

Armed drones on the European media

Table of contents

2 DRONES CAUSE NEW TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Saudi Arabia oil facilities hit by drone strikes

Trump says US response to oil attack depends on Saudi Arabia's assessment

Costly Saudi defences prove no match for drones

Drones, sanctions, contamination: supply surprises leave oil unfazed

Why Saudi attacks changed the calculations on regional security

United States: The missiles against Saudi Arabia have been launched from Iranian territory

US troops sent to Saudi Arabia after attack

Missiles or drones: what kind of weapons were used to attack Saudi Arabia?

Who helped Yemen's rebels attack the Saudis?

Attack on Saudi-Arabian oil infrastructure: "A deterrence mechanism"

Middle East: Turkey pull down a drone at the Syrian border

How tension between Hezbollah and Israel could lead to another war

Hezbollah says it shot down 'Israeli drone' at Lebanon border

A rare window for diplomacy opened. It is now shut. Instead, the door is ajar for war

6

DRONES ARE KILLING ELSEWHERE TOO

U.S. drone kills 30 farm workers in Afghanistan

Letter detailing civilian presence failed to prevent deadly Afghan drone strike

Terrorism: 20 death in Afghanistan

The drone war nobody is talking about

7

A NEW KIND OF (SCARY) WAR

Drones and the end of fast jet air supremacy

Killer robots could cause mass atrocities

Saudi oil attack and the Middle East's drone war

How drones changed war

Dehumanized war

Drones: threatening weapons of war

10 drones avoid outdated defence systems

Drone fighter from Northern Jutland impresses American Defence

Hobby: Terror weapons

Noone can protect themselves against a major drone attack

Interview to a Yemen's rebel leader: did you really develop a drone without help?

10 THE DRONE RACE IN EUROPE

Belarus completes work on combat drones

Saudi oil infrastructure attacked by a type of drone manufactured in the Czech Republic

Czech company denies involvement of its components in the attack on Saudi Arabia

Europe buys Chinese drones, even if US expresses data concerns

Belgian army drones ensure the safety of the North Sea

French army will use armed drones in the Sahel

NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group trains shooting, self-defence and mine clearance

Serbia purchases chinese combat drones

Has a Danish network supplied IS with drones? A USB key is the central piece of evidence

Turkish President sign an edict granting additional funds for the development of Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles

14 DRONES ARE POLITICAL WEAPONS

China and Iran presented in Russia their tactical kamikaze drones

DJI drone maker caught in US-China trade war

Welcome to Iran's International aerospace exhibition

DRONES CAUSE NEW TENSIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Major Saudi Arabia oil facilities hit by Houthi drone strikes

14 Sept 2019

The Guardian, Uk

Houthi rebels have claimed responsibility for a drone attack on the world's largest oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia which is vital to global energy supplies. The attacks on the processor and a major oilfield, operated by Saudi Aramco sparked a huge fire, the kingdom's interior ministry said.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/14/major-saudi-arabia-oil-facilities-hit-by-drone-strikes>

Trump says US response to oil attack depends on Saudi Arabia's assessment

17 Sept 2019

Julian Borger, The Guardian, Uk

Donald Trump has said the US response to the drone attack on Saudi oil facilities will depend on the assessment in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, and downplayed US dependence on Middle East energy supplies. The US secretaries of state and energy both explicitly blamed Iran for the attack. But Trump suggested the US did not have definitive evidence, adding that he would send the secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, to Riyadh to investigate.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/16/iran-trump-saudi-arabia-oil-attack-assessment-latest>

Costly Saudi defences prove no match for drones

17 Sept 2019

Stephen Kalin and Sylvia Westall, Reuters, Uk

Billions of dollars spent by Saudi Arabia on cutting edge Western military hardware mainly designed to deter high altitude attacks has proved no match for low-cost drones in a strike that crippled its giant oil industry. The assault on Saudi oil facilities that halved production has exposed how ill-prepared the Gulf state is to defend itself

- ▶ <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-saudi-aramco-security/costly-saudi-defences-prove-no-match-for-drones-cruise-missiles-idUKKBN1W22FL>

