AFRICA INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE EXHIBITION

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26 – 29 OCTOBER 2026

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AFRIDEX OPENS TO STRONG EXHIBITOR AND DELEGATE INTEREST

The inaugural Africa International Defence Exhibition (Afridex) was greeted with enthusiasm by delegates and exhibitors on its first day on Monday 26 October at Eko Atlantic in Lagos. Defence Web was there and spoke to a number of them to find out what they expected of the show.



Colonel Becky Heyse, the US Director of Public Affairs for the US military's Africa Command (Africom), said the US was present because Africom "oversees all US military operations and relations with the continent of Africa. And so we work with many of the countries to promote our shared security interests. And the US, particularly for Nigeria, has been a great partner this last year as we have worked together on counter-terror operations specifically. We want to listen, we want to learn, we want to hear about what security concerns our partners have and where those relationships overlap so we can figure out where best we can work together and partner. Our goal is to help enable them with some of the unique capabilities that only the United States has, like some of our very unique precision strike capabilities, our intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities: we want to improve their effectiveness against shared security threats."

POLISH FIRM TARGETS ELECTRONIC WARFARE OPPORTUNITIES IN AFRICA

Mateusz Rzymowski, CEO of Revobeam from Poland, is keen to expand his business in Africa considering the experience in Poland, "the experience that we have from our neighbourhood in Ukraine plus our experience with Russia. We are now also trying to put solutions in different markets. Our company is focused on electronic warfare solutions and secure wireless communication. So we can provide solutions starting from the components like antennas, like sensors that could be embedded into unmanned solutions like drones or even ground vehicles."

He added that, "We are open for the different models of collaboration. We are not trying only to sell the solutions but also to set up some kind of joint venture companies here, depending on the needs of the local governments and companies."

JAPAN PRIORITISES DEFENCE MAINTENANCE AND LOCAL CAPACITY

Lieutenant Colonel Nao Otsuji, the Japanese Defence Attache in Nigeria, is attending to find new areas of defence cooperation and to build stronger relations between Africa and Japan. "I'm in charge of Nigeria and Ghana. I am researching what the government in Japan can do to offer to Nigeria. Africa doesn't just want weapons, and then you dump them. It wants to build the weapons, maintain the weapons. I think maintenance is the most important thing. I focus on Nigerian companies. For example, Terra Industries. They are completely Nigerian and they are exporting. I want to build at least one thing: the best cooperation I can between Japan and Nigeria."

QATARI PARTNER EXPANDS NIGERIAN DEFENCE-INDUSTRIAL TIES

Thamer Al-Emadi from Qatar is no stranger to Africa. As Managing Director of DICON-SUR he is already in a partnership with the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) manufacturing uniforms.

"We are here today at Afridex to show our friendship and cooperation and partnership with the Nigerian Ministry of Defence. We are here to expand our partnership. Moreover, we localise and transfer technology to Nigeria. We are also here looking to expand our potential cooperation with the Nigerian forces and with other countries from the different delegations that are here. We see that Nigeria is a good hub for expanding our businesses across Africa."

AUSTRALIA FOCUSES ON TRAINING AND PEACEKEEPING COOPERATION

Colonel Karen Such, the Australian Defence Attaché to the African Union, is accredited to Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Djibouti and South Africa, but covers the entire continent. "The organisers reached out to our High Commission in Abuja and I thought this was a good opportunity to come and engage with a lot of African nations considering our need to cover the majority of the continent," she said.

"What we focus on from a defence perspective here is we offer defence training courses to a number of different African nations. So, we recently had two Nigerian defence members come to Australia to undertake the UN Military Observer Course in preparation for UN Peacekeeping Missions, so that's something I think that is of particular interest for Australia in our partnership with African countries.

"I also think it is important for countries to have some autonomy and have some ability to protect themselves and defend themselves. I think it does make sense as well for Africa to look across its nations and work together, but I think there's a lot of opportunities for partners to come in and share and exchange knowledge and experiences and things like that, and I think that's where this conference is a really good opportunity to do that," she said.

TINUBU URGES COLLECTIVE ACTION AGAINST INTERCONNECTED THREATS

Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, represented at the opening ceremony by President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio, said: "We gather with a shared responsibility: to secure our nations, protect our people and safeguard Africa's future. From the Gulf of Guinea to the Sahel, from our territorial borders to cyberspace and outer space, the threats confronting us are becoming more complex and interconnected.

"They threaten lives and livelihoods, disrupt trade and weaken the foundations of development. Africa's security must therefore command our collective attention, because there can be no enduring prosperity where fear governs daily life", he added.

Akpabio stressed that "Afridex 2026 marks a renewed determination to turn African potential into African capability. Let the partnerships formed here strengthen our readiness; let the knowledge exchanged here inspire our innovators; and let the commitments made here produce results our people can see. We owe them nations where peace creates opportunity, where service earns trust and where the future can be approached with confidence."

LAGOS POSITIONS SECURITY AS ESSENTIAL TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Welcoming delegates on behalf of the Lagos State Government, Dr Kadri Obafemi Hamzat, Deputy Governor of Lagos State, said: "Security is the first condition of any economy. Lagos, Nigeria's commercial centre and one of Africa's largest cities, depends on it every single day." He noted that modern security systems increasingly depend on surveillance technology, effective communication, cooperation between agencies and public confidence and indicated that the Lagos State Government was rebuilding its Command and Control Centre while expanding closed-circuit television surveillance to improve security monitoring and coordination.

NIGERIA INVITES INVESTMENT IN INDIGENOUS DEFENCE PRODUCTION

General Christopher Gwabin Musa (Rtd), Nigeria's Minister of Defence, said: "Afridex started as a strategic vision, and I'm glad to see that today the ideas have come to fruition." Highlighting the opportunity for international industry, he added: "Nigeria has the population, has the landmass and has the reach, and Africa has the requirement for this. So anybody who invests in Nigeria is investing wisely." He added that the Tinubu administration is committed to modernising the Nigerian Armed Forces through strengthened indigenous defence production and the development of new capabilities.





AFRICA INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE EXHIBITION ON DISPLAY

























STM RIDES THE WAVES AT AFRIDEX 2026 WITH NAVAL PLATFORMS AND TACTICAL UAVS

With a proven record of delivering turnkey naval projects to customers around the world, one of Türkiye's leading defence engineering companies, STM (Savunma Teknolojileri Mühendislik ve Ticaret), is showing its advanced naval platforms and tactical UAV systems at Afridex 2026 (stand 2112).



"To date, STM has undertaken 44 naval projects at 11 different shipyards worldwide, providing NATO-standard, tailor-made solutions to the specific operational requirements of navies," the company said in a statement. "Building on 35 years of experience, STM has expanded its international naval portfolio with corvette programmes for Ukraine and Malaysia, logistics support ships for Portugal, and a fleet tanker delivered to the Pakistan Navy."

The company offers flexible cooperation models, including technology transfer, local construction and industrial partnerships.

It played a key role in Türkiye's first national warship programme called MİLGEM, and designed and built as the main contractor the TCG İSTANBUL (F-515), the country's first national frigate that was delivered to the Turkish Navy. The company is currently involved in the construction of seven İ-Class frigates and Türkiye's first national fast attack craft.

The İ-Class frigate is designed to conduct a wide range of naval missions, including anti-air, anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, maritime surveillance, patrol operations and the protection of strategic maritime areas.

With an overall length of 113.2 metres and displacement of approximately 3 150 tonnes the İ-Class frigate combines advanced combat systems with high manoeuvrability and operational endurance. The vessel boasts a maximum speed exceeding 29 knots.

Its capabilities include a vertical launch system, surface-to-surface missiles, advanced radar and electronic warfare systems, sonar and helicopter operations. Designed with reduced radar visibility and enhanced survivability, the platform offers a versatile solution for navies seeking modern, multi-mission surface combatants.

For anti-surface warfare, air defence and maritime patrol missions in both coastal waters and open-sea environments, STM is currently engaged in building the high-speed Multi-Purpose Attack Craft (MPAC).

Its optimised hull form and advanced propulsion configuration combine speed, manoeuvrability and combat capability. STM states that it is suitable for operations requiring rapid deployment and effective engagement of maritime threats.

