

Armed drones on the European media

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A DRONE RACE IN EUROPE

Brussels plans to block US and UK groups from defence programme

13 June 2018

Alex Barker, Financial Times, United Kingdom

Brussels is proposing to routinely shut out US and UK companies from a 13bn defence programme to develop the EU's "strategic autonomy" in areas such as cyber security and drone technology. Strict restrictions placed on the European Defence Fund risk worsening a bitter dispute with London over post-Brexit defence and security cooperation. The draft legislative proposal makes clear that "only entities established in the union" and "not subject to control" by third countries would be eligible to bid for research or development projects.

► <https://www.ft.com/content/ec7728a4-6e85-11e8-852d-d8b934ff5ffa>

100 drones capable of carrying warheads for the Polish army in 2018

2 June 2018

Wiadomości Polsat News, Poland

A further 80 Warmate drones will be delivered to the Polish army, according to Tomasz Badowski from WB Electronics. In April, 9 soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces were given UAV Operator Certificates. The supply contract with the NIL military unit was signed in November 2017, and the first supply was made in December 2017. Warmate drones capable of carrying hollow-charge high-explosive warheads have a range of 12 km and can search for their target for up to 50 minutes.

► <http://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2018-06-02/sto-dronow-dla-wojska-do-konca-roku-maja-przenosic-glowice-bojowe/>

German military to get its first ever combat-capable drones

13 June 2018

Die Zeit, Germany

Germany has agreed a nine-year deal worth half a billion euros to lease Israeli military reconnaissance drones capable of carrying missiles. European aerospace giant Airbus, which signed the 500 million agreement on behalf of the German defence ministry, will maintain and provide operational support for the Heron TP drones, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) said. The Social Democrats had held up the deal for years in the German parliament due to the sensitivity among their voters of using unmanned aircraft which are capable of firing missiles.

► <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-06/kampfdrohnen-beschaffung-bundestag-herontp>

Military drones from Israel to Germany

19 June 2018

Defence 24, Poland

On June 14, Airbus Defence&Space signed an agreement, on behalf of the German Defense Ministry, with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) to lease Heron TP. The nine-year agreement entails an expenditure of USD 600 million but the total cost is estimated at around USD 1 billion. Since 2010, the Bundeswehr is using also the Hyperon 1. The current contract is an interim solution before the upcoming implementation of the European unmanned aerial system called RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft System).

► <https://www.defence24.pl/bojowe-drony-z-izraela-dla-niemiec>

German parliament committee backs Israeli drones leasing plan

3 June 2018

Reuters, United Kingdom

Germany's parliamentary budget committee backed plans by the military to lease Israeli-built Heron-TP surveillance drones in a deal valued at around \$1.18 billion. The deal had run into resistance last year from the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), junior partners in Chancellor Angela Merkel's grand coalition, because the drones could be armed in the future. The German military currently uses a different model of Heron drones that cannot be armed.

► <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-military-drones/german-parliament-committee-backs-israeli-drones-leasing-plan-idUSKBN1J92IY>

Bulgaria PM suggests joint drone manufacture with Israel

13 June 2018

Reuters, United Kingdom

Bulgaria is interested in joint unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) production with Israel, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said on Wednesday. Israel rivals the United States as a top UAV exporter and has cooperated with Russia and India on drone technologies. UAVs accounted for 2 percent of Israel's defense sales in 2017, according to government data released last month. Total defense sales in 2017 were valued at \$9.2 billion.

► <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-arms-bulgaria-israel/bulgaria-pm-suggests-joint-drone-manufacture-with-israel-idUSKBN1J914R>

EU's military budget explodes

15 June 2018

Arbejderen, Denmark

The EU commission proposes an increase in financial support for research into armed military drones and other autonomous weapons such as killer robots. The proposal would lead to a 2200% increase in EU funding for weapons research, surpassing EU support

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for humanitarian aid. The European Network Against Arms Trade (ENAAT) warns that armed drones and other autonomous weapons challenge international law, for example due to difficulties in locating responsibility.