Drones, sanctions, contamination: supply surprises leave oil unfazed

26 Sept 2019

Ahmad Ghaddar and Noah Browning, Reuters, Uk

Drone attacks crippled Saudi Aramco's oil plants, U.S. oil sanctions knocked out exports from Iran and Venezuela, and massive contamination tainted Russian oil flows. Yet, instead of sky-high prices, the market has been kept in check by a flood of oil from the U.S. fracking boom and worries about a global recession weighing on the demand outlook.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-oil-prices-graphic/drones-sanctions-contamination-supply-surprises-leave-oil-unfazed-idUSKBN1WB1SJ>

Why Saudi attacks changed the calculations on regional security

20 Sept 2019

Andrew England, Ahmed Al Omran, Najmeh Bozorgmehr and Demetri Sevastopulo, Financial Times, Uk

The co-ordinated assaults in Saudi Arabia's oil-rich Eastern Province caused the worst disruption to the kingdom's oil industry in Aramco's 86-year history, knocking out half of its daily oil production, equivalent to 5 per cent of global supply. More importantly, this attack could change the entire political order in the region, with the risk of an open conflict between Iran and the United States and new tensions between Washington and its European allies.

- ▶ <https://www.ft.com/content/39606f64-db8a-11e9-8f9b-77216ebe1f17>

United States: The missiles against Saudi Arabia have been launched from Iranian territory

17 Sept 2019

Le Soir, Belgium

According to the United States, the attack against Saudi Arabia was conducted from the ground with Iranian cruise missiles. Although the attack was claimed by pro-Iranian Houthi rebels who regularly fire ballistic missiles from Yemen to Saudi Arabia, the US intelligence services claim that they have elements for locating the origin of the shots. The US administration is preparing a dossier to prove its claims and convince the international community, especially the Europeans.

- ▶ <https://plus.lesoir.be/248126/article/2019-09-17/les-missiles-contre-larabie-saoudite-ont-ete-lances-depuis-le-sol-iranien?referer=%2Farchives%2Fcherche%3Fdatefilter%3Dlast6month%26sort%3Ddate%2Bdesc%26start%3D20%26word%3DDrones%E2%80%9D>

US troops sent to Saudi Arabia following drone attacks

21 Sept 2019

Volkskrant, Netherlands

The US is sending troops as well as missile defense systems to Saudi Arabia to improve their air defences. President Donald Trump has taken this course following the drone attacks on Saudi oil installations on Saturday. How many troops are being sent is still unclear.

- ▶ <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/amerikaanse-troepen-naar-saoedi-arabie-na-drone-aanval-bd93a2d1/>

Missiles or drones: what kind of weapons were used to attack Saudi Arabia?

16 Sept 2019

Alexis Feertchak, Le Figaro, France

Two oil station owned by Aramco have been attacked, but many gray areas remain. Pointing to the difficulty of intercepting some type of drones, Frédéric Coste, a researcher at the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS), answers the questions of Le Figaro.

- ▶ <https://www.lefigaro.fr/international/missiles-drones-quelles-armes-ont-ete-utilisees-pour-attaquer-l-arabie-saoudite-20190916>

Who helped Yemen's rebels attack the oil of the Saudis?

16 Sept 2019

Susanne Koelbl e Mohammed al-Kibsi, Der Spiegel, Germany

After the attack on the world's largest oil refinery in Saudi Arabia, the conflict between the US and Iran threatens to escalate. What's behind the attack - and what role do Yemen's rebels play?

- ▶ <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/eskalation-am-golf-wer-half-jemens-rebellen-beim-angriff-auf-das-oel-der-saudis-a-1286971.html>

Attack on Saudi-Arabian oil infrastructure: "A deterrence mechanism"

14 Sept 2019

Lars Lindevall, DR, Denmark

The drone attack on two Saudi oil facilities on Saturday was a revenge action after Saudi attacks in Yemen, says Middle East expert Søren Schmidt from Aalborg University. The attack is part of the civil war in Yemen, and is, according to Schmidt, a deterrent mechanism "if you hurt me, I hurt you"; in the absence of diplomatic tools, that is how international politics works.

- ▶ <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/udland/angreb-paa-saudiarabiske-olieranlaeg-en-afskraekkelses-mekanisme>

CONTINUA>>

Middle East: Turkey pull down a drone at the Syrian border

29 Sept 2019

Le Matin, Switzerland

Turkish aviation has shot down an unidentified UAV that violated its airspace six times on the Syrian border, the Turkish Ministry of Defense said. The ministry said that the origin of the drone remained unknown.