The STM MPAC is 66.2 metres long with a displacement of approximately 620 tonnes and a maximum speed exceeding 40 knots.

Boasting substantial firepower in a compact naval platform, its proposed combat configuration includes surface-to-surface missiles, a 76 mm naval gun, a point defence missile system, electronic warfare equipment and advanced surveillance and fire-control sensors. The platform can be tailored to different operational

requirements through flexible sensor and weapon system integration.

For the Portuguese Navy STM is currently building two Auxiliary Oiler Replenisher and Logistics Ships (AOR+) in terms of a contract signed in December 2024. Both vessels are being constructed simultaneously in Türkiye and are scheduled for delivery to the Portuguese Navy in 2028. The vessels will provide logistical support to naval forces during peacetime and military operations, including the replenishment of fuel, supplies and other essential cargo at sea.

"Beyond conventional fleet replenishment, the ships feature a multi-role design supporting joint operations, amphibious missions and force projection," STM stated. "Their capabilities include the transportation of military vehicles and equipment, with each vessel designed to accommodate up to 20 light armoured tactical vehicles."

In terms of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence, STM is showing its tactical UAV solutions designed for reconnaissance, surveillance and precision engagement at Afridex 2026.

Its KARGU combat-proven rotary-wing loitering munition has been exported to 15 countries across four continents. In service with the Turkish Armed Forces since 2018, KARGU has been deployed in counter-terrorism operations, special missions and cross-border operations.

Designed for rapid deployment by a single soldier, it offers 30 minutes' flight endurance and an operational range of 10 kilometres. The system combines autonomous navigation, advanced image processing and day-and-night target engagement. Carrying interchangeable anti-personnel and armour-piercing warheads, KARGU can be adapted to different mission requirements. Equipped with advanced image-processing capabilities, it can perform precision-strike missions and operate as part of an autonomous swarm.

The TOGAN tactical surveillance and reconnaissance UAV provides real-time situational awareness, while KUZGUN and STM's VTOL UAV solution demonstrate the company's expanding portfolio of autonomous aerial systems. With a flight range of approximately 1 000 kilometres and an endurance of up to six hours, KUZGUN offers extended operational reach without requiring runway infrastructure.

"Our KERKES technology further strengthens the resilience of UAV operations by enabling navigation in environments where satellite positioning signals are unavailable or disrupted," STM said.



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AFRIDEX 2026 AND PROJECT CLASSS: BUILDING AFRICA'S DEFENCE FUTURE THROUGH COLLABORATION

In an increasingly complex security environment, African defence industries face the common challenge of transforming individual capabilities into integrated solutions that address real operational requirements.



While the continent is home to a growing number of capable manufacturers, technology developers and specialist service providers, opportunities to connect these strengths across borders have often been limited.

This challenge lies at the heart of Afridex 2026, the emerging African defence and security exhibition and conference platform that aims to bring together governments, armed forces, industry leaders and technology partners from across the continent and beyond.

Aerospace, Maritime and Defence Industries Association (AMD) of South Africa board member Colin Singarum said the event represents far more than another industry exhibition. It is an opportunity to foster meaningful partnerships, strengthen African industrial cooperation and create practical pathways towards sustainable defence capability development.

"What attracted me was the opportunity to help build stronger connections between African defence industries, their customers and international partners. Africa has considerable capability, but we need more opportunities to bring that capability together around real requirements," he said.

As a member of Afridex's content advisory board, Singarum helped shape discussions that focus on addressing customer needs through collaboration. Drawing on decades of experience spanning aircraft manufacturing, maintenance, upgrades, international business development and defence industry cooperation, he believes successful programmes are built around complete solutions rather than standalone technologies.

"My experience has taught me to look beyond an individual product and consider the complete customer requirement: integration, training, maintenance and long-term support. I want to bring that perspective to Afridex, with discussions that connect operational needs to industrial capability and achievable projects," he explained.

SHIFT TOWARDS PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

His emphasis on practical outcomes reflects a broader shift across the defence sector. End users are increasingly seeking integrated capabilities that combine multiple systems, technologies and support services.

This focus on cooperation is particularly relevant in Africa, where defence requirements often span vast geographic areas and evolving security threats. Singarum said the continent already possesses many of the skills and technologies required to address these challenges.

"I hope to connect people whose requirements and capabilities complement each other. The value lies in preparing those introductions properly, understanding what each party needs, where there is a credible fit and what practical next step could move the relationship forward," he said.

For South African companies, Afridex presents an opportunity to showcase capabilities while positioning themselves as contributors to broader African solutions. South Africa's defence sector has earned a reputation for expertise in aerospace engineering, electronics, protected mobility, systems integration and support services.

"I see an opportunity for South African companies to present their capabilities as part of broader African solutions. Afridex can help them find customers and partners, while also identifying Nigerian capabilities that complement their own," said Singarum.

Importantly, he believes smaller specialist companies should participate alongside larger manufacturers. The inclusion of small and medium-sized enterprises strengthens industry ecosystems while introducing innovative technologies and niche capabilities that might otherwise remain overlooked.

Singarum's views on partnership development have been shaped by years of working with international defence organisations, including ten years at Denel, four years at Paramount and six years at ASELSAN South Africa.

COMMITMENT ON BOTH SIDES

"One of my strongest lessons was that a partnership needs commitment on both sides. Strong technology is important, but successful cooperation also depends on understanding local requirements, choosing the right partners and agreeing on realistic responsibilities," he said.

He added that technology transfer and industrial participation cannot be achieved through one-off transactions. Instead, meaningful capability development requires sustained engagement, investment in skills and a long-term commitment to growing local capacity.

"Technology transfer becomes effective when local people can perform the work independently and sustain the capability over time. That requires practical training, appropriate technical information, equipment, quality systems and agreed rights to use the technology," Singarum explained.

Among the areas where he sees significant opportunities for cross-border cooperation are aircraft maintenance, assembly and upgrades, unmanned systems, communications, maritime surveillance, border security and technical training.

"These are areas where complementary capabilities could support local assembly, integration and long-term maintenance. The starting point should always be a specific customer requirement and a clear understanding of what each partner can contribute," he said.

That philosophy also underpins Project CLASSS, one of AMD's most ambitious industry collaboration initiatives and a key feature of Singarum's planned Afridex presentation. CLASSS (Cyber, Land, Air, Sea, Space and Security) aims to demonstrate how multiple companies can collectively address customer needs through integrated solutions.

"Project CLASSS grew from seeing good products presented separately and only from the OEM's product point and not from the customer's need to procure a complete solution for their threat levels, while customers were trying to solve problems that required several capabilities working together. I wanted to make those connections on one digital defence platform in real-time easier to understand and explore, driven by the customer," said Singarum.

SINGLE INTEGRATED ENVIRONMENT

This aligns closely with AMD's broader objective of strengthening collaboration across South Africa's defence sector. CLASSS functions as an interactive platform that brings together products and solutions from multiple companies within a single, secure integrated environment, allowing customers to build solutions around operational requirements rather than individual products.

Singarum has previously described the initiative as a way for South African defence companies to "hunt as a pack" by combining their capabilities in response to customer needs.

"CLASSS brings cyber, land, air, sea, space and security into one interactive marketing platform. It allows visitors to explore how a customer requirement could be supported by products and services from different companies," he said.

For example, a maritime surveillance solution could combine a vessel, unmanned aircraft, communications systems, sensors and cyber protection technologies supplied by different organisations.

"The platform provides a starting point for discussion. It helps make those relationships visible and encourages conversations about how capability can be brought together," Singarum noted.

The initiative is also designed to address one of the traditional weaknesses of defence exhibitions, namely the difficulty of translating initial engagement into tangible business opportunities. CLASSS allows visitors to design potential solutions and generate leads for participating companies based on user selections and interests.

"A productive relationship develops when both parties identify a real opportunity and agree on a practical next step. That might be a technical meeting, an exchange of requirements, a demonstration or a proposal," he said.

IDEAL PLATFORM FOR CLASSS

Afridex, he believes, provides an ideal platform for introducing CLASSS to a wider African audience following its debut at the Africa Aerospace and Defence Expo in South Africa in September.

Beyond technology and commercial opportunities, Singarum sees Afridex as a platform for advancing enterprise development across the continent.

