

Armed drones on the European media

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A SCARY FUTURE

Why bother teaching drone pilots about ethics? It's robots that will kill us

27 Sep 2018

Andrew Brown, The Guardian, United Kingdom

The Church of England decided to offer a support program to RAF drone pilots that includes the study of ethics and philosophy. Even if drone pilots are safe and far from the victims, they could have psychological repercussions. Anti-missile defences, in fact, to be effective operate faster than the human mind, but by the time a human realises what decision has been made, it is already too late.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/27/drone-pilots-ethics-robots-kill-church-of-england-raf>

Killer Robots: facts about deadly systems

11 Sep 2018

Bayerischer Rundfunk, Germany

How will the world community deal with autonomous weapons in the future? BR answers to five key questions about this topic, just before experts from 70 countries meet in Geneva. According to Anja Dahlmann, a researcher at Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), there is a consensus that the decision of killing should be taken by humans. However opinions are different: US and Israel, for example, do not want any form of regulation or binding political agreements. Developing countries are in favor of a ban. The attitude of Russia is unclear.

- ▶ <https://www.br.de/nachrichten/deutschland-welt/killer-roboter-fakten-ueber-toedliche-systeme,R1wD3Rs>

The triumph of killer robots

2 Sep 2018

Gerhard Hegmann, Die Welt, Germany

For years, the United Nations have been trying to ban killer robots, the so-called Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS). Unlike automatic weapons, autonomous weapons could decide who and when to kill. While Geneva experts discussed a ban on autonomous killer weapons, Boeing got a major contract showing the current state of unmanned military technology. In addition, the US department of defense published a new strategy paper describing how unmanned systems should revolutionize the US military by 2042.

- ▶ <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article181394416/Militaertechnik-Autonome-Waffen-koennten-das-Militaer-umkrempeeln.html>

When fighter jets eject drones

16 Sep 2018

Gerhard Hegmann, Die Welt, Germany

In the future, unmanned drones and drone swarms should accompany fighter jets in their missions. Europe wants to play a leading role in this technology field, the Airbus Group is currently testing flying teams over the Baltic Sea. These drones do not operate in a completely autonomous way and they are launched with a special catapult. The Europeans have to hurry to keep up with the US developments: early this year, the Pentagon wants to launch flight tests for the Gremlins project. These drones will be ejected from a military transporter C-130. After the mission, they should return to the transporter and be collected in the air again.

- ▶ <https://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article181551364/Lufkrieg-Drohnen-sollen-Eurofighter-im-Kampfeinsatz-helfen.html>



A catapult used for testing drones

No chances for a ban on autonomous weapons

6 Sep 2018

Ndr, Germany

Technology is progressing rapidly and critics are now warning about the development of killer robots. More than 70 states participated at the conference on the Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) in Geneva. A small group of states – that include above all USA, Russia, Israel, South Korea and Australia – are against an immediate ban: they want to wait for the technological development. An argument is that autonomous weapons could protect civilians in armed conflicts because they process information better than humans. Proponents of a ban, such as Austria, point out international law problems. Furthermore the new weapons could fall into the wrong hands.

- ▶ https://www.ndr.de/info/sendungen/streitkraefte_und_strategien/Verbot-autonomer-Waffen-ohne-Chance,streitkraefte508.html

Testing of nerve agent detecting robots under Project Minerva

20 Sep 2018

Rebecca Hudson, Salisbury Journal, United Kingdom

Project Minerva aims to reduce risk for emergency services and front-line troops attending incidents involving chemical or biological materials that could cause them harm. The new fleet of robots and drones are designed to test for chemical agents, provide 3D mapping of buildings and identify casualties, and they have now been tested by the military, police officers and scientists for the first time.

- ▶ <https://www.salisburyjournal.co.uk/news/16892209.testing-of-nerve-agent-detecting-robots-under-project-minerva/>

Expert on arrest of two suspected terrorists: The worst horror scenario is if their drones are turned into flying weapons

26 Sep 2018

Mette Guldagger, Politiken, Denmark

Two men have been arrested, suspected of sending drone parts to IS. Terror expert, Ranstorp, is alarmed at the possibility that drones or parts are being sent from Denmark to IS in Syria or Iraq. Drones are a serious issue for intelligence agencies; especially as they can be modified to get alarmingly close to key targets (e.g. politicians). Exporting military equipment to terror organisations is illegal and it would be a big success for Danish intelligence services if they managed to expose a transporter of drones.