▶ <https://www.lematin.ch/monde/turquie-abat-drone-frontiere-syrienne/story/27606567>

How tension between Hezbollah and Israel could lead to another war

9 Sept 2019

Ferruccio Michelin, Formiche, Italy

A widening campaign by Israel to blunt the threat posed by Iran's ally Hezbollah, and the pushback from beyond Israel's borders, are raising the risk that the two sides will stumble into another war. Israel uses drones and other means of surveillance and intelligence collection to monitor Hezbollah's activities

▶ <https://formiche.net/2019/09/hezbollah-libano-israele-iran/>

Hezbollah says it shot down 'Israeli drone' at Lebanon border

9 Sept 2019

El País, Spain

Hezbollah said that it had downed an "Israeli drone" as it flew over the border with Lebanon. The Islamist militant movement said that the unmanned aircraft was now in the hands of its fighters.

▶ https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/09/09/actualidad/1568016147_452962.html

A rare window for diplomacy opened. It is now shut. Instead, the door is ajar for war

16 Sept 2019

Carolina Kamil, Berlingske, Denmark

5% of global oil supply has been put out of action and oil prices have risen. But the weekend's drone attack not impacts private economies. It can threaten peace in the Middle East. When 10 drones hit the heart of Saudi-Arabia's oil empire, half of the country's oil production was affected, sending oil prices soaring.

▶ <https://www.berlingske.dk/internationalt/analyse-i-sidste-uge-aabnede-et-sjaeldent-vindue-for-diplomati.-det>

DRONES ARE KILLING ELSEWHERE TOO

U.S. drone strike kills 30 pine nut farm workers in Afghanistan

19 Sept 2019

Ahmad Sultan and Abdul Qadir Sediqi, Reuters, Uk

A U.S. drone strike intended to hit an Islamic State (IS) hideout in Afghanistan killed at least 30 civilians resting after a day's labor in the fields. The attack injured 40 people after accidentally targeting farmers and laborers who had just finished collecting pine nuts at mountainous Wazir Tangi in eastern Nangarhar province.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-attack-drones/u-s-drone-strike-kills-30-pine-nut-farm-workers-in-afghanistan-idUSKBN1W40NW>

Letter detailing civilian presence failed to prevent deadly Afghan drone strike

19 Sept 2019

Ahmad Sultan and Abdul Qadir Sediqi, Reuters, Uk

Twelve days ahead of the pine-nut harvest season, the governor of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province received a letter from village elders in the Wazir Tangi area about their plans to recruit 200 laborers and children to pluck the dry fruit. The letter was sent in an effort to help protect laborers from getting caught in clashes between U.S.-backed Afghan forces and Islamic State fighters.

- ▶ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-attack-drones-letter/letter-detailing-civilian-presence-failed-to-prevent-deadly-afghan-drone-strike-idUSKBN1W431P>

Terrorism: 20 death in Afghanistan

19 Sept 2019

Le Matin, Switzerland

A car bomb attack claimed by the Taliban in southern Afghanistan left 20 dead and 90 wounded. A drone attack killed 9 people. The drone strike "was supposed to target Daesh fighters, but hit civilians by mistake," a police spokesman said. The Afghan Ministry of Defense declined to comment the information.

- ▶ <https://www.lematin.ch/monde/afghanistan-10-morts-attentat/story/30119695>

The drone war nobody is talking about

21 Sept 2019

Riccardo Noury, Corriere della Sera

In an effort to fight the islamist organization Al Shabab, the US are intensifying their strikes in Somalia. According to news reports and humanitarian organization, the increase in lethal operations in Somalia will lead to an increase in unlawful killings and in civilian casualties.

- ▶ <http://lepersoneeladignita.corriere.it/2019/09/21/somalia-la-guerra-dei-droni-usa-che-non-fa-notizia/>

A NEW KIND OF (SCARY) WAR

Middle East drones signal end to era of fast jet air supremacy

16 Sept 2019

Martin Chulov, The Guardian, Uk

In the history of modern warfare, “own the skies, win the war” has been a constant maxim. Countries with the best technology and biggest budgets have devoted tens of billions to building modern air forces, confident they will continue to give their militaries primacy in almost any conflict. Tiny, cheap, unmanned aircraft have changed that, especially over the battlefields of the Middle East.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/16/middle-east-drones-signal-end-to-era-of-fast-jet-air-supremacy>

Ex-Google worker fears ‘killer robots’ could cause mass atrocities

15 Sept 2019

Henry McDonald, The Guardian, Uk

A new generation of autonomous weapons or “killer robots” could accidentally start a war or cause mass atrocities, a former top Google software engineer has warned. Laura Nolan, who resigned from Google last year in protest at being sent to work on a project to dramatically enhance US military drone technology, has called for all AI killing machines not operated by humans to be banned.

