

Armed drones in the European media

December 2020

Sources:

Biznes, Poland
Defence 24, Poland
Die Zeit, Germany
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany
Le Monde, France
Les Echos, France
Libération, France
Politico, Belgium
Reuters, Uk
Technet, Czech Republic
The Guardian, Uk
VTM, Czech Republic

The drone cold war

U.S. sanctions target Turkish defence body

14 Dec 2020

Reuters, Uk

The United States has imposed sanctions on Turkey for purchasing Russian defence systems, targeting Turkey's top defence procurement and development body Presidency of Defence Industries (SSB). The SSB is a shareholder in companies including SSTEK, a holding company for stakes in emerging defence companies, including a jet engine developer and aircraft contractor TUSAS. TUSAS produces fuselage parts for F-35 fighter jets, attack helicopters and drones as well as aircraft components for Boeing and Airbus.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-turkey-sanctions-ssb/fac-tbox-u-s-sanctions-target-turkish-defence-body-idUSKBN28O2XP>

2020 turned out to be a great year for Chinese drones

27 Dec 2020

Jacek Raubo, Defence 24, Poland

At the end of November 2020, the Chinese company NORINCO (North Industries Group Corporation Limited) notified the export of crewless helicopters to an unknown foreign recipient. The CR500 Golden eagle drones are to be an alternative to similar Western weapons. This dual-rotor helicopter has been designed to undertake intelligence missions, battlefield reconnaissance and fighting action. They also can be used for transportations purposes.

<https://www.defence24.pl/koniec-dobrego-roku-dla-chinskiich-dronow>

Russia's loitering munition : battle-tested in Syria

7 Dec 2020

Juliusz Sabak, Defence 24, Poland

Kalashnikov drones have been battle-tested during the conflict in Syria. Russia's armed forces uses two types of unmanned combat aerial system produced by ZALA company (belonging to the Kalashnikov Concern): kamikaze drones to take out targets on land, in the air and/or in water (such as ZALA Lancet and ZALA Kub) and reconnaissance drones (such as ZALA 421). Their systems are very similar to the bsl Orbiter drone well known in Poland.

<https://www.defence24.pl/rosjanie-z-amunicja-krazaca-kalaszniakowa-sprawdzona-w-syrii>

The Uk wants more drones...

UK wants new drones in wake of Azerbaijan military success

29 dec 2020

Dan Sabbagh, The Guardian, Uk

The UK's military is expected to embark on a new armed drone

programme in response to Azerbaijan's controversial use of the technology in its victory over Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Defence officials believe that Azerbaijan's use of cheaper Turkish drones in the six-week autumn war was crucial in defeating the Armenians, and forcing them to cede control of territory in the disputed Caucasus region.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/29/uk-defence-secretary-hails-azerbaijans-use-of-drones-in-conflict>

British military drone crashes during Cyprus training flight

26 dec 2020

Jamie Doward, The Guardian, Uk

A UK military drone, of the type now being used to monitor the Channel for migrant crossings, crashed during a practice in Cyprus in October, the Observer has learned. The £1bn Watchkeeper drone programme has been plagued with problems during its development. Between 2014 and 2018 there have been at least five recorded crashes, and there are claims the drone is unable to fly in poor weather conditions.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/26/british-military-drone-crashes-during-cyprus-training-flight>

UK army buys 30 'Bug' drones that can spy on targets 2km away

28 dec 2020

Jasper Jolly, The Guardian, Uk

The British army has bought 30 "nano 'Bug' drones" for soldiers to spy on targets up to 2km (1.25 miles) away, in the latest step in the military use of controversial unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The drones are small enough to be held in the palm of one hand, and weigh 196g, about the same as a large smartphone.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/28/uk-army-buys-30-bug-drones-that-can-spy-on-targets-2km-away>

...while Germany is not so sure

Bundeswehr quit another drone project

26 Dec 2020

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Germany

In order to achieve modern air-to-ground reconnaissance, German armed forces have long dreamed of high-flying IMINT drones for optical reconnaissance (IMINT stands for IMagery INTelligence). For this purpose, the armed forces have planned for years the purchase of up to four of the largest class HALE drones, that are based on the American Global Hawk system. Now, the federal government has abandoned those plans.

<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/steigende-kosten-bundeswehr-gibt-weiteres-drohnen-projekt-auf-17118871.html>

Should Germany buy armed drones?

