

India's Defence Chief Champions Homegrown Drones for Modern Warfare



India's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan, recently made a compelling case for the accelerated development and adoption of indigenous drone and counter-drone technologies for contemporary warfare. Speaking at a workshop in Delhi on Wednesday, July 16, General Chauhan emphasized that a nation cannot effectively confront modern conflicts using outdated weaponry and underscored the critical vulnerabilities inherent in relying on foreign defense technologies.

General Chauhan's address, delivered at an event focused on the indigenization of critical components for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS), highlighted that self-reliance in these advanced systems is not merely an option but a strategic imperative for India. He cited the recent "Operation Sindoor" as a prime example illustrating this urgent need.

During Operation Sindoor, which occurred on May 10, Pakistan reportedly deployed unarmed drones and loitering munitions. General Chauhan revealed that these aerial threats inflicted no damage on Indian military or civilian infrastructure. "Most were neutralised through a combination of kinetic and non-kinetic means, and some were even recovered in almost intact condition," he stated. This successful neutralization, he argued, unequivocally demonstrated why "indigenously developed UAS [Unmanned Aerial Systems] and C-UAS built for our terrain and our needs are crucial."

The CDS further explained that while the development of drones may be an evolutionary process, their employment in warfare has been revolutionary. He noted that these systems can disproportionately shift tactical balances and render traditional large military platforms vulnerable, prompting a re-evaluation of military doctrines.

General Chauhan stressed that dependence on imported niche technologies for critical offensive and defensive missions weakens national preparedness. Such reliance, he cautioned, limits the ability to scale up production and can lead to shortfalls in critical spare parts for sustained operations. Conversely, developing technology at home safeguards sensitive information, reduces costs, and offers an element of surprise to adversaries.

The workshop, organized by the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies, aimed to foster collaboration among defence experts, policymakers, military leaders, scientists, and private industry. The objective is to chart a strategic roadmap for reducing India's reliance on imported components for UAV and C-UAS technology, aligning with the nation's broader 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) initiative. The push for indigenous drone technology, therefore, represents a forward-looking strategy to bolster India's defense capabilities for the evolving landscape of modern warfare.