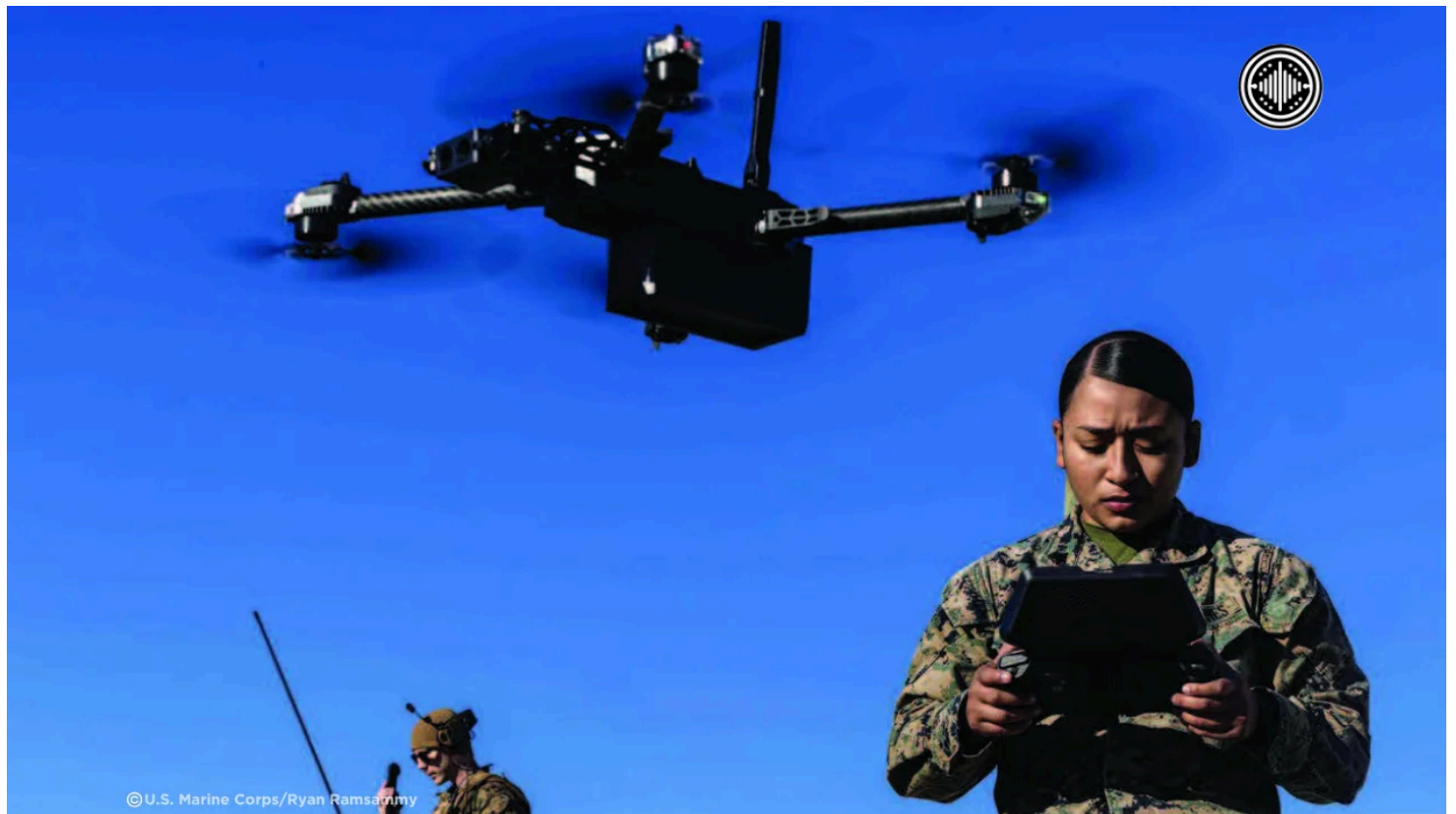


New Paper Warns NATO Not to Trade Traditional Firepower for Drone Dependence

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A newly published strategic paper has warned NATO against over-relying on drone systems at the expense of conventional military firepower. The report urges alliance members to maintain a balanced force structure, cautioning that the growing emphasis on unmanned platforms must not come at the cost of capabilities such as artillery, tanks, missile defences, and manned airpower.

Drawing from lessons in the war in Ukraine, the authors argue that while drones have proven highly effective in modern conflict, they remain vulnerable to electronic warfare and air defences and cannot fully replace the deterrent power of traditional weapons systems. The paper stresses that drones should serve as force multipliers, not substitutes for core battlefield capabilities.

It also highlights that Western militaries remain at risk of supply chain disruption, as many drone components are imported from outside the alliance. The authors recommend boosting domestic production capacity and fostering innovation to avoid operational dependency and strengthen NATO's technological resilience.

UK Armed Forces Minister Luke Pollard, speaking at a recent drone summit, echoed these concerns, noting that NATO procurement systems still favour expensive, long-lead programmes over more agile and scalable unmanned solutions. He acknowledged Ukraine's battlefield agility in rapidly deploying and adapting low-cost drones, often outperforming heavier and slower Western platforms.

NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation, Admiral Pierre Vandier, also weighed in, stressing that drones, while essential, must complement, not replace-existing military frameworks. He described the combination of unmanned systems with traditional firepower as the best path to a resilient, adaptive force.

The paper concludes that overcorrecting in favour of drones risks undermining deterrence and leaving gaps in NATO's ability to confront peer adversaries. Instead, it recommends an integrated approach that

leverages the speed and affordability of drones while preserving the strategic weight of conventional firepower.

As NATO adapts to emerging threats and evolving warfare, the warning serves as a timely reminder: technological innovation must not outpace the alliance's ability to sustain credible, full-spectrum combat power.