- ▶ <http://www.arbejderen.dk/indland/eu-budget-satser-p%C3%A5-bev%C3%A6bnede-droner>

New British army chief urges shift towards tech-driven warfare

20 June 2018

Ewen MacAskill, The Guardian, United Kingdom

According to General Mark Carleton-Smith, the army's new chief of the general staff, British forces must shift their focus to include confronting adversaries in the virtual world as well as on the battlefield. Carleton-Smith will make the call during his first speech in the role, at the closing of a two-day conference on land warfare. For Carleton-Smith the changing battlefield will require skills beyond those normally associated with careers in the army.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jun/20/new-british-army-chief-signals-shift-towards-virtual-warfare>

France to lead joint fighter jet program with Germany

19 June 2018

Reuters, United Kingdom

France will take the lead in the development of a next generation combat jet with Germany under an agreement the two governments signed on Tuesday, the French defense ministry said. In addition to being capable of acting on its own, the new aircraft is expected to be at the center of a broader weapons system, capable of commanding a squadron of drones.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-france-defence/france-to-lead-joint-fighter-jet-program-with-germany-idUSKBN1JF2UJ>

Drone games in the Portugal sea (video)

27 June 2018

Expresso, Portugal

Cybernetic and drone attacks were tested by the Portugal Navy in a multinational exercise with four more European countries. In what was the first test of a drone attack on a naval force located near densely populated areas, where so-called rules of engagement imposed limitations on the use of large-caliber automatic weapons, the military exercise Swordfish 2018 revealed the high degree of military threat currently posed by unmanned drones, even though they are not very complex.

- ▶ <https://www.jn.pt/nacional/interior/nova-legislacao-nao-trava-ataque-de-drones-8570207.html>

Dutch cabinet wants to deploy 4 mq-9 reaper drones starting summer 2020

4 June 2018

Sander van Voorst, Tweakers, The Netherlands

In order to deploy drones in 2020, the Netherlands will have to sign an agreement with the United States this summer. The agreement, a so-called Letter of Offer and Acceptance, was expected to be signed much earlier, but the project was delayed for budgetary reasons. The drones will also have to be certified to fly in Dutch airspace. The certification procedure can only be started after the LOA has been signed, and the two years between 2018 and 2020 will also be used for the acquisition and training of pilots.

- ▶ <https://tweakers.net/nieuws/139659/nederlands-kabinet-wil-vier-mq-9-reaper-drones-vanaf-zomer-2020-in-kunnen-zetten.html>

Italy starts arming drones

8 June 2018

Lorenzo Bagnoli, Osservatorio diritti, Italy

According to Mil€x, a non-governmental organization that keep track of Italian military spending, the Italian government has quietly started arming the drones purchased from the United States. This is “an epochal turning point” for the Italian army: until now military drones could only be deployed for reconnaissance operations, from now on the Italian Predators will be able to hit targets on the battleground.

- ▶ <https://www.osservatoriodiritti.it/2018/06/08/droni-militari-italiani/>

Center-right grouping proposes tough security offer for EU election

12 June 2018

Maïa de La Baume, Politico, Belgium

The European People’s Party, the largest political group in the European parliament, will propose creating an EU army by 2030, external borders policed by drones and with fences, and a block on EU membership for Turkey, according to a draft policy document obtained by Politico. The group, which currently has 219 seats in the European Parliament, plans to put forward a tougher approach on security to limit a shift by its voters toward anti-migration parties to its right.

- ▶ <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-army-epp-proposes-tough-security-offer-for-eu-election/>

THE MOVEMENT AGAINST DRONES GROWS

A drone dilemma for the German armed forces

15 June 2018

Agenzia Nova, Italy

German lawmakers decision to lease five Heron TP drones from Israel drew immediate praise from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but was contested by opposition parties. Agnieszka Brugger, one of the leaders of the Green Party, criticized the Spd (center-left, in the government coalition) for supporting the deal. Brugger said that armed drones would lower “the political threshold for using force”.

- ▶ <https://www.agenzianova.com/a/o/1963842/2018-06-15/speciale-difesa-germania-le-forze-armate-e-il-dilemma-dei-droni-armati>

A contested policy in Germany

11 June 2018

Aktionfsa Blog, Die Tageszeitung, Germany

German lawmakers decision to lease five Heron TP drones from Israel will empower the groups that ask for the reduction of military spending, in particular regarding UAV technology. According to Laura von Wimmersperg, activist of the Berlin Peace Coordination, “combat drones and drone warfare are among the most important topics of the peace movement because the automation of weapon systems is creating a new and dangerous paradigm in warfare”.