"A specialist business may have an excellent component or service but lack access to the right decision-makers. Structured introductions, supplier discussions and clearly defined work packages can help close that gap," he said.

Singarum hopes Afridex will become a catalyst for tangible industrial growth across Africa. Success, in his view, will be measured not by attendance figures but by the partnerships and projects that emerge after the event.

Ultimately, he believes Africa's defence future depends on making complementary capabilities more visible and connected.

"I would like visitors to see how much more we can achieve when we connect our capabilities around a customer's requirement. Africa has skilled people and capable businesses, and there is value in making their complementary strengths more visible," said Singarum.

His ambition is to create an environment where collaboration becomes the foundation for capability development, industrial growth and long-term security outcomes across the continent.

SUPER TUCANO WELL SUITED TO AFRICAN AIR FORCES

With its Super Tucano light attack and trainer turboprop well suited to African air forces seeking a cost-effective multi-role aircraft, Embraer (stand 2166) predicts 150 orders from the continent over the next two decades.



The Super Tucano already has a solid customer base in Africa. Burkina Faso was the first African country to receive the Super Tucano, taking delivery of three in September 2011 for border patrol missions. In October 2012, Mauritania received its first of two aircraft, featuring sensor turrets for surveillance duties, although they have also been used for counter-insurgency missions, particularly against al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. They replaced older Tucano aircraft.

Angola became the next African operator, with the first three of six aircraft arriving in April 2013. Angola acquired its Super Tucano aircraft for border surveillance missions, augmenting a fleet of 14 older Tucanos.

In July 2018, Mali took delivery of four Super Tucanos following a 2015 contract as part of the rejuvenation of the country's military. They are configured for light attack and close air support.

Africa's largest Super Tucano order came from Nigeria, which ordered 12 from the United States in 2018 under the Foreign Military Sale (FMS) programme, with the aircraft manufactured by Embraer and modified by the Sierra Nevada Corporation in the US. The first six Super Tucano aircraft arrived in Nigeria in July 2021 and were inducted into the Nigerian Air Force at the end of August. They had accumulated 10 000 flight hours by August 2024, with many of those combat hours - the aircraft is heavily used to combat Boko Haram and numerous other terrorist groups in Nigeria.

Nigeria received the aircraft in a $500 million Foreign Military Sales package deal that included the airframes, munitions, spare parts to support several years of operations, contracted logistics support, and a multiyear construction project to upgrade infrastructure at the Kainji base in Niger State. Weapons include Paveway II guided bombs, APKWS laser-guided rocket kits, Hydra 70 unguided rockets, and Mk 81 (250 lb) bombs.

Togo appears to be the sixth operator of the Super Tucano on the African continent. Ghana was initially suspected to be behind an African order for four Super Tucanos that was announced by Embraer in late December 2024, as Ghana has expressed interest in the type for a number of years. While Embraer could not disclose the customer, it is likely that it is Togo.

The Super Tucano has to date been selected by 22 air forces, with over 300 aircraft ordered, including 39 aircraft added to Embraer's order book in less than 24 months, with Uruguay (5 aircraft), Panama (4) and the United States' Sierra Nevada Corporation (1) the latest customers.

Global customers include Angola, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Indonesia, Lebanon, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Panama, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Uruguay, United States, and four undisclosed customers. They have accumulated 625 000 flight hours, including 65 000 combat hours.

According to Marcio Monteiro, Chief Marketing Officer for Embraer Defence & Security, the company estimates a global addressable market of approximately 500 aircraft over the next 20 years, with Africa accounting for the majority of Super Tucano contracts at an estimated third of that demand. Demand is also expected to come from South America (a quarter), the Middle East (about 20%), Asia (roughly 20%), and Europe (about 15%).

This demand is not just for replacing older aircraft but includes adding new capabilities to air forces. "This platform remains relevant because of its multi-mission capabilities," Monteiro said.

The Super Tucano is suitable for a wide range of missions such as close air support, air patrol, special operations, air interdiction, forward air controller (FAC), air and tactical coordinator (TAC), armed intelligence,

surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), border surveillance, reconnaissance, air escort, basic, operational and advanced training, transition to air superiority fighters, lead-in fighter and FAC training.

A recent addition to the Super Tucano's mission list is countering unmanned aerial systems. It does this with electro-optical sensors, data link, laser-guided rockets and/or guns. Last year Embraer partnered with a US company Valkyrie Aero for its Gunslinger AI target classification suite to counter drones. Embraer hopes to have a counter-UAS offering ready soon after demonstrations later this year. The company sees this option as an urgent one to pursue given the proliferation of UAVs in combat theatres, from Iran to Ukraine.

The Super Tucano has spent two decades leading the light attack market segment, according to Embraer. Over the last seven years, the Super Tucano has secured a 72% market share, with 51 aircraft sold since 2019 compared to seven Paramount Mwaris, eight Textron AT-6 Wolverines, and five Turkish Aerospace Industries Hurkus-Cs.

Developed in response to the demanding requirements of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB), the A-29 Super Tucano is equipped with a variety of fourth generation avionics and weapons, including an electro-optical/infrared system with laser designator, night vision goggles, secure communications and data-link package. Its systems allow the gathering and sharing of time-critical information, and the aircraft can operate as part of a networked environment.

The A-29 features a reinforced airframe and self-sealing fuel tanks to repel small-arms fire. It is powered by a 1 600 horsepower Pratt & Whitney PT6 engine and can carry a 1 550 kilogram payload across five hardpoints. Weapons options include gun pods, bombs, rocket pods, and (on the two outboard stations) air-to-air missiles.

As the Super Tucano was designed from the start to have a light attack capability, it features built-in machinegun mounts, self-sealing fuel tanks and armour in critical locations. Its combat abilities have been well proven in Afghanistan and Colombia, during Amazon protection operations in Brazil and counter-narcotics operations in the Dominican Republic and Brazil, and in Nigeria and other African nations against terrorist organisations.

Monteiro noted many African customers use the Super Tucano for armed reconnaissance and border patrol. He is excited about new Super Tucano orders, with the company's KC-390 Millenium airlifter and Super Tucano key defence products for Embraer. Production stands at about 12 A-29s per year, depending on demand.

Aircraft are manufactured in Brazil or by Sierra Nevada Corporation in Jacksonville, Florida, for US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customers such as Nigeria, Lebanon, and Afghanistan. This facility has also manufactured some white tail aircraft in anticipation of future demand. Monteiro said Embraer is also considering a production line in Portugal. The Portuguese government recently said the establishment of a final assembly line for the Super Tucano is a project of national public interest. A final assembly line could support future European customers – Latvia and Poland, for example, have expressed interest in the type.









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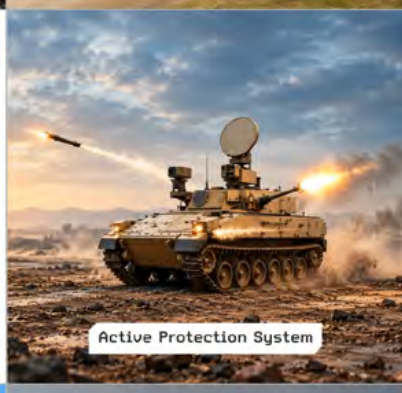
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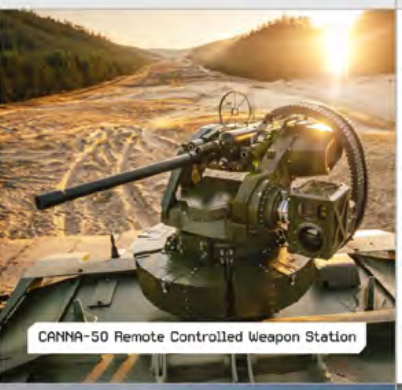
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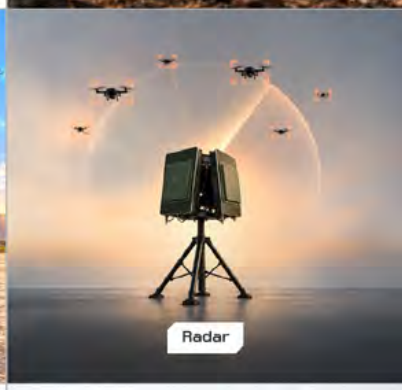
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NIGERIAN AH-1Z VIPER PRODUCTION UNDERWAY

The United States' Bell Textron has formally commenced manufacturing AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters for Nigeria as part of a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme approved by the United States in 2024.