- ▶ <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2019/sep/15/ex-google-worker-fears-killer-robots-cause-mass-atrocities>

Saudi oil attack highlights Middle East’s drone war

17 Sept 2019

Helen Warrell, Andrew England and Ahmed Al Omran, Financial Times, Uk

Long before the attack on Saudi Arabia’s oil facilities that knocked out half of its oil production, the kingdom knew it was vulnerable to assault from armed drones. Houthi rebels in neighbouring Yemen have often used this new type of aerial weapon, alongside missiles, to target Saudi airports, desalination plants and crude facilities in the past 18 months. The rising threat has prompted numerous Saudi agencies to scout the US and Europe for adequate defence systems, said one defence industry executive.

- ▶ <https://www.ft.com/content/f2a73b40-d920-11e9-8f9b-77216ebee1f17>

How drones changed war

24 Sept 2019

Pablo Pardo, El Mundo

Armed groups like Isis and Hezbollah are increasingly using drones to attack regular armies. The United States are trying to maintain their advantage in the armed drones market while China and Russia are trying to steal that lead. As a result, some region, in particular the Middle East, are crowded with drones, and this new weapons are changing war and foreign politics.

▶ <https://www.elmundo.es/internacional/2019/09/22/5d84f60121efa097208b4672.html>

Dehumanized war

19 Sept 2019

Tica Font, Público, Spain

The attack against oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, carried by drones probably operated by Iran, is an additional demonstration of how technology has changed conflict and war, which are now dehumanized.

▶ <https://blogs.publico.es/cronicas-insumisas/2019/09/19/drones-atacan-una-refineria-guerra-deshumanizada/>

Drones: threatening weapons of war

16 Sept 2019

France Info, France

Drones are spreading panic around the world. Bought on the internet for a few hundred euros to be transformed into weapons, or made from scratch with products available on the market, these unmanned drones are changing the war and are the new face of the terrorist threat.

▶ https://www.francetvinfo.fr/monde/proche-orient/offensive-jihadiste-en-irak/drones-des-armes-de-guerre-menacantes_3619365.html

10 drones avoid outdated defence systems

16 Sept 2019

Laurids Hovgaard, Ingeniøren, Denmark

10 drones hit the world's largest oil plant and the Khurai oilfield in Saudi-Arabia, showing how vulnerable critical infrastructure is to attacks by even small drones. Saudi oil production decreased by half, and global oil supply by 6%. According to danish tech firm MyDefence, contemporary defence systems are not able to deal with the threat of drones.

▶ <https://ing.dk/artikel/10-droner-omgaar-foraeldede-forsvarssystemer-228799>

Drone fighter from Northern Jutland impresses American Defence

6 Sept 2019

Andreas Lindqvist, Ingeniøren, Denmark

Danish IT firm MyDefence impressed at stopping UAV's at a military exercise in New Mexico, and landed an innovation contract from Pentagon. The firm now receives direct financial support from the US Ministry of Defence to further develop its anti-drone technology. As 1 of 6 firms taking part in the Black Dart exercise in June, MyDefence received an OTA contract from the Defence Innovation Unit.

▶ <https://ing.dk/artikel/nordjysk-dronebekaemper-imponerer-amerikansk-forsvar-228539>

Hobby: Terror weapons

17 Sept 2019

Poul-Henning Kamp, Ingeniøren Version 2, Denmark

The drones that attacked oil facilities in Saudi Arabia were largely highschool projects, not very technologically advanced. The critical technology was image recognition, and it appears to have been pretty basic. The article proceeds to discuss technological trends for weapons, the decreasing size of drones used for terror attacks, and the unlikelihood of building a capable defence system.