- ▶ <https://blogs.taz.de/bewegung/2018/06/11/entscheidung-des-bundestages-ueber-ruestungsspirale/>

U.S. officials warn Congress on risks of drones

6 June 2018

David Shepardson, Reuters, United Kingdom

The Trump administration urged Congress on Wednesday to give it new powers to disable or destroy threatening drones, according to testimony viewed by Reuters. “Terrorist groups overseas use drones to conduct attacks on the battlefield and continue to plot to use them in terrorist attacks elsewhere. This is a very serious, looming threat that we are currently unprepared to confront”, said David Glawe, undersecretary for intelligence.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-drones-security/us-officials-warn-congress-on-risks-of-drones-see-new-powers-idUSKCN1J214S>

MORE RULES FOR CIVILIAN DRONES

European Parliament has passed new EU-wide rules for drones

12 June 2018

David Slížek, Lupa, Czech Republic

The European Parliament has passed a new proposal for common rules in the field of civil aviation that should mean the same rules for drones across the EU. Until now, operation of UEV's under 150 kgs has been regulated by each member state. The proposal contains general rules for the operation of drones - for example, the maximum operating distance, altitude, and the rules for operators who will have to be trained and registered.

- ▶ <https://www.lupa.cz/aktuality/evropsky-parlament-schvalil-nova-celounijni-pravidla-pro-provoz-dronu/>

EU approved new rules for safety of drones

26 June 2018

Correio da Manhã, Portugal

The European Parliament approved an agreement reached between Council and Parliament negotiators in November 2017 on EU-wide principles for drones and drone operators to ensure a common level of safety and give operators and manufacturers the predictability to develop products and services. Currently most drones fall under differing national rules, which can hamper market development.

- ▶ <http://www.cmjornal.pt/sociedade/detalhe/parlamento-europeu-aprova-regras-gerais-para-uso-de-drones-na-ue>

NEW TOOLS FOR POLICE FORCES

Drones to all regions. Police is about to expand its existing fleet

10 June 2018

Marek Kočovský, iDnes, Czech Republic

Czech police is about to purchase additional 16 drones that would monitor the whole country. Drones will be deployed in searches for missing persons and in areas such as a burglary prevention. Marked with police colors, the drones will be operated by the existing airborne units. They will help to cut costs considerably as cost per flight-hour ranges from 4 to 27 euros, which is incomparable to helicopter deployment.

- ▶ https://zpravy.idnes.cz/drony-policie-nakup-048-/domaci.aspx?c=A180605_095753_domaci_PAS

Will drones identify a violence in a crowd?

13 June 2018

Marek Felt, 21 Století, Czech Republic

Cambridge University researchers have created an AI solution capable of detecting violent behavior. With an accuracy of 94 percent, it can recognize violent actions like kicking, shooting or fist fighting. The new DSS (Drone Surveillance System) would be able to monitor crowds without any human interference and in case of a riot it could automatically alert law enforcement and identify the culprits.

- ▶ <https://21stoleti.cz/2018/06/13/rozpoznaji-drony-nasili-v-davu-lidi/>

CHINA KEEPS INNOVATING

China unveils new stealth combat drone

6 June 2018

Franco Iacch, Il Giornale, Italy

China released images of a new, unmanned, stealth-fighter-style jet, and they present a look into how close Beijing has come to unseating the US as the dominant military air power. According to military experts, the drone, called the “Dark Sword,” could give China a big advantage in a fight with the US. The Dark Sword looks like an unmanned stealth fighter jet that could overwhelm the US with quantity and supersonic speed.

- ▶ <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/mondo/cina-svelato-primo-drone-combattimento-supersonico-mondo-1537176.html>

China launches new dove-like drones so realistic even real birds don't recognize them

25 June 2018

Jolien Meremans, De Morgen, Belgium

China has developed new high-tech surveillance drones. Real birds recognize these drones as one of their own, and the technology can supposedly even fool radar-technology. The birds have been tested by the Chinese Military. Researchers have flown over 2000 testflights, and claim the devices will have enormous potential.