In mid-September 2026, the company said delegates toured Bell's Amarillo, Texas, production facility to observe the Viper production line and ceremoniously sign the aircraft's frame destined to join the Nigerian Air Force (NAF).

"We are honoured to host the Nigerian Air Force and share this milestone in production for the AH-1Z," said Scott Sims, H-1 programme director at Bell. "The beam of the first production Viper for Nigeria will forever carry the names, hopes, and commitment of those who brought this aircraft to life."

"The Bell AH-1Z Viper will play an important role in strengthening our counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations and enhancing our ability to protect the citizens of Nigeria," said Air Commodore Ehimen Ejodame, NAF spokesperson. "We are pleased with the Viper's advanced capabilities and interoperability and look forward to its induction as a key platform in our attack helicopter fleet."

The US Department of Defence awarded Bell a $455 million contract to manufacture and deliver 12 AH-1Z Vipers to Nigeria. Bell will also provide associated engineering, programme management, and logistics support. Bell projects the aircraft production will be completed in early 2029, over six months later than originally scheduled.

In April 2022 the US approved the possible sale of 12 Bell AH-1Zs to Nigeria for $997 million. The proposed deal included 28 T-700 GE 401C engines, 2 000 Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) guidance sections, M197 20 mm guns, sighting systems, night vision equipment, technical and logistics support.

In February 2024 the Nigerian Air Force took into service the first of six T-129 ATAK helicopters from Turkish Aerospace Industries in what it said at the time was a major boost to the fight against terrorism, crude oil theft and kidnapping, joining Nigeria's fleet of Mi-24 and Mi-35 attack helicopters. The Nigerian Army is separately acquiring 12 MD 530F Cayuse Warriors from MD Helicopters.

The AH-1Z programme was originally launched in 1996 by the US Marine Corps and the AH-1Z first flew in December 2000. The Viper model features a 10 000-flight-hour airframe, a four-blade tail rotor and drive system, upgraded landing gear, and a new foldable four-blade hingeless and bearingless main rotor system. The new rotor configuration provides greater agility, a higher top speed, faster climb rate and reduced vibration compared to earlier models.

The AH-1Z is powered by two T700-GE-401C engines rated at 1 800 shp each. Maximum gross weight is 8 391 kg and maximum useful load 2 615 kg. Internal fuel capacity is 1 561 litres. Bell lists the helicopter's cruise speed at 257 km/h, and combat radius at 243 km.

New avionics include a fully digital glass cockpit with large multifunction liquid crystal displays and helmet-mounted displays. The helmet system has day/night capability, and its visor projects forward-looking infrared or video imagery.

The AH-1Z is capable of carrying eight Hellfire missiles, fourteen 70 mm rockets, 650 rounds of 20 mm ammunition, and 120 expendable countermeasures. It is also armed with a nose-mounted M197 three-barrel 20×102 mm cannon. The helicopter can also fire AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles, but Nigeria's FMS package does not specify a Hellfire or Sidewinder allocation.

Self-protection systems include AN/AAR-47 missile warning and laser detection system, AN/ALE-47 countermeasure dispenser, and AN/APR-39 radar warning receiver, providing warning against radar, missile, and laser threats and gives automatic or crew-directed dispensing of countermeasures.

In terms of training and sustainment, Bell received an approximately $18 million award in August 2026 for one AH-1Z flight-training device and an initial spares package, with completion planned for January 2029.

Day 2 | Wednesday 28th October 2026

VIPS, SPEAKERS & DELEGATES ONLY

Building on the strategic context established on Day 1, Day 2 focuses on implementation, partnership, and future direction. Sessions will examine how African nations are strengthening defence sovereignty, addressing internal and regional security challenges, and advancing effective partnerships. With a focus on practical outcomes and long-term priorities, the programme will conclude with a forward-looking discussion on how today's insights translate into actionable strategies for Africa's defence and security landscape.

08.00	**Registration Opens** *VIPs, Speakers, Delegates and Exhibitors*
08.00	**Breakfast & Networking** *VIPs, Speakers & Delegates only*
09.00	**Registration Opens** *All Vistors*
08.30	**Opening Remarks**

BUILDING SOVEREIGN CAPABILITY: PROCUREMENT, PRODUCTION AND INDUSTRIAL PARTNERSHIP

African defence sovereignty requires procurement decisions that strengthen national readiness while developing sustainable domestic capability. This session will examine how strategic acquisition, industrial cooperation, technology transfer and joint production can reduce external dependency, build local expertise and support defence industry.

08.45

PANEL:

Building Africa's Defence Capability: From Procurement To Sovereignty

- Aligning procurement with strategic priorities
- Building sustainable domestic capability
- Advancing long-term defence sovereignty



General Lúcio G. Amaral
Minister of National Defence, Republic of Angola



Ambassador Emmanuel Amara Vandi Fomba
Founder and Global President, Global Chamber on African Trade, Rights and Economic Development

MODERATOR:



Major General Olufemi T. Akinjobi
Strategic Advisor, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Day 2 | Wednesday 28th October 2026

VIPS, SPEAKERS & DELEGATES ONLY

09.45

PANEL:

From Partnership To Production – Advancing tTürkiye–Nigeria Defence Industry Cooperation

- Identifying opportunities for joint development, manufacturing and investment
- Strengthening technology transfer, skills development and local industrial capability
- Building long-term government–industry partnerships that support innovation, resilience and defence sovereignty



Bam Ibrahim Garba CMC FIMC
Chief Executive Officer, DICON Gray Insignia (DGI)



Engineer Ade Ogundeyin
Managing Director, PRO FORCE Limited



Gökhan Uçar
Deputy Secretary, Secretariat of Defence Industries (SSB) Türkiye



Şevket Ünal,
Vice President, HAVELSAN

MODERATOR:



Major General Anthony Atolagbe
International Consultant and Research Fellow, Federal Republic of Nigeria

10.45 **Morning Coffee & Networking**
VIPs, Speakers & Delegates only

FROM THREAT TO READINESS: STRENGTHENING AFRICA'S IMMEDIATE SECURITY RESPONSE

Evolving border threats and internal security pressures are placing new demands on African armed forces. This session will assess the operational capabilities required to protect national stability, improve cross-border cooperation and accelerate the procurement and deployment of the equipment, training and systems required.

11.30

PANEL:

Securing Borders And Internal Stability In A Volatile Era

- Responding to evolving border threats
- Strengthening internal security capabilities
- Improving cross-border cooperation



Major General Felix Busizoori
Chief of the Ugandan Defence Forces, Armed Forces of Uganda



Major General Fructueux Gbaguidi
Chief of Defense Staff, Beninese Armed Forces



Brigadier General Tchakpélé Aklésso
Chief of the General Staff, Togolese Armed Forces

MODERATOR:



Major General Olufemi T. Akinjobi
Strategic Advisor, Federal Republic of Nigeria

Day 2 | Wednesday 28th October 2026

VIPS, SPEAKERS & DELEGATES ONLY

12.30 PANEL:

The New Security Order: Africa In A Multipolar World

- Africa's place in a multipolar order
- Navigating new alliances and partnerships
- Shaping global security governance



Major General Mohamed Adly Abdel Wahed Soliman
Deputy Director, Armed Forces Armament Authority of Egypt



Major General Garba Ayodeki Wahab
Former Director General of the Nigerian Army Resource Centre (NARC), Federal Republic of Nigeria

MODERATOR:



Major General Anthony Atolagbe
International Consultant and Research Fellow, Federal Republic of Nigeria

13.30 **Lunch & Networking**
VIPs, Speakers & Delegates only

CONFRONTING TRANSNATIONAL THREATS: MARITIME SECURITY AND COUNTER-TERRORISM

Threats to maritime trade and the continued evolution of terrorist activity demand responses that extend beyond national borders and individual services. This session will examine how stronger intelligence-sharing, regional coordination and operational cooperation can protect vital trade routes, disrupt emerging threats and improve collective security across Africa.

