

Armed drones on the European media

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EUROPEAN NATIONS WANT MORE DRONES

New Black Hornet nanodrones to the French soldiers

2 Jan 2019

Jean-Michel Normand, Le Monde, France

The Black Hornet 3 nanodrone is the subject of an order of 77 million euros worth. The French army is buying from the American FLIR a mini-helicopter model that measures 16 cm and weighs no more than 33 grams, in order to discreetly carry out reconnaissance missions. It is intended to equip soldiers sent to the front line. Easy to maneuver, quiet and difficult to detect, it can move away from the soldier to a distance of 1,6 kilometers. Its weak point: an autonomy that doesn't exceed twenty-five minutes.

- ▶ https://www.lemonde.fr/la-foire-du-drone/article/2019/01/29/de-nouveaux-nanodrones-black-hornet-pour-les-soldats-francais_5416216_5037916.html

France will take off its first hypersonic drone

29 Jan 2019

Florentin Franche, Geeko, Belgium

While US, China, Russia and UK are already in the running for the hypersonic arms race, France doesn't want to be left behind. So the Minister of the Armed Forces Florence Parly announced the birth of the V-Max project, a hypersonic glider briefly. It will be an autonomous glider operated remotely at very high speed and "difficult to intercept through avoidance maneuvers," said the minister. This drone would reach 6,000 km/h, a respectable speed which remains below the achievements of some Chinese and Russian equipment.

- ▶ <https://geeko.lesoir.be/2019/01/29/la-france-va-faire-decoller-le-premier-drone-hypersonique/>

Spain to join French-German next fighter jet program

24 Jan 2019

C. Lorca, La Razón, Spain

Spain is about to join France and Germany in the Future Combat Air System (FCAS) program to develop a new European fighter jet. A final agreement between the three countries is to be concluded during Paris Air Show between June 17 and 23. The aim of the FCAS is to develop a fighter jet that should have the capacity to operate with a wide range of elements connected and operating together, including "swarms" of drones, cruise missiles and existing aircraft.

- ▶ <https://www.larazon.es/espana/espana-codesarrollara-el-futuro-avion-de-combate-europeo-con-francia-y-alemania-NP21594823>

Ukraine purchased Turkish UAVs

14 Jan 2019

Juliusz Sabak, Defense 24, Poland

Baykar Makina, a privately owned Turkish drone manufacturer, sold six Bayraktar TB2 UAVs to Ukraine. The \$69 million contract was signed between Baykar Makina and Ukroboronprom (UOP). TB2 is a medium-altitude, long-range tactical UAV system. It features a monocoque design and integrates an inverse V-tail structure. Each system consists of six aerial vehicles, two ground control stations, three ground data terminals, two remote video terminals and ground-support equipment.

▶ <https://www.defence24.pl/ukraina-kupila-tureckie-bezalogowce-z-uzbrojeniem>

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THE NEW FRONT OF US-CHINA CLASH: DRONES

China: “Our UFO in flight”

8 Jan 2019

Franco Iacch, Il Giornale, Italy

China released the first video of the Sky Hawk drone. In promoting the test of the new low-observation remote control system, the Chinese state TV used the phrase “similar to a flying saucer”. Based on the few data released by the Chinese, the Sky Hawk is a high-altitude drone for long-range patrols in hostile environments. It is still a prototype.

► <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/mondo/cina-volo-nostro-ufo-1625768.html>

Denmark buys Chinese drones for the military – the US does not dare

28 Jan 2019

Rasmus Dam Nielsen, TV2, Denmark

A recent report by the Danish military shows that 25 of 29 drones bought since 2016 come from Chinese Da Jiang Innovations Science and Technology Company (DJI), a company the US military prohibits for security reasons. A report by Homeland Security warns that Chinese drones share data from mounted cameras with the Chinese government, that could be used to launch physical or cyber-attacks. The Danish opposition demands answers from the defence minister, who claims no cause for concern.

► <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2019-01-28-danmark-koeber-kinesiske-droner-til-forsvaret-usa-toer-ikke>

The Defence purchases Chinese drones despite warnings of risk to national security

29 Jan 2019

Kasper Junge Wester, Olf, Denmark

Danish military has bought 25 commercial drones from Chinese DJI, according to their own report. The US military prohibits Chinese drones due to security concerns, but Danish defence minister sees no problem, as these are only for unclassified activities; for classified activities special military drones are used. Analyst Hans Michaelsen (Cph. University) warns: commercial drones don't offer same control over data as military drones. The opposition demands clarification of “unclassified activities”.

► <https://olfi.dk/2019/01/29/danmark-koeber-droner-i-kina-trods-advarsler-om-sikkerhedsrisiko/>

The military buys numerous Chinese drones – the US prohibits them due to security concerns.