- ▶ <https://www.demorgen.be/buitenland/china-lanceert-nieuwe-duifachtige-drones-die-zo-realistisch-zijn-dat-zelfs-echte-vogels-ze-niet-herkennen-bdaf686e/>

China tests army of tiny drone ships

7 June 2018

Tom Barnes, The Independent, United Kingdom

China is developing an army of tiny drone ships, which experts say could be used as a “shark swarm” against enemies during sea battles. Tests involving 56 of the unmanned vessels were carried out off the Wanshan Archipelago in the South China Sea in early June. “Once equipped with weapons, unmanned small combat vessels can attack the enemy in large numbers, similar to drones,” says Li Jie, a Beijing-based naval expert.

- ▶ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-drone-ships-unmanned-test-video-military-south-sea-shark-swarm-a8387626.html>

NO VALLEY FOR ARMED DRONES

Facebook abandons its Project Aquila flying internet plan

27 June 2018

Dave Lee, Bbc, United Kingdom

Facebook is giving up on its plan to create drones that beam down internet connectivity, the company has confirmed. Project Aquila, first announced in 2014, failed to achieve the long flight times managed by airborne connectivity efforts from rivals including Google. In one test, Facebook's craft suffered a broken wing as it came in to land.

► <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-44624702>

Google publishes AI principles

22 June 2018

Marius François, Le Figaro, France

Following an internal outcry in response to the company's participation in a drone surveillance project for the U.S. military, Pichai published seven principles for its use of artificial intelligence. Among those principles: be socially beneficial, be built and tested for safety, be accountable to people, incorporate privacy design principles.

► <http://www.lefigaro.fr/secteur/high-tech/2018/06/08/32001-20180608ARTFIG00176-google-se-dote-de-7-grands-principes-pour-faire-bon-usage-de-l-intelligence-artificielle.php>

Google adopts ethical principles for Artificial Intelligence

8 June 2018

Niels Møller Kjemtrup, Ingeniøren, Denmark

Employee protests and negative press due to Google's engagement in Project Maven, using machine learning in military drones, has motivated Google to launch ethical regulations for the use of AI. The new principles prohibit the use of AI for weapon systems and surveillance which go against internationally accepted norms.

► <https://ing.dk/andre-skriver/google-vedtager-etiske-principper-kunstig-intelligens-212742>

After internal rebellion: Google to drop development of AI for US military

4 June 2018

Rune Bang Frederiksen, Version2, Denmark

Google will not renew their contract with the American ministry of defence, when it expires in March 2019. The decision is due to strong negative reactions to the Maven project contract, including an open protest letter signed by thousands of employees.

► <https://www.version2.dk/artikel/efter-internt-oproer-google-dropper-udvikling-kunstig-intelligens-usas-militaer-1085309>

Google 'to end' Pentagon artificial intelligence project

1 June 2018

Público, Portugal

Google, hoping to head off a rebellion by employees upset that the technology they were working on could be used for lethal purposes, will not renew a contract with the Pentagon for artificial intelligence work when a current deal expires next year. Google's work with the Defense Department on the Maven program, which uses artificial intelligence to interpret video images and could be used to improve the targeting of drone strikes, roiled the internet giant's work force.

▶ <https://www.publico.pt/2018/06/01/tecnologia/noticia/google-trava-colaboracao-militar-com-o-pentagono-1832974>

Google take distance from US government

2 June 2018

Francesco Palmas, Avvenire, Italy

Google decided not to renew its contract with a Pentagon drone program once it expires, after extensive protests from employees of the internet giant. Signed last September, the contract lets the Defense Department use Google artificial intelligence tools to analyze drone footage for an initiative called Project Maven. It was part of a major push by Greene to break into the lucrative business of selling cloud services to the government, where Amazon.com Inc. and Microsoft Corp. dominate.