▶ <https://www.version2.dk/blog/hobby-terrorvaaben-1088963>

Noone can protect themselves against a major drone attack

21 Sept 2019

24Nyt, Denmark

Use of military drones has risen exponentially in the past 15 years. The US is leading with over 10 times as many drone attacks in Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen during Obama's presidency compared to George Bush's. That trend will continue. The problem is that even the strongest military powers such as the US struggle with defence against coordinated drone attacks such as that seen in Saudi Arabia.

▶ <https://24nyt.dk/ingen-kan-forsvare-sig-mod-et-massivt-droneangreb/>

Interview to a Yemen's rebel leader: did you really develop a drone without help?

20 Sept 2019

Mohammed al-Kibsi, Der Spiegel, Germany

The head of the so-called Houthi Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, is the number two behind the Yemeni rebel leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi. The Houthi militia is engaged in a war against government troops supported by Saudi Arabia. Mohammed Ali al-Houthi talks about the attack on the oil station and says that now they have "new goals".

▶ <https://www.spiegel.de/plus/jemens-rebellenfuehrer-mohammed-ali-al-houthi-im-interview-a-00000000-0002-0001-0000-000166040395>

THE DRONE RACE IN EUROPE

Belarus completes work on combat drones

24 Sept 2019

Sputnik, Poland

Roman Golovchenko, a representative of the Belarusian State Military and Industrial Committee, said that Belarussian combat UAVs have been brought to the required state. Drones are flying RPGs dropping fragmentation grenades. Training and preparations of combat units are underway.

- ▶ <https://pl.sputniknews.com/swiat/2019092411096998-bialorus-konczy-prace-nad-dronami-bojowymi/#comments>

Saudi oil infrastructure attacked by a type of drone manufactured in the Czech Republic

17 Sept 2019

Anita Baselová, SeznamZprávy, Czech Republic

According to Ladislav Semetkovský, CEO of a Czech UAV manufacturer Primoco, Saudi oil infrastructure was attacked by a drone similar to the one produced by his company. Made of composite materials, and thus hardly detectable by radars, these civilian drones can fly 1500 km with a 10-hour battery life and can carry up to 30 kilograms. They present a new type of danger as radar technology is not ready for attacks coming from a flight level of 100-200 meters.

- ▶ <https://www.seznamzpravy.cz/clanek/drony-jako-novy-nastroj-teroristu-nejsou-videt-na-radaru-a-unesou-i-tuny-vybusniny-79033>

Czech company denies involvement of its components in the attack on Saudi Arabia

19 Sept 2019

iDnes, Czech Republic

Czech engineering company PBS Velká Bíteš denies any involvement of its components in the attack on Saudi oil infrastructure after AP news agency informed that the drone sent by Yemeni Houthi rebels contained the engine PBS TJ100 manufactured by the Czech company.

- ▶ https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/motor-dron-velka-bites-saudska-arabie-iran-cesko.A190919_163439_zahranicni_remy

Europe buys Chinese drones, even if US expresses data concerns

8 Sept 2019

Saim Saeed, Politico, Belgium

In an era of paranoia over data security in which military officers and public officials warn of the reams of sensitive data collected by drones, European governments and militaries are increasingly looking to China, and its premier drone manufacturer DJI, for their needs. The company insists it has access to “essentially none” of the data its drones produce, but the value of data being generated coupled with a potential lack of protection from data regulations could make drones a prime target for cyberattacks.

- ▶ <https://www.politico.eu/article/europe-buys-chinese-drones-even-as-us-expresses-data-concerns/>

Belgian army drones ensure the safety of the North Sea

7 Sept 2019

Le Soir, Belgium

The B-Hunters drones of the Florennes’ squadron are tracking polluting boats and all kinds of traffic over the North Sea. The squadron used them also in Congo, Bosnia, Corsica and Portugal. But soon, these drones will be replaced by devices that will make Belgium a pioneer.

- ▶ <https://plus.lesoir.be/246168/article/2019-09-07/les-drones-de-larmee-veillent-sur-la-sante-et-la-securite-de-la-mer-du-nord?referer=%2Farchives%2Fcherche%3Fdatefilter%3Dlast6month%26sort%3Ddate%2Bdesc%26start%3D40%26word%3DDrones>

The French army will use armed drones in the Sahel

19 Sept 2019

Deutsche Welle, Germany

Until now, French drones had led intelligence and surveillance missions over the Sahel in order to find terrorists. But in a few weeks, the operation Barkhane drones will be equipped with bombs. A little more than five years after its start, the operation is at a turning point.