14.30 FIRESIDE CHAT:

Maritime Flashpoints: Securing Trade Under Pressure

- Protecting critical maritime trade routes
- Responding to emerging maritime threats
- Strengthening naval cooperation and readiness



Vice Admiral Idi Abbas
Chief of the Navy, Nigerian Navy



Rear Admiral Manuel António Pereira Semedo
Chief of Staff, Cabo Verdean Armed Forces

MODERATOR:



Major General Anthony Atolagbe
International Consultant and Research Fellow, Federal Republic of Nigeria

15.15 PANEL:

Strengthening Counter-terrorism Efforts In Africa: Adapting To An Evolving Threat Landscape

- Responding to evolving terrorist threats
- Adapting counter-terrorism strategies
- Strengthening intelligence and regional coordination



H.E Ahmed Moallim Fiqi Ahmed,
Minister of Defence, Federal Republic of Somalia



General Júlio dos Santos Jane
Chief of the General Staff, Mozambique Defence Armed Forces

MODERATOR:



Major General Neil Sexton
Former Director Army Engagement & Communications, British Army

Day 2 | Wednesday 28th October 2026

VIPS, SPEAKERS & DELEGATES ONLY

16.00 **Afternoon Coffee & Networking**
VIPs, Speakers & Delegates only

BUILDING AFRICA'S FUTURE FORCE: POWER, AUTONOMY AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE

Africa's ability to shape the global security order will depend on credible military power, greater strategic autonomy and forces prepared for rapidly changing forms of conflict. This session will examine how African nations can strengthen readiness, integrate drones and artificial intelligence, and use emerging technologies to achieve operational advantage against evolving threats.

16.30 **PANEL:**

Africa At The Centre: Military Power, Strategic Autonomy And A New Global Order

- Building credible African military power
- Strengthening strategic autonomy and readiness
- Shaping Africa's role in the global security order



General Emmanuel Matatu
Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Zimbabwe Defence Force



Lieutenant General William Agyapong
Chief of The Defence Staff, Ghana Armed Forces

MODERATOR:



Major General Neil Sexton
Former Director Army Engagement & Communications, British Army

17.15 **PANEL:**

Future Warfare In Africa: Drones, AI & Asymmetric Advantage

- Drones and AI in future conflict
- Technology as an asymmetric advantage
- Adapting forces for emerging threats



Lieutenant General Ibrahima Sory Bangoura
Chief of General Staff, Guinea Armed Forces

MODERATOR:



Major General Neil Sexton
Former Director Army Engagement & Communications, British Army

18.00 **Closing Remarks**

18.30 **Exhibition Closed**

19.00 **Private Networking Event**
Invitation Only

FOR THE FULL TECHNICAL THEATRE PROGRAMME, CLICK HERE OR SCAN THE QR CODE

GABON RECEIVES NEW PATROL BOAT FROM OCEA

France's Ocea has delivered an FPB 98 Mk I patrol boat to Gabon, the first of 15 new vessels the country is acquiring to modernise its navy.



The christening ceremony took place in the presence of President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema in mid-August. The 32 metre long vessel was named Paul Bivigou Nziengui, the Presidency of the Gabonese Republic said.

The new patrol boat is a major step in the modernisation of Gabon's naval forces and the strengthening of the maritime sovereignty of Gabon, the Presidency added. "This new patrol boat will strengthen the monitoring of territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), as well as the capacities for rapid intervention and security of coastal approaches."

Delivery came only three months after contract signing in May 2026. The partnership also includes a maintenance contract and a transfer of skills to strengthen local technical know-how.

According to Ocea, the FPB 98 is 32 metres long and six metres wide, has a crew of 14 and a top speed of 20-35 knots with a range of 1 200 nautical miles at 12 knots. Armament can include a 30 mm cannon on the vessel's bow. A rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB) can be launched from the back of the vessel.

Ocea has sold a number of FPB 98 boats around the world, including to Algeria, Benin, Suriname and Nigeria.

Gabon's Presidency said the christening of the Paul Bivigou Nziengui paves the way for additional vessels for Gabon's navy, which will soon receive a second 32 metre patrol boat, an 84 metre offshore patrol boat and twelve 9 metre intervention boats.

"Through this programme, the Head of State reaffirms his determination to build a modern, reactive and fully sovereign Navy, in the service of the protection of the national territory and the maritime interests of Gabon," the Presidency concluded.

According to Mer et Marine, the offshore patrol boat will likely be Ocea's OPV 270 design. One of these, the Gabriela Silang, was built for the Philippine Coast Guard and delivered in 2019. The class can reach a speed of more than 20 knots and has a range of 8 000 nautical miles at 15 knots. It is crewed by 30 but has accommodation for 70. It can carry 9 metre RHIBs and has a helicopter platform and a hangar for a five ton helicopter.

Gabon's Navy is small and includes two 54 metre P400 class offshore patrol vessels delivered by CMN in 1988 and 1990, a Patra class missile boat and a 42 metre Esterel type fast attack craft built in 1978 as well as a few smaller types. In 2010, Gabon received four Raidco RPB20 patrol boats from France.

GHANA AIR FORCE REEQUIPS

The Ghana Air Force (GAF) is overhauling its rotary wing fleet through a contract with Airbus Helicopters, which is delivering four new rotorcraft, while Dassault will supply a new executive jet.

In December 2025, Ghana's Parliament approved a €125 million agreement between the Ministry of Defence and Airbus Helicopters as well as a $60 million agreement with Dassault Aviation for the acquisition of a single Falcon 6X aircraft for the Ghana Air Force.

In mid-January, Airbus Helicopters revealed that Ghana had ordered two H175Ms, one ACH175, and one ACH160 for transport, search and rescue, disaster relief, and other duties. The H175M is a military configured airframe to be used for missions such as personnel and cargo transport and civil support, while the ACH160 and ACH175 are corporate configured helicopters likely acquired for VIP duties.

The first H175 arrived in early March. "The arrival of the H175 forms part of a wider aircraft procurement initiative approved by Parliament," the Ghana Air Force said. "The programme is intended to address the operational limitations associated with the Air Force's ageing fleet while significantly improving mission readiness and operational flexibility."

"The addition of the Airbus H175 is expected to significantly enhance the Ghana Air Force's operational capability across a wide range of missions, including search and rescue operations, medical evacuation, humanitarian assistance, disaster response, maritime surveillance, and troop and logistics transport. Equipped with advanced avionics, extended operational range, and increased payload capacity, the aircraft provides improved endurance, flexibility, and rapid response capability in addressing both conventional and emerging security challenges," the GAF said.

The Ghana Air Force currently operates five Mi-17V-5 and Mi-171Sh helicopters and three Harbin Z-9EH utility helicopters while the Ghana Police Service operates AS350 and SA342 helicopters.





AIRBUS AND LEONARDO DELIVER NEW ROTORCRAFT TO THE NIGERIAN AIR FORCE

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) continues to expand its rotary wing fleet, recently adding five new helicopters to its inventory from Airbus Helicopters and Leonardo Helicopters.



The aircraft were seen arriving in Nigeria partially disassembled at the beginning of September. Airbus technical personnel helped reassembled two H125 light helicopters at NAF Base Ikeja, Lagos, marking an important milestone in strengthening technical collaboration, facilitating knowledge transfer and enhancing NAF personnel's practical exposure to the support and maintenance of modern rotary-wing platforms, the NAF said at the time.

"Beyond acquiring modern platforms, we are committed to developing the knowledge, partnerships and support systems required to maximise their operational value and sustain them throughout their service life," said Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke.

The two Airbus helicopters were formally accepted into service on 2 October at 355 Rotary Wing, Ikeja, where Aircraft Acceptance Documents were formally signed by the Commander, 643 Equipment Supply Depot, Air Commodore E Akintunde, on behalf of the Chief of Logistics, Headquarters NAF, and a senior representative of Airbus Helicopters.

The H125 helicopters will provide valuable additional capability for ongoing NAF air operations, including surveillance, tactical mobility and other operational support missions, the NAF said.

The Nigerian Air Force also received three AW109 helicopters from Italy's Leonardo Helicopters, as part of an order for ten. They were received in Lagos on 15 September and formally accepted on 6 October, with the remaining seven expected by the end of 2026.