17 Dec 2020

Susan Djahangard, Die Zeit, Germany

(Podcast) German politicians argue about the purchase of armed drones. Heron TP drones have already been leased in Israel and now they are wondering if these drones should be armed. Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer (CDU) and the Union parliamentary group spoke out in favor. The situation is different with the SPD because the leadership is against the purchase. The armaments expert Hauke Friederichs explains what this dispute is about and the consequences for the grand coalition.

<https://www.zeit.de/politik/2020-12/drohnenstreit-union-spd-nachrichtenpodcast>

German SPD under attack after shooting down armed drones

18 Dec 2020

Politico, Belgium

A decision by SPD to withhold support for armed military drones triggered a vicious battle within Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition. Amid accusations, the center-left

party had made a cynical calculation to sacrifice the lives of German troops for political gain.

<https://www.politico.eu/article/spds-withholds-support-armed-drones-german-defense-minister-annegret-kramp-karrenbauer-annoyed/>

A dangerous future

A new type of warfare is knocking at the door

28 Dec 2020

Maciej Milosz, Biznes, Poland

The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan showed us the significant role of drones in technological warfare. “Armoured vehicles were useless under the attacks of combat drones”, says Piotr Wojciechowski, chairman and main shareholder of the WB Group (Poland). Loitering munition is silent and difficult to detect and to destroy. Drones can carry as much explosive as rockets but are much safer for the outsiders since they aim for a specific goal.

<https://biznes.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/8054768,piotr-wojciechowski-grupa-wb-uzbrojenie-sprzet-wojskowy.html>

Skyborg robotic combat drones to use AI

13 Dec 2020

Jan Grohmann, Technet, Czech Republic

US Air Force Research Laboratory is developing a Skyborg multi-platform solution designed for future generations of robotic loyal-wingmen and Unmanned Combat Air Vehicles (UCAV). While the robotic loyal-wingman is a drone designed for direct cooperation with manned aircraft, UCAV is rather a more complex machine that can handle navigation, weapons, radar operation, target recognition, etc. But the most important task will be processing huge amounts of data (so-called data fusion) and then passing the cleaned information to the pilot in an easy-to-understand form.

https://www.idnes.cz/technet/technika/dron-letoun-strojove-uce-ni-skyborg-umela-intelligence-nova-generace-vojensky-armada.A201211_153949_tec_technika_vse

Bugs: Palm-sized spy drones can cover a distance of up to 2 kilometers

31 Dec 2020

Jiří Černý, VTM, Czech Republic

The British military has revealed that it has 30 spy drones known as "Bugs". These were developed by BAE Systems and are about the size of a human palm. Each of these devices has a battery lasting about 40 minutes and can cover a distance of 2 kilometers - even in demanding climatic conditions. However, some experts believe that the use of these drones carries significant risks as information provided at a distance could provide a "false sense of understanding" leading to unnecessary civilian casualties.

<https://vtm.zive.cz/clanky/bugs-spionazni-drony-o-velikosti-dlane-dokazou-urazit-vzdalenost-az-2-kilometry/sc-870-a-207723/default.aspx>

"In 2035, there will be 50 times more drones than military aircraft in the air".

17 Dec 2020

Anne Bauer, Les Echos, France

While France is going to seal the sale of Rafale aircraft to Greece, General Philippe Lavigne, Chief of Staff of the French Air and Space Forces, reminds why the stakes of air domination oblige to remain in an uninterrupted technological race.

<https://www.lesechos.fr/industrie-services/air-defense/en-2035-il-y-aura-50-fois-plus-de-drones-que-davions-militaires-en-vol-1274918>

In Turkey, the drone is the new national hero

22 Dec 2020

Jérémié Berlioux, Libération, France

Omnipresent in Turkish government propaganda, drones have become the symbol of Turkey's rise to power and of its growing independence on the international stage. The new Turkish “gem” is the TB2 drone: inexpensive, reliable and used by an experienced army, it is a key factor in Ankara's success.

https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2020/12/22/en-turquie-le-drone-nouveau-heros-national_1809376

Nagorno-Karabakh, precursor of tomorrow's wars

25 Dec 2020

Le Monde, France

Attacks of armed drones and psychological warfare on social networks: the irruption of technology explains Azerbaijan's superiority in its confrontation with Armenia. A lesson for European armies.

https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/12/25/le-haut-karabakh-prefiguration-des-guerres-de-demain_6064471_3232.html