- ▶ <https://www.dw.com/fr/larm%C3%A9e-fran%C3%A7aise-va-utiliser-des-drones-arm%C3%A9s-dans-le-sahel/a-50469811>

Mission update no. 36 2019: Northern Coasts is in full swing. NATO's Mine Countermeasures Group trains shooting, self-defence and mine clearance

11 Sept 2019

The Danish Military News (Forsvarskommandoen), Denmark

NATO's mine clearance unit is taking part in the Northern Coasts exercise. At the shooting range north of Sjællands Odde, they trained with all weapon systems, shooting at sea-surface and air targets in the form of drones. Last week, they were in Copenhagen with the Danish mine clearance unit, who are active with two drones on the ship Thetis, responsible for protecting smaller deminers.

► <https://www2.forsvaret.dk/nyheder/intops/Pages/MissionUpdatenr362019.aspx>

Serbia purchases chinese combat drones

18 Sept 2019

Marek Trojan, Kresy, Poland

According to Stripes.com, Serbia will receive 9 Pterodactyl-1 UAVs within the next 6 months and may order 15 more. This is the largest export of Chinese military equipment to Europe in recent decades.

Pterodactyl-1 (also called Wing Loong) is very similar to American MQ-1 Predator or MQ-9 Reaper. It can scout, track targets day and night, and attack them with laser guided bombs and rockets.

► <https://kresy.pl/wydarzenia/serbia-kupuje-chinskie-drony-bojowe/>

Has a Danish network supplied IS with drones? A USB key is the central piece of evidence

16 Sept 2019

Kaare Kronberg Jensen, Jyllands Posten, Denmark

[subscription only; can't access full article] An attack against Lars Hedegaard in 2013 and the discovery of a USB key in the ensuing investigation became the beginning of what has become known as the drone case.

► <https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/indland/ECE11620431/har-et-dansk-netvaerk-forsynet-is-med-droner-et-usbstik-staar-som-centralt-bevis/>

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has signed an edict granting additional funds for the development of Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles

10 Sept 2019

Defence 24, Poland

This is to make Turkey UAVs self-reliant and enable their export. The sum of allocated funds - 600 million lira will be used for further development of two systems: Baykar Bayraktar TB2 and Akinci. TB2 max. altitude - 7,200 m, Akinci - 12,000 m. Both can stay in the air 24 hours. Akinci, developed with Ukraine, is larger - 2 turbo engines, 20 meters wingspan, 12 m hull length; TB2 - 12m, 6.5 m.

► <https://www.defence24.pl/turcja-panstwowe-dotacje-wspieraja-rozwoj-dronow>

DRONES ARE POLITICAL WEAPONS

China and Iran presented in Russia their tactical kamikaze drones

5 Sept 2019

Petr Vašíček, Cdr, Czech Republic

Chinese and Iranian manufacturers presented their latest tactical drones at Russian Aircraft Exhibition MAKS 2019. The Chinese LJ-1 tactical stealth UAV is to become a robotic wingman escorting fighter jets. The Iranian Mobin drone is able to perform terrain contour matching at low-altitudes and can be used in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations or as an attack kamikaze drone and as such might be considered as a missile.

▶ <https://cdr.cz/clanek/cina-iran-predstavili-v-rusku-sve-takticke-kamikaze-drony>

DJI drone maker caught in US-China trade war

26 Sept 2019

Anaïs Moutot, Les Echos, France

Several US politicians accuse DJI of transferring sensitive information to China as government agencies increasingly use its services. In an attempt to avoid Huawei's fate, the number one quadcopter counterattack by improving the control of its customers on their data.

▶ <https://www.lesechos.fr/tech-medias/hightech/le-fabricant-de-drones-dji-pris-dans-la-guerre-commerciale-entre-les-etats-unis-et-la-chine-1135009>

Welcome to Iran's International aerospace exhibition

26 Sept 2019

Rainer Hermann, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany

For the first time, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards air force expose in Teheran twelve captured drones, that were shot down or forced to land in the recent years. Ten of them are US-made drones, one is from UK and one from Israel. "The message is clear," says an officer of the Air Force: to show that the country is able to shoot down drones invading its airspace without a permit. The Islamic Republic is determined to defend itself.

▶ <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/was-iran-mit-der-ausstellung-von-drohnen-signalisieren-will-16402695.html>

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