▶ <https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/droni-pentagono>

THE DRONES OF THE FUTURE

The future belongs to unmanned aircrafts

12 June 2018

Damien Licata Caruso, Le Figaro, France

The Eurosatory showcase (which was held in Paris in mid Jun), one of Europe's largest land warfare conferences, confirmed that the warfare industry is increasingly moving toward the development of unmanned technology. During the exposition were presented new machines that, if fully developed, could reduce the role of soldiers on the battleground, like armed robots and kamikaze drones.

► <http://www.leparisien.fr/high-tech/robots-armes-et-drone-kamikaze-en-vedette-a-eurosatory-12-06-2018-7768608.php>

Printed drones for non-state actors

27 June 2018

Franco Iacch, Il Giornale, Italy

The developing and creation of drones by non-state actors (starting from terrorist groups like Isis) keep advancing at impressive pace. Just three years after producing the first homemade drones, some organizations are now able to produce drones more easily using 3D printing technology. This new approach give non-statal actors a low cost and efficient tool in the conflicts against regular armies.

► <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/mondo/droni-terroristi-avviata-produzione-stampa-3d-1545528.html>

Small quadriopters become dangerous enemies on the battlefield

6 June 2018

Stanislav Mihulka, Vtm , Czech Republic

Belarusian armed forces have presented an anti-tank drone armed with a one-time manual anti-tank grenade launcher. A reactive grenade is launched by an operator who commands the drone by a remote control. While this technology is still quite primitive, armies should observe closely the development of anti-tank drones, as similarly cheap and simple drones will appear sooner or later and will be even more dangerous.

► <https://vtm.zive.cz/clanky/nove-rpg-kvadrioptery-z-beloruska-si-troufnou-i-na-tank/sc-870-a-193534/default.aspx>

FAILED EXPERIMENTS

Another crash for the drone British program

24 June 2018

Feilidh Dwyer, The Independent, United Kingdom

A United Kingdom military drone has crashed just several hours after completing a flyover of a Welsh primary school. The drone was part of the Watchkeeper program, developed by the army for intelligence and surveillance operations. This latest crash is yet another setback to the program becoming fully operational. Since flight trials began in 2010 the Watchkeeper program has been beset by delays and the drones have been involved in five crashes. In total, the Watchkeeper program has cost the UK more than \$1.58 billion.

► <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/drone-watchkeeper-crash-school-sports-day-failed-mod-military-spending-projects-defence-equipment-a8409206.html>

Eagle trained to bring down terrorist drones attacks a five-year-old girl

7 June 2018

Correio da Manhã, Portugal

A French air force eagle designed to claw drones out of the sky attacked a five-year-old girl dressed in white because she looked like one of the aircraft. The attack took place in Col d'Aubisque, a mountain pass in the Pyrenees. The eagle involved is one of four Golden Eagles recruited by the French air force to bring down remote-controlled drones when they stray into unauthorised airspace.

► <http://www.cmjornal.pt/insolitos/detalhe/aguia-treinada-para-derrubar-drones-ataca-crianca-vestida-de-branco>

Clarifai: Company working on military AI tries to cover up breach of security

13 June 2018

Niels Møller Kjemtrup, Version2, Denmark

The American startup Clarifai, which was part of Project Maven, working on image recognition from military drones and assisting drone operators in identification of targets, was hacked in November 2017. The company chose to keep the breach of security secret. Clarifai's IT systems were infected by malware, which appears to originate from a computer in Russia.

► <https://www.version2.dk/artikel/clarifai-firma-arbejder-paa-militaer-ai-har-forsoegt-at-daekke-sikkerhedsbrist-1085382>

Prison besieged by drones

16 May

Jean-Michel Normand, Le Monde, France

Prison authorities in many countries – from United States to France, from Canada to United Kingdom – are intensifying their efforts to stop drones from delivering drugs, porn and cellphones to inmates. In Canada, the number of drones spotted near prisons increased from 27 in 2015 to 180 in 2017. Last year in Valence, in France, a drone managed to deceive the the security system and dropped a package in the courtyard of the prison. And prisons aren't the only secure facilities grappling with consumer drones. Last year in Japan a man was arrested after landing a drone carrying radioactive material on the prime minister's roof.

► https://abonnes.lemonde.fr/la-foire-du-drone/article/2018/05/16/les-drones-se-bousculent-au-dessus-des-prisons_5299698_5037916.html