- ▶ <https://politiken.dk/indland/art6727768/Det-v%C3%A6rste-skr%C3%A6kszenarie-er-hvis-deres-droner-er-ombygget-til-flyvende-v%C3%A5ben>

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THE AMERICAN DRONES

Trump is unshackling America's drones thanks to Obama's weakness

17 Sep 2018

Brett Max Kaufman, The Guardian, United Kingdom

Us president Donald Trump increased the use of drones and tripled the attacks in Somalia and Yemen. He has also apparently determined to further reassert CIA control over lethal drones by establishing its own drone base in Niger, broadening the agency's lethal reach into Libya and other parts of Africa. The Guardian stresses the weak and useless limits put by Obama and eliminated by Trump.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/17/the-cia-is-back-in-the-drone-business-trump-is-unshackling-americas-drones-thanks-to-obamas-weakness>

CIA is going to increase the number of drone strikes

11 Sep 2018

TVN24, Poland

Paramilitary units of CIA want to increase the number of drone strikes in order to fight with Al-Qaeda terrorists and ISIS in Africa making a use of the military base in North-Eastern Niger. TVN24 stresses the fact that Trump's administration opposes to Barack Obama's vision that tended to limit targeted killing due to the number of civil casualties. This year, 5 strikes have been carried out in southern Libya. Increasing number of attacks proves the government's willingness to use drones during CIA operations.

- ▶ <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-ze-swiata,2/nyt-cia-planuje-ataki-z-uzyciem-dronow-w-afryce,867531.html>

Drone shot down by a drone: Unmanned aerial battles on the horizon

27 Sep 2018

Stanislav Mihulka, VTM, Czech Republic

MQ-9 Reaper using an infrared-led Stinger rocket shot down another UAV in a first air-to-air drone kill incident in history. US Military has been using drones on a large scale since 9/11: initially for reconnaissance purposes, later for air to ground precision attacks and anti-drone aerial operations are just a logical broadening of its use. Pentagon wants to acquire such capabilities as it becomes increasingly nervous about presence of enemy drones on the battlefield.

- ▶ <https://vtm.zive.cz/clanky/dron-sestrelil-dron-na-obzoru-jsou-bezpilotni-vzdušne-souboje/sc-870-a-195247/default.aspx>

U.S., India to discuss sale of drones, exchange of satellite data

4 Sep 2018

Idrees Ali and Phil Stewart, Reuters, United Kingdom

The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) has long been a demand of the United States and would allow Washington to sell sensitive defence equipment to India, like the armed version of Guardian drones. India has historically opposed the agreement because it sees it as being too intrusive but this year New Delhi changed its position.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-usa/us-india-to-discuss-sale-of-drones-exchange-of-satellite-data-idUSKCN1LKoUH>

The Pentagon designates Boeing to develop a refueling drone

2 Sep 2018

Florian Maussion, Les Echos, France

The Boeing company won the US Navy contract for the development of four MQ-25A by 2024. The fleet could subsequently be expanded to 72 drones for 13 billion dollars. According to the Navy, the drones, nicknamed 'Stingray', will allow operations that otherwise would not be possible. The head of naval operations, John Richardson, called it "a historic day".

- ▶ <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/air-defense/0302189752587-le-pentagone-charge-boeing-de-concevoir-un-drone-ravitailleur-2201546.php>

The Global Hawk, the largest US spy drone, crashed on June 26 facing the coast of Rota, Cádiz

7 Sep 2018

El Mundo, Spain

According to The War Zone magazine, an RQ-4 Global Hawk, the largest US spy drone, crashed on June 26 off the coast of Rota, Cadiz (Spain). The incident, which did not cause injuries, was kept secret by the US Army. The mission and the route of the drone are not known.

- ▶ <http://www.elmundo.es/andalucia/2018/09/07/5b920de9e2704e39518b4682.html>

Low cost armed drones: industry increase without rules is scary

4 Sep 2018

Corrado Fontana, Valori, Italy

The drone industry is growing with 300 manufactures involved in the military sector. According to data reported by Valori, in 2025 it could be worth 21 billion dollars. Undisputed leaders the US, thanks to a growing billionaire budget. Furthermore, President Trump is changing the rules for drone export. The greatest concern is the absence of shared international rules that can regulate the development of these technologies.