Aneke described the helicopter acquisition as "another significant milestone in the Federal Government's sustained investment in the modernisation and re-equipment of the NAF", noting that the new platforms would increase asset availability and enhance the service's responsiveness across multiple theatres. "The arrival of these five [Airbus and Leonardo] helicopters provides greater flexibility in the employment of airpower in support of ground troops in ongoing operations," he stated.

The Chief of Air Staff thanked President and Commander-in-Chief Bola Ahmed Tinubu for the transformation and modernisation of the NAF. "His commitment is enabling us to progressively build the capabilities required to meet our operational responsibilities and confront the nation's evolving security challenges," he said.

Aneke said the three AW109 Trekker B helicopters would enhance NAF capabilities in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, close air support, armed escort, combat search and rescue, as well as other joint operations in support of surface forces. He added that the two H125 helicopters would provide versatile and responsive light helicopter support for a range of operational requirements, collectively expanding the service's flexibility and capacity to respond to evolving operational demands.

The Nigerian Air Force is growing its fixed and rotary wing fleets and expects to receive dozens of additional aircraft in the coming years. Leonardo will also by supplying 24 M-346FA jets, while Bell has started manufacturing the first of 12 AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters for the NAF. In the last couple of years the Nigerian Air Force has received six Turkish Aerospace Industries T-129 ATAK helicopters; three Beechcraft King Air aircraft; and four Diamond 62 reconnaissance aircraft, amongst others.

BABASKY DEMOS COUNTER-DRONE SYSTEM

Nigeria's BabaSky Technologies has demonstrated the latest iteration of its counter-unmanned aerial system (C-UAS) offering to the Nigerian Army and Nigerian Air Force, alongside key intelligence stakeholders. According to BabaSky, the system is capable of detecting, pinpointing and neutralising rogue drones within an approximate eight-kilometre operational radius.

BabaSky, a subsidiary of the Nigerian technology conglomerate UNICCON Group, specialises in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and counter-UAV solutions. This latest demonstration came shortly after the company successfully demonstrated its UNIKAM-FO1 fibre-optic-guided loitering munition, a first for an African defence manufacturer.

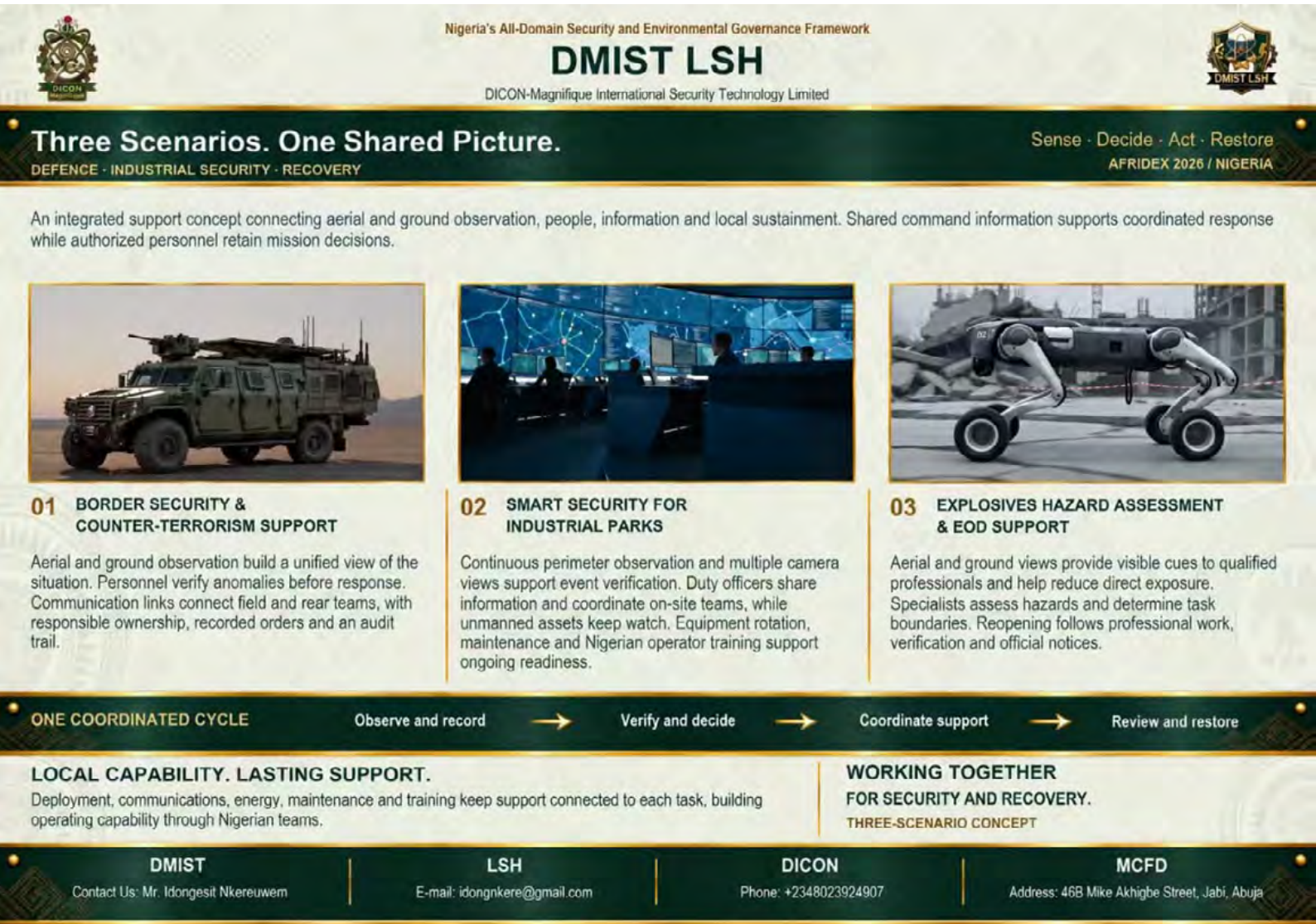
"While the UNIKAM-FO1 solved the problem of offensive drones operating under enemy electronic warfare, this new anti-drone system completes the tactical circle by delivering premier defensive electronic warfare capabilities," BabaSky said.

BabaSky's newly unveiled counter-drone system is said to bring together a number of key capabilities into one, more effective package, with the company noting that "observers from the Nigerian Armed Forces praised the seamless integration of detection radar, radio frequency spectrum analysis, and electronic countermeasures into a single mobile framework." According to BabaSky, some of the system's key capabilities include the ability to identify small and medium-sized multi-rotor drones up to eight kilometres away. While this is not extraordinary in and of itself, BabaSky says that its system goes further than standard signal detection thanks to the integration of pilot geolocation capabilities.

The system also enables the automated establishment of no-fly zones through mapping out "protected airspace perimeters, establishing an immediate digital shield around sensitive assets and military installations," the company said. This is practically enabled through the incorporation of what the company terms "targeted directional jamming."

The demonstration comes as Nigeria, like other African countries, has placed an increased emphasis on developing an indigenous defence industrial capacity across legacy and emerging technology spheres.





BUILDING THE FUTURE OF AFRICA'S DEFENCE INDUSTRY

Africa's defence and security landscape is facing growing security challenges, rapid technological advances and increasing interest from international manufacturers, creating new opportunities for the continent's defence sector.

At the same time, African companies are gaining recognition for developing practical, reliable solutions tailored to some of the world's most demanding operating environments.

Matthew Harman, Afridex Content Advisory Board member and founder of Greypoint Advisory Services, said these developments point to a future in which African defence businesses play a far more prominent role in regional and international markets.

With more than three decades of experience across global defence industries, Harman believes Africa's future success will depend on combining innovation, industrial partnerships and operational expertise with a deep understanding of local requirements.

"Africa represents an enormous opportunity for the international defence industry, but it is important to recognise the diversity of the continent and the different requirements of individual countries," he said.

Harman noted that one of the biggest mistakes defence companies can make is assuming Africa can be approached as a single market. "This is particularly relevant in Africa, where political, commercial, geographical and operational considerations can vary significantly between markets," he explained.