27 Jan 2019

Matias Ludvig Littauer, Berlingske, Denmark

The Danish military has purchased numerous drones produced by Chinese Da Jiang Innovations Science and Technology Company (DJI). A recent report shows that 25 of 29 drones bought since 2016 have come from DJI. Meanwhile, the American military prohibits drones from DJI due to concerns over cyber vulnerability. A military analyst explains: just as it may pose a threat to let Huawei build our telecommunications networks, there may be risks associated with using Chinese drones.

▶ <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/forsvaret-koerber-stort-ind-af-kinesiske-droner-usa-forbyder-dem-af>

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MEANWHILE, RUSSIA IS NOT WASTING TIME...

The first images of the Russian strike drone S-70 Okhotnik-B appeared on a social network

24 Jan 2019

Jan Grohmann, Armádní noviny, Czech Republic

First pictures of Russian S-70 Okhotnik-B drone leaked on VK social media website. The drone is supposed to be a first Russian drone in a UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle), i.e. a drone destined mainly to air-to-ground strikes. The drone is supposed to have similar capabilities as its current US counterparts and the program demonstrates that the Russian aviation industry is still able to keep up with competitors from the US, Europe and China.

► <https://www.armadninoviny.cz/ruskeho-bojoveho-dronu-ochotnik.html>

Russian Navy does not sleep. It is testing submarine drones to detect submarines

14 Jan 2019

Tadeáš Prouza, Eurozprávy, Czech Republic

Russian Navy is testing autonomous submarine drones that would replace submarines in detecting enemy submarines and torpedos. Currently a towed array sonars on more than a 1,6 km long cable towed by a submarine, and thus limiting its maneuverability, are used to detect enemy submarines. From now on, the drones could tow this cable. Drone submarines are being developed also by American companies Lockheed Martin and Boeing.

► <https://eurozpravy.cz/zahranicni/evropa/245931-ruske-namornictvo-nezahali-testuje-podmorske-drony-pro-odhalovani-ponorek/>

Russia tests the “carnivore” interceptor attack drone

17 Jan 2019

Artur Bartkiewicz, Rp.pl, Poland

According to the TASS agency, Russia has recently carried out flight trials of the strike drone Carnivora. Russian UAV is capable of intercepting other drones and carrying several types of fragmentation and high-explosive ammunition, as well as reconnaissance equipment. The fixed-wing drone has a 16-foot-long wingspan and top speed of over 90 miles mph. It weighs around 88 pounds and is designed to stay airborne for between 10-15 hours. The next step is the trial under battle conditions but it is not yet known when or where it will occur.

► <https://www.rp.pl/Konflikty-zbrojne/190129355-Rosja-testuje-miesozerce-drona-polujacego-na-drony.html>

Russian UCAV Okhotnik ready for test flight

28 Jan 2019

Defense24, Poland

Recently several photos on Russian military forums depicted a tailless jet-powered blended-wing-body aircraft. The unmanned combat air vehicle (UCAV) “Okhotnik” (Hunter) designed by Sukhoi (aircraft manufacturer) has been developed for years. The vehicle can be used as a smart wingman to the Su-57 fighter and hit targets designated by the pilot in an automatic mode upon receiving authorization to attack. Experts in the field point out its close resemblance to the USA’s North Grumman X-47B and China’s AVIC 601-S Sharp Sword.

- ▶ <https://www.defence24.pl/rosja-bezzalogowiec-w-ukladzie-latajacego-skrzydla-przed-pierwszym-lotem>

This Is Russia’s First Autonomous Strike Drone

24 Jan 2019

Franco Iacch, Il Giornale, Italy

Images of what appears to be a new unmanned strike drone have emerged from Russia. The aircraft is believed to be the Sukhoi “Okhotnik” (“Hunter”) heavy strike drone, under development since 2011. Okhotnik is designed to strike targets on the ground in support of manned aircraft, destroying air defenses and headquarters units.

- ▶ <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/mondo/russia-svelata-immagine-drone-sesta-generazione-1633750.html>

The Russia’s super secret giant drone Okhotnik-B

28 Jan 2019

Stern, Germany

The first high-resolution photos of the Russian armed drone called Okhotnik-B.

- ▶ <https://www.stern.de/digital/technik/okhotnik-b--das-ist-russlands-supergeheim-riesendrohne-8552826.html>

Are China, Russia winning the AI arms race?

15 Jan 2019

Peter Apps, Reuters, United Kingdom

Artificial intelligence products and systems will contribute up to \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, with China and the United States likely the two leading nations. But it is the potential military consequences that have governments most worried, fearful of falling behind – but also nervous that untested technology could bring new dangers. Russia said it would publish a new AI national strategy “roadmap” by mid-2019. As the world’s most powerful autocratic states, Russia and China have that capability and intent, both to use AI to maintain government dominance at home and beat enemies beyond.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-apps-ai-commentary/commentary-are-china-russia-winning-the-ai-arms-race-idUSKCN1P91NM>

...AND THE US RESPOND

US laser mounted drones to fight rockets. Trump is about to respond to the technological advances of Russia, China and Iran

17 Jan 2019

Ondřej Soukup, Hospodářské noviny, Czech Republic

US President Donald Trump has presented a new anti-missile defense strategy. As US adversaries have made a significant technological leap in recent years and are able to threaten US soil with missiles that the current American anti-missile system is not able to deal with, a possibility of using suborbital drones carrying laser weaponry shall be examined. As such powerful lasers do not exist yet, F-35 jets would most probably be used as the “missile killers”.