- ▶ <https://valori.it/droni-armati-low-cost-la-corsa-senza-regole-dellindustria-fa-paura/>

U.S. Program with armed drones resumed in Africa to pursue Al-Qaeda and Daesh

10 Sep 2018

Expresso, Portugal

According to a NYT reporter, a Predator-size drone has flown over Niger three times since the beginning of August. At least five US drone attacks took place in Libya in 2018 and at the end of July the US command confirmed sending the drones to Niger. The Trump administration re-launched the program that had been slowed down due to civilian casualties.

► <https://expresso.sapo.pt/internacional/2018-09-10-Estados-Unidos.-Programa-com-drones-armados-retomado-em-Africa-para-perseguir-Al-Qaeda-e-Daesh#gs.bYdMEvE>

Boeing unit launches new military drone

17 Sep 2018

Reuters, United Kingdom

Boeing launched the Extended Range, a military drone enabled with satellite communications and an extended range of operations. It is the first of this size to achieve certain levels and its cost is much lower than other similar products. President Trump has also lightened the rules for the export of some types of lethal drones to allies and partners.

► <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-boeing-drones/boeing-unit-launches-new-military-drone-idUSKCN1LX2A4>

Libya, Cia ready to use drones again to attack the terrorists

10 Sep 2018

Guido Olimpio, Corriere della Sera, Italy

According to the New York Times, the CIA has created a new base in Dirkou, in the northeast of Niger, to launch Reaper armed drones to attack Al Qaeda and Isis militants in Libya. Furthermore, Paris has announced that the G5 Sahel command in Chad will be moved from Djamena to Wour, further north. Dirkou and Wour are both close to the routes of migrant smugglers.

► https://www.corriere.it/esteri/18_settembre_10/libia-cia-pronta-usare-nuovo-droni-attaccare-terroristi-abdf71co-b4f8-11e8-9795-182d8d9833ao.shtml

In Africa jihadists are increasingly targeted by US drones

14 Sep 2018

Marco Cochi, Eastwest.eu, Italy

According to the NYT, United States have expanded Dirkou airport to deploy MQ-9 Reaper drones. The drones, often disapproved for civilians casualties, have been transferred from the bases of Sigonella, Niscemi and Niamey. Although there are no combat missions, the US military presence in Niger is the second largest in Africa and has another base in Agadez, a strategic city for drug and migrant smugglers and terrorists.

► <https://eastwest.eu/it/opinioni/open-doors/niger-attacchi-droni-stati-uniti-terrorismo>

EUROPE HAS DRONES TOO

German ministry defends drone deployment in Mali

16 Sep 2018

Die Zeit, Germany

According to Die Welt, the cooperation of German armed forces and French units in Mali has exceeded the parliament mandate. The report, based on confidential UN documents, argues that the armed forces supported French anti-terrorist units in the Sahel area with the use of a Heron I drone, in December 2017. The German ministry of defense has claimed there are no violations of the mandate: the drone has been used to collect information and it was been requested by the UN headquarters in Bamako.

► <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-09/bundeswehreinsatz-mali-verteidigungsministerium-mandat>

Airforce gets 306 Squadron back

14 Sep 2018

Luchtvaart Nieuws, The Netherlands

The Royal Netherlands Airforce will be reinstating 306 Squadron at Leeuwarden Airbase this week. This squadron will host the four MQ-9 Reaper drones the Netherlands is expected to receive in 2020. The reinstalment of the squadron is a long-running project at the MoD. In preparation of the drone squadron, imagery analysts and intelligence officers have been providing assistance to the fight of the Coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

► <https://www.luchtvaartnieuws.nl/nieuws/categorie/4/militair/luchtmacht-krijg-306-squadron-weer-terug>

Warheads for Polish army will be now manufactured in Bydgoszcz

11 Sep 2018

Express Bydgoski, Poland

The Bydgoskie Zakłady Elektromechaniczne Belma S.A (subsidiary of the Polish Armaments Group) has recently concluded a contract concerning Polish UAVs warheads developed by Military Institute of Armament Technology in Zielonka. This agreement is an example of synergy. High explosive, anti-tank, fuel-air explosive and training warheads have been designed for micro-class UAV systems. The series of GX-2 warheads are capable of destroying light armoured vehicles, tanks and infantry.

► <https://expressbydgoski.pl/bydgoska-firma-wyprodukuje-glowice-do-dronow-dla-wojska/ar/13483659>

Armed and unarmed drones specific to Turkish manufacture

16 Sep 2018

Tarkan Zengin, TRT, Turkey

According to the Turkish state channel, IHA drones and SIHA armed drones make Turkey one of the few countries in the world able to produce this technology. According to the state broadcaster, the drones have contributed significantly to the Turkish anti-terrorist operations nearby countries. Turkey started the production of armed drones after the US Congress banned the sale of Predator and Reaper drones in the country in 2000.