The continent faces a range of security challenges, from piracy and terrorism to trafficking, insurgency and the protection of critical national infrastructure. Yet these challenges exist alongside growing economies, increasing technology adoption and considerable industrial potential.



PREPARATION AND COMMITMENT

For companies seeking to enter African markets, Harman argues that success requires careful preparation and long-term commitment.

"Companies need to approach these markets with a clear understanding of local requirements, appropriate commercial preparation and a willingness to establish long-term relationships. Those that take the time to understand the operating environment will be much better positioned to identify meaningful opportunities," he said.

Understanding operational requirements must always be the starting point. Africa's diverse environments, from deserts and rainforests to extensive coastlines and remote regions with limited communications infrastructure, place unique demands on defence equipment and systems. As a result, reliability and sustainability are often more important than cutting-edge specifications.

"Defence manufacturers must consider how their products will perform over extended distances, how they will be maintained and whether they can remain operational when access to technical support or replacement components is limited," he said.

The growing importance of Africa within the global defence market is also being driven by wider technological and economic developments. Improvements in communications networks, mobile connectivity and satellite-based services are changing the equation. These advances are increasingly influencing defence and security operations, where access to information, communications and situational awareness are central to mission success.

For international manufacturers, this creates opportunities to establish industrial partnerships, introduce new technologies and support capability development. However, Harman stressed that meaningful success requires patience.

"Businesses must recognise that individual countries have different political structures, commercial practices and procurement requirements. The opportunity is significant, but it must be approached with a proper understanding of the markets involved," he said.

OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPAND

Harman also sees substantial opportunities for African defence manufacturers to expand beyond their domestic and regional markets.

One of Africa's greatest strengths, he argues, is the

practical experience companies have gained operating in difficult conditions.

"If a manufacturer can demonstrate that its equipment is robust, reliable, relatively straightforward to operate and capable of being maintained over an extended service life, those qualities can be highly attractive to international customers," he said.

Many countries outside Africa face similar challenges, particularly in parts of South America and the Middle East.

"The opportunity is to take equipment and solutions that have demonstrated their effectiveness in African operating environments and introduce them to other markets where similar requirements exist," he said.

Strong partnerships, he argues, remain fundamental to building sustainable businesses across Africa. "Businesses should avoid becoming dependent on individual political relationships. The objective should be to establish commercially credible partnerships capable of operating successfully over the long term," he said.

"The strongest relationships are those in which both sides benefit and where the partnership contributes to the long-term development of local industrial capabilities."

Industrial cooperation will be increasingly important as African manufacturers seek to strengthen their international competitiveness. Partnerships can combine advanced international technologies with African operational knowledge, engineering expertise and proven solutions.

"That combination can create products that are technologically capable, commercially competitive and particularly well suited to demanding operational environments," said Harman.

SUCCESSFUL TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

One of the biggest challenges confronting manufacturers is scaling production after developing a successful technical solution. "Partnerships can help accelerate that development by bringing together complementary expertise and industrial capabilities," he explained.

Technology transfer is another area where Harman sees significant opportunities. "Successful technology partnerships need to deliver benefits in both directions," he said. Rather than importing finished products, he advocates collaboration spanning manufacturing, software development, component production and long-term support services.

"By combining international expertise with African manufacturing and engineering capabilities, companies can develop solutions that meet domestic requirements while also creating export opportunities," he said.

Perhaps the most significant driver of change across the defence sector is the emergence of new technologies. Harman said recent conflicts have demonstrated how rapidly military priorities are evolving, particularly in relation to unmanned systems and autonomous capabilities. "We are witnessing a fundamental change in military operations, particularly within the maritime environment."

Advances in drones, artificial intelligence and autonomous technologies are altering how armed forces evaluate future investments. Lower-cost systems that can be manufactured efficiently, upgraded rapidly and deployed at scale are becoming attractive alternatives to traditional large platforms.

"One of the most significant changes is the increasing importance of lower-cost systems that can be manufactured at scale, adapted quickly and improved continuously in response to operational experience," Harman explained.

"This creates interesting opportunities for African industry, particularly in unmanned surface vessels, unmanned underwater vehicles and associated maritime technologies," he said.

Countries such as Nigeria face growing maritime security requirements linked to the protection of critical infrastructure and economic activity within the Gulf of Guinea. Harman believes international technology partnerships could help develop solutions tailored to these requirements while opening export opportunities.

"One of the most significant developments is that sophisticated military capabilities do not necessarily require the same level of investment associated with traditional large defence platforms," he explained.

The growing accessibility of technologies such as artificial intelligence, autonomous systems and advanced sensors is lowering barriers to entry and creating opportunities for a broader range of companies to participate in defence programmes.

However, Harman cautioned that innovation alone is not enough. "Manufacturers must also be able to produce equipment at scale, maintain quality and respond quickly to changing operational requirements. Companies that can combine technical innovation with efficient manufacturing and sustained product support will be well positioned," he said.

CATALYST FOR GROWTH AND COOPERATION

Against this backdrop, Harman believes Afridex has the potential to become an important catalyst for industrial growth and international cooperation. "The exhibition creates an opportunity for organisations to meet directly, exchange knowledge and identify areas where their capabilities and requirements may complement one another," he said.

For African manufacturers, it offers a platform to showcase technologies, engage with international partners and explore opportunities beyond domestic markets. For international companies, it provides valuable insight into African operational requirements and industrial capabilities.

"What makes Afridex particularly interesting is its pan-African ambition and the opportunity to bring together participants from across the continent and the wider international defence community," said Harman.

For Harman, Afridex arrives at a pivotal moment for both Africa and the wider defence industry. As technologies, operational requirements and international supply chains evolve, the continent has an opportunity to demonstrate the depth of its innovation, expertise and industrial capability.

"Afridex should encourage organisations to think beyond traditional markets and established relationships. There is an opportunity for African defence industries to contribute meaningfully to the future of international defence and security," he concluded.

EU PLEDGES €20 MILLION IN NON-LETHAL DEFENCE AID TO NIGERIA

The European Union has for the first time pledged direct defence assistance to Nigeria under the European Peace Facility (EPF) to the value of €20 million. It will be used for non-lethal defence capabilities.

The funding approval was announced on 19 October 2026 by the European Union Council (EUC). Nigeria already benefits from EPF support as part of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad basin. The MNJTF comprises contingents from Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Nigeria.

The EPF assistance will be used to provide non-lethal defence capabilities to the Nigerian armed forces in the areas of counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED), counter unmanned aerial system (C-UAS), night vision and individual protection. This will improve the security of the troops deployed on Nigeria's national territory and strengthen their capacity to react against malign external actors, armed groups and bandits, the European Union (EU) said.

"The measure aligns with the shared priorities discussed in the Peace, Security and Defence Dialogue between Nigeria and the EU, most recently held on 18 February 2026, as well as during the eighth Nigeria-EU ministerial dialogue, held on 23 March 2026 in Abuja. It forms part of the EU engagement to support peace and stability in the country," it added. "The support under the EPF is part of a broader package of EU assistance that combines various tools, including assistance aimed at preventing and combatting violent extremism."

Of its relationship with Nigeria, the EU said it is rooted in shared values and interests. The bloc recognises Nigeria's strategic importance as Africa's most populous nation and largest economy. "Our co-operation aims to enhance growth and stability to achieve social equity in Nigeria and on the continent."

The European Peace Facility was established in March 2021 for the financing of actions to prevent conflicts, preserve peace and strengthen international security and stability. Much of its funding has gone to supporting Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022 (of the €7 billion disbursed so far, more than €6 billion has gone to Ukraine).

In December 2023, the European Union backed a new security and defence initiative to tackle the spill over of insecurity from the Sahel to west African countries. The initiative is seen as part of a wider response pulling together prevention, socio-economic development and humanitarian assistance.

Multiple African countries have benefitted from EPF assistance this year. In September, the EU adopted a second EPF assistance measure, worth €60 million, in support of the armed forces of Cabo Verde. The measure will strengthen the defence capacities of Cabo Verde's armed forces, helping them safeguard the country's sovereignty at sea and improve regional maritime security.

Also in September, the EU agreed to strengthen the support provided to the Djibouti armed forces under an existing assistance measure adopted in July 2025. The



financial support provided will increase from €10 million to €20 million. The extra funds will support Djibouti's efforts to enhance maritime security in the region.