- ▶ <https://archiv.ihned.cz/c1-66435930-americke-drony-s-lasery-budou-chranit-pred-raketami-trump-se-chysta-odpovedet-na-technologicky-pokrok-ruska-ciny-ci-iranu>

FLIR Systems wins \$39.6 million nano drone order from U.S. Army

24 Jan 2019

Reuters, United Kingdom

U.S. defense contractor FLIR Systems Inc said it had got a \$39.6 million order for delivering nano drones to the U.S. Army. The tiny surveillance drones, over six inches in length and with a flight time of up to 25 minutes, can be deployed by soldiers on the ground to identify threats beyond the line of sight, helping minimize collateral damage.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-usa-shanahan/acting-pentagon-chief-supports-kabul-role-in-peace-talks-idUSKCN1Q007E>

United States: Trump’s new missile defense strategy targets Tehran and Pyongyang

17 Jan 2019

Le Temps, Switzerland

Donald Trump presented his new missile defense strategy create to counter the threat of cruise missiles from Iran and North Korea. Among the new weapons there is also an interception system in the space: a new type of drone equipped with missiles could remain in orbit permanently to destroy hostile hypersonic missiles.

- ▶ <https://www.letemps.ch/etats-unis-nouvelle-strategie-antimissile-trump-vise-teheran-pyongyang>

The great game of military bases in Africa

15 Jan 2019

Manlio Dinucci, Il Manifesto, Italy

The state of Djibouti, in East Africa, represent a cardinal outpost for Nato and Us troops in the region. The United States established their military base in Camp Lemonnier in 2011. Today the Us Task Force is composed of 4,000 specialists in top secret missions, including targeted assassinations by commandos or killer drones, particularly in Yemen and Somalia.

► <https://ilmanifesto.it/il-grande-gioco-delle-basi-in-africa/>

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A DANGEROUS FUTURE

The future of war: no human being in the battlefield

15 Jan 2019

Pablo Pardo, El Mundo, Spain

According to Paul Scharre, author of “Army of None: Autonomous Weapons and the Future of War”, in the not-so-distant future war will be waged by autonomous machines (like flamethrower drones and surveillance drones) they will cut off human judgement from the military equation. Scharre warns that the neural networks used in machine learning are intrinsically vulnerable to spoofing.

▶ <https://www.elmundo.es/papel/futuro/2019/01/25/5c49e69c21efa013618b463c.html>

Thankfully, the technology to combat rogue drones is getting better

24 Jan 2019

The Economist, United Kingdom

Drones are being used to smuggle goods across borders, drugs into prisons, to attack military bases with explosives and in assassination attempts, like that which took place last August on Nicolás Maduro, the president of Venezuela. Because of this, authorities in the US and the UK are increasingly worried about drones, and they are putting a lot of efforts in developing new defensive technologies, like clever jamming techniques and improved radar.

▶ <https://www.economist.com/science-and-technology/2019/01/24/thankfully-the-technology-to-combat-rogue-drones-is-getting-better>

Red Cross sounds alarm over use of ‘killer robots’ in future wars

22 Jan 2019

Nita Bhalla, Reuters, United Kingdom

With rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, there are fears among humanitarians over its use to develop machines which can independently make the decision about who to kill. Yves Daccord, director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said this would be a critical issue in the coming years as it raised ethical questions on delegating lethal decisions to machines and accountability.

▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-war-rights/red-cross-sounds-alarm-over-use-of-killer-robots-in-future-wars-idUSKCN1PGoAK>

THE CENTRAL ROLE OF DRONES IN YEMEN

Houthi drones kill several at Yemeni military parade

10 Jan 2019

Reuters, United Kingdom

Drones belonging to the Iranian-aligned Houthi movement attacked a Yemeni government military parade in the southern province of Lahaj, killing several people. The attack comes as the United Nations tries to get peace talks going between the Houthis who control northern Yemen and the Saudi-backed government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi by overseeing a limited ceasefire in the Red Sea port city of Hodeidah.

▶ <http://news.trust.org/item/20190110161602-sjaiw/>

Yemeni rebels say they will increase the use of lethal drones

14 Jan 2019

Luís M. Faria, Expresso, Portugal

Days after a drone killed six people in Lajah, the Houthi rebels, who for years have maintained an insurgency against the official government and control a large part of the country, have stated their intend to continue to use these type of weapons. A rebels spokesman promised that soon they will be able to launch more than one drone operation on multiple fronts at the same time.

▶ <https://expresso.sapo.pt/internacional/2019-01-14-Rebeldes-do-Iemen-dizem-que-vao-aumentar-o-uso-de-drones-letais#gs.TG2eptnc>