▶ <http://www.trt.net.tr/francais/turquie/2018/09/16/les-drones-armes-et-non-armes-specifiques-de-fabrication-turque-1050320>

Denmark is missing out on lucrative opportunities in defence technology

6 Sep 2018

Henning Heiselberg, Ingeniøren, Denmark

As Nato member, Denmark must have a defence budget over 2% of GDP. The current budget is 1.15%; members with which Denmark compares itself have larger defence budgets but use it cleverly to fund research and boost domestic industry. Denmark could benefit from researching, developing and producing military technology e.g. software for cyber defence and AI, and technology for use with and protection against drone activity. These technologies could also have civilian uses, create growth, jobs and export, while counting towards the defence budget.

▶ <https://ing.dk/artikel/kronik-danmark-misser-lukrative-muligheder-forsvarsteknologi-214224>

Florence Parly: “The daily life of the soldiers must improve”

20 Sep 2018

Ava Djamshidi, Le Parisien, France

The French minister of the armed forces, Florence Parly, has revealed the main lines of her budget for next year. Among the investments, six armed drones will be deployed in 2019 to detect threats and intervene immediately if necessary, especially in the Sahel area. As part of the Operation Barkhane operation, the drones will be piloted from their area of intervention, and not from France.

▶ <http://www.leparisien.fr/politique/florence-parly-le-quotidien-des-soldats-doit-s-ameliorer-20-09-2018-7896666.php>

Weapons: the industrial winners of the 2019 budget

25 Sep 2018

Bruno Trévidic and Anne Bauer, Les Echos, France

The French ministry of defense will be one of the few with a budget and troops increase planned for 2019. From € 45.09 billion the availability will reach € 46.72 billion. Expected purchases include three new Reaper drones, manufactured by the American General Atomics and which will have to be armed for the first time, for a cost of 72 million euros each.

- ▶ <https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/air-defense/0302305412644-armements-les-industriels-gagnants-du-budget-2019-2208254.php>

Jambon announces: “The police force in Zeebrugge will be reinforced”

12 Sep 2018

7 sur 7, Belgium

Interior Minister Jan Jambon has announced a new police reinforcement in the port of Zeebrugge to fight against transmigrants, also with the help of drones. “Given the proximity of the village, it is impossible to place large fences,” he said, “So we will use technology, including smart cameras Anpr and drones”.

- ▶ <https://www.7sur7.be/7s7/fr/1502/Belgique/article/detail/3474983/2018/09/12/Les-effectifs-policiers-a-Zeebrugge-vont-etre-renforces-annonce-Jambon.dhtml>

Four candidates to replace mine hunters

7 Sep 2018

Frédéric Delepierre, Le Soir, Belgium

Belgium and the Netherlands navies renew their anti-mine fleet and they moving towards gears based on the use, from the coast or mother ships, of underwater drones as well as surface drones. Drones will implement towed sonar and robots for identification and destruction of mines. These autonomous systems aim to minimize human presence in danger zones.

- ▶ <http://plus.lesoir.be/177183/article/2018-09-07/quatre-candidats-pour-remplacer-les-chasseurs-de-mines>

EU wants to promote armaments projects with 13 billion euros

20 Sep 2018

Christoph Prössl, Tagesschau, Germany

From 2021 to 2027, the EU wants to launch several projects concerning armaments. 13 billion euros will be available if the European Parliament and the Member States approve the draft. The money will be assigned without a parliamentary scrutiny by EU Commission and experts. In Germany the opposition has criticized the lack of parliamentary control, because the armaments sector is subject to inefficiency and corruption.

▶ <https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/eu-verteidigungsfonds-103.html>

Italy divided on military drones. And Piaggio Aerospace remains hanging on politics

4 Sep 2018

Corrado Fontana, Valori, Italy

In the drone business Italy has not a single strategy. On one side the government could support Piaggio Aerospace, owned by the United Arab Emirates, in developing drones, even armed drones. On the other, the Italian company Leonardo, along with France, Spain and Germany, is working on the drone Male RPAS. Finally, the Air Force has a fleet of MQ-9 US Reaper with the authorization to arm them, although the time frame is still unknown.

