handelsblatt, Germany

South Korean researchers are developing a foldable arm for drones. It can help mobile robots and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) overcome access issues by allowing them to reach into confined spaces. The origami-inspired design enables a foldable structure to be lightweight, compact, and scalable while maintaining its kinematic behavior. The simplicity of the stiffening mechanism enables an actuation system to drive shape and stiffness changes with only a single electric motor. The results show that this design is effective for a foldable arm and allow a UAV to perform a variety of tasks in a confined space.

► <http://www.handelsblatt.com/technik/forschung-innovation/leicht-und-faltbar-forscher-entwickeln-roboterarm-fuer-drohnen/21073716.html>

US wants first drones that can kill people truly independently

27 Mar 2018

David Hambling, New Scientist, United Kingdom

The US Army wants to develop small drones to automatically spot, identify and target vehicles and people. The project will use machine-learning algorithms, such as neural networks, to equip drones as small as consumer quadcopters with artificial intelligence. Current military drones have little onboard intelligence, sending raw video back to analysts who pick out and identify targets. Small drones that can spot and identify objects already exist: “The military is basically trying to import the technology from the commercial sector,” says Nabin Sharma at the University of Technology Sydney, in Australia.

► <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg23731713-500-us-wants-first-drones-that-can-kill-people-truly-independently/>

HOW TO STOP A DRONE

Hunted down drones

24 Mar 2018

Josef Tucek, Lidové noviny, Czech Republic

Civilian drones in the hands of terrorists or even irresponsible users present nowadays an increasing danger for the public. Security experts all over the world are trying to find an efficient way to take dangerous drones down from the sky. Some airports have unsuccessfully tried to train eagles for this task, others are trying hawks. Even more sophisticated, tech-based, approaches don't provide much better results: military microwave technology is able to destroy the drone's electronic components and thus stop them, but it is not suitable for civilian space.

► <https://www.lidovenoviny.cz/nahled.aspx?d=24.03.2018&e=LN-PRAHA&id=6895328>

Laser weapons against drones

21 Mar 2018

Giorgio Giordano, Il Secolo XIX, Italy

The U.S. Military is facing an unlikely new threat: Drones, including commercially available ones, are capable of spying on and attacking U.S. forces. Two so-called Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS) tested by the Army are the Raytheon high power microwave (HPM) and high energy laser (HEL). Together, the two weapons burned a total of 45 drones during a recent Army exercise, as well as some mortar projectiles.

► http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/cultura/2018/03/21/ACjWAEHC-militari_americani_mezzi.shtml

What to do with the drones?

5 Mar 2018

Paloma Almoguera, El País, Spain

With the increase of threats caused by drones, the request of technical solutions to tackle such dangers grows as well. During the Singapore airshow 2018, Rheinmetall company presented a system that consists in using drones equipped with nets for capturing dangerous drones. TRD company presented a rifle with an integrated frequency inhibitor that disturbs the radio transmission signal and interrupts the flight of the drone.

► https://elpais.com/tecnologia/2018/03/05/actualidad/1520254889_354710.html

Creative dealers from China used drones and built a rope transport

31 Mar 2018

Najwyższy Czas, Poland

Chinese customs arrested a gang of phone dealers on the border with Hong Kong. Each night up to 15 000 mobiles were smuggled. Drones were flying cables between high buildings in the autonomous territory and Shenzhen in China. Early in the morning the motorised wheels were dismantled. It's the first case of smuggling with the use of drones, but other could follow.

► <http://nczas.com/2018/03/31/pomyslowski-przemyslownicy-z-chin-do-szmuglu-wykorzystywali-drony-i-skonstruowana-przez-siebie-kolej-linowa/>

MARKET IS BOOMING

Demand for commercial-use drones boosts Chinese firm

22 Mar 2018

Fiona Lau and Julie Zhu, Reuters, United Kingdom

China's SZ DJI Technology Co Ltd, the world's largest maker of non-military drones, is in talks with investors for at least \$500 million in funding ahead of a planned stock market debut. The move seeks to capitalize on robust investor enthusiasm for Chinese tech stocks which have pushed valuations to high levels for many firms, as well as on rapid growth in the demand for commercial-use drones.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-crime-smartphones-smugglers/china-busts-smugglers-using-drones-to-transport-smartphones-state-media-idUSKBN1H60BT>