▶ <https://valori.it/italia-divisa-sui-droni-militari-e-piaggio-aerospace-resta-appesa-alla-politica/>

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CONCERNS ABOUT DRONES

The silence of Europe on armed drones

23 Sep 2018

Wim Zwijnenburg, VoxEurop, France

The author appeals to the European Union to take a firm position on the use of drones and respect for human rights. The recent inversions of course in the policy of US President Trump and the expansion of the use of armed drones in Europe create concern. To limit the lethal use of force we need a clear interpretation of international law and greater transparency on military operations.

▶ <https://voxeurop.eu/it/2018/difesa-e-diritti-umani-5122217>

Drones: the distress of pilots

9 Sep 2018

Eyal Press (NYT), translated and adapted by Karen Isère, Paris Match, France

The New York Times reports on the psychological stress of drone pilots. Many of them, despite the distance from the conflict, suffer from inner conflicts worse than PTSD. They are in fact constantly exposed to traumatizing images that are consequences of their decisions taken in a fraction of a second or, conversely, of their inability to act.

▶ <https://www.parismatch.com/Actu/International/Drones-la-detresse-des-pilotes-1572644>

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WHEN THE DRONE IS THE TARGET

Latakia, Syria: Syrian army shoots down spy drones

11 Sep 2018

Sputniknews, Italy

According to a source in the Syrian army, artillery shot down several spy-drones and bomb-armed drones in the east of Latakia in the past. The Jabhat an-Nusra terrorist group is allegedly using drones to carry out reconnaissance on the positions of government troops and to attack them. Violent fighting is taking place in the area: the Syrian army aims to free the province from terrorists.

► <https://it.sputniknews.com/mondo/201809116478299-Latakia-esercito-siriano-droni-spia/>

Three soldiers killed in a rebel drone strike in Latakia, Syria

3 Sep 2018

Europa press, Spain

According to Sputnik, the Russian Defense minister announced the death of three soldiers in Latakia, Syria, in a drone attack launched by rebel groups. Other nine soldiers could be gravely injured. Militants attacked Syrian Army positions from the region of Yisr al Shugur, in the province of Idlib, using five craft drones.

► <http://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-tres-militares-muertos-ataque-drones-caseros-rebeldes-latakia-siria-20180903232034.html>

The Netherlands destroy drones with lasers

21 Sep 2018

Jeroen Koot, Financieel Dagblad, The Netherlands

The Dutch Government will use lasers to shoot down drones. Spaceflight Centre NLR will be testing a laser which can take these devices out of the sky. More weapons manufactures are stepping into this game too. The target is the so-called evil drone, one that disguises as a delivery one but which might carry explosives and drop them above crowds. You do not need more than a regular plug, so in theory everyone could have a drone-fighter on their balcony.

► <https://fd.nl/futures/1270275/nederland-vernietigt-drones-met-lasers>

Ka-52 and Mi-28 helicopters will be able to control UAVs

10 Sep 2018

Sputniknews, Poland

Work is on-going in order to optimise the compatibility requirements of Russian attack helicopters and UAVs. According to local media and general manager of Vertolety Rossii (Russian Helicopters), both the Ka-52 Aligator and the Mi-28NM are about to 'learn' how to control drones. Boginski also claims that this is one of the trends in the development of attack machines.

► <https://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/201809108755040-smiglowce-bojowe-drony-unifikacja-rosja/>

Man who can take down drones from the sky

15 Sep 2018

Nikola Žbirková, Info.cz, Czech Republic

Founder of company specialized in anti-drone protection explains how the protection system used on high-security premises like government buildings, prisons or public gathering works and that it is possible to prevent drone attacks from happening. Such protection is nevertheless very expensive as it requires non-stop monitoring using special antennas capable to detect drone controls.

- ▶ <https://www.info.cz/magazin/muz-ktery-umi-sundat-dron-z-oblohy-zabranime-spionazi-i-teroristickemu-utoku-36274.html>

Drones not allowed to fly over people, but cannot be shot down

9 Sep 2018

Martin Singr, Český deník, Czech Republic

Drones are not allowed to interfere in people's privacy and pilot must always have a visual control with the drone. Violation of this rule could incur a fine up to 5 M CZK (200 000 euros). On the other hand, people are not allowed to shoot down a privacy-breaching drone even in their private premises as such act could constitute a transgression against property punishable by a jail term.

- ▶ https://www.denik.cz/z_domova/nad-lidmi-drony-letat-nesmi-zaroven-je-ale-nelze-sestrelit-20180909.html