Another recent African EPF beneficiary was Togo, which received a €5 million assistance measure in July 2026 so its Navy can better protect the country's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and add capacity to ongoing Gulf of Guinea anti-piracy efforts. This follows an assistance measure in July 2025 to support the Forces Armées Togolaises (FAT) in efforts protect the West African country's territorial integrity and curb the spread of extremism in the north.

The maritime assistance measure brings overall EU support to Togo to €15 million and will see surveillance and communication capacities, maintenance and support equipment and intervention assets boost the country's maritime service. The equipment that will be added to the Togolese Navy inventory is all non-lethal.

Another recent EPF disbursement came in early June, to Egypt, which was allocated €20 million, while in May Senegal was allocated €15 million, and in March Benin was allocated €10 million. Other allocations this year have been to Lebanon, Albania, Moldova, the Philippines, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Armenia.

OPERATION CORYMBE ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

The French Navy's amphibious assault ship FS Mistral is currently in the Gulf of Guinea on the latest Operation Corymbe mission.



The vessel left Toulon, France, on 23 September, carrying one fast amphibious landing craft, two standard amphibious landing craft, and an airmobile group comprising 77 vehicles and several helicopters. In total, 300 soldiers are on board the vessel along with 200 crew.

Also on board are some 40 officers and petty officers from 20 different countries (including Angola, Benin, Cape Verde, Congo, and Gabon) as part of the SIREN (Stage d'Instruction Regionale Embarquee et Numerique – Regional Onboard and Digital Training Course) programme. This 'onboard academy' jointly developed by the Yaoundé Naval Architecture and the French Atlantic Maritime Zone Command (CECLANT) is dedicated to training and cooperation for maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea.

Under Operation Corymbe, the FS Mistral will exercise with various nations in the region in support of the Yaounde architecture, which brings together 19 countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea and aims to strengthen the fight against piracy, armed robbery, illicit trafficking at sea, illegal fishing, and marine pollution.

"Since 2023, under the leadership of the President of the Republic, this mission has been partially reoriented and now aims to contribute to the maritime security and safety of the region, in partnership with all the coastal nations directly confronted with the threats looming over the Gulf of Guinea," said Captain Gauthier, commanding officer of the amphibious assault ship deployed on Operation Corymbe.

He pointed out that the Gulf of Guinea sees a thousand ships a day sail through, and the Gulf accounts for 10% of global oil production, and one million tons of fish caught every year. It is a hotspot for piracy, and a transit point for narcotics.

The FS Mistral is visiting Cotonou, Benin, from 22 to 27 October under Operation Corymbe, and will carry out exercises with the Beninese Armed Forces.

Since 1990, one or two French vessels supported by a maritime patrol aircraft have been deployed in the Gulf of Guinea on an almost permanent basis as part of Operation Corymbe. By strengthening the capacities of local navies, France is participating in the development of the security architecture resulting from the Yaoundé process, the French Navy said.

It listed some recent successes in Gulf of Guinea deployments: in 2021, the Dixmude intercepted the cargo ship Najlan, which was carrying 6 tons of cocaine. This is the largest drug interception by the French Navy to date. In 2022, the amphibious assault ship Tonnerre seized 4.6 tons of cocaine on a Brazilian tugboat. In early 2023, a French Falcon 50M, deployed to Dakar, supported a Senegalese patrol boat, resulting in the seizure of 805 kg of cocaine.

The FS Mistral is set to take part in the Grand African NEMO exercise scheduled to take place from 29 October to 6 November. This will encompass activities such as Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) operations, anti-piracy drills, and countering crude oil theft, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and drug trafficking in the Gulf of Guinea.

Grand African NEMO is an annual exercise conducted along more than 6 000 km of West African coastline, under the auspices of the Yaoundé Architecture. Each year, it brings together more than 3 000 participants, 55 vessels, 10 aircraft, representatives from 25 countries, and several international organisations including European External Action Service (EEAS), UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and INTERPOL HQ.

LEONARDO CLOSE TO FIRST NIGERIAN M-346 DELIVERIES

Italy's Leonardo (stand 4140) is getting close to delivering the first of 24 M-346FA aircraft to the Nigerian Air Force (NAF), with the first three set to arrive before year-end.





Factory Acceptance Tests for the first batch of M-346FAs was conducted by a joint delegation comprising representatives of the NAF and the Nigerian Ministry of Defence (MoD) between 29 June and 9 July in Venegono, Italy.

Beyond the acceptance process, the delegation also engaged with Leonardo Aircraft Division on pilot and maintenance training, logistics support and long-term fleet sustainment, while inspecting simulation and ground-based training systems that will strengthen indigenous training capacity, enhance operational readiness and ensure the effective employment of the M-346FA fleet. Included in the M-346FA acquisition is a 25-year maintenance contract.

Commenting on the milestone, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke, stated that the M-346FA's unique blend of advanced pilot training and frontline combat capability will significantly enhance the NAF's ability to generate combat-ready aircrew while expanding its capacity to conduct precision strike, close air support, air interdiction and other air combat missions in response to Nigeria's evolving security environment.

The first three M-346FAs (NAF 01, NAF 02 and NAF 03) are expected to arrive in Nigeria by December, following a 2023 order for 24 aircraft valued at approximately €1.2 billion. The delivery plan is structured in four tranches of six aircraft each, including weapons, support equipment, tools, spare parts, and comprehensive training and logistics support services.

The M-346FA that Nigeria is getting is an upgraded version of the M-346 advanced jet trainer, and is fitted with the Leonardo Grifo-346 multimode fire-control radar, defensive aids suite, tactical datalink, and helmet-mounted display. It is equipped with seven hardpoints, including three under each wing and one on the centreline for an optional cannon pod. The aircraft can carry over 2 000 kg of 'dumb' and 'smart' munitions, such as guided and unguided bombs, air-to-surface missiles (such as the Brimstone), air-to-air missiles (AIM-9L, IRIS-T), as well as electronic countermeasures, targeting and other pods.

The M-346 has a top speed of over 1 065 km/h, a range of 1 960 km, and a service ceiling of 45 000 feet (13 715 metres). It is powered by two Honeywell F124-GA-200 engines providing 2 850 kg of thrust each.

Leonardo is also delivering ten AW109 Trekker B helicopters to the Nigerian Air Force, with three arriving in Lagos, Nigeria, in mid-September. The remaining seven expected before the end of 2026, according to the NAF.

Together, the two programmes represent 34 Leonardo aircraft being acquired by the Nigerian Air Force, creating a substantial current aerospace link between Nigeria and Italian industry.

Leonardo's relationship with Nigeria predates the current aircraft programmes. Italy's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has described the company as having decades of collaboration in Nigeria's defence sector, while Italy and Nigeria have also maintained formal military-to-military engagement through bilateral staff talks and other institutional cooperation.

Odiri Umusu, Portfolio Director for the Africa International Defence Exhibition (Afridex), said: "Italy's participation at Afridex comes at a particularly relevant point in the defence relationship between Italy and Nigeria. Nigeria is progressing through delivery, training and sustainment milestones across major Leonardo aircraft programmes, while the presence of an Official Delegation from Italy creates an important opportunity for wider government-to-government and industry engagement.

"Afridex has been established to support structured defence and security cooperation around capability requirements, training, long-term readiness, technical capacity, industrial support and credible government-industry dialogue.

"We are pleased to welcome the Official Delegation from Italy and Leonardo to Lagos and to provide a platform for engagement with defence and security stakeholders from Nigeria, across Africa and international partner markets."

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BEYOND THE SECURITY OF SUPPLY: THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

Although the concept of strategic autonomy has been around for several decades now, the repeated global shocks, return of great power competition and increasing geopolitical uncertainty of recent years have pushed it into the forefront of defence planners across the globe. Africa has been no exception.



However, it remains an inescapable fact that the continent remains almost entirely reliant on foreign suppliers, partners, and benefactors to meet its own security needs. While there are a handful of exceptions to this, including Egypt and Algeria, even they, perhaps with the exception of South Africa, remain fairly dependent on foreign partners in terms of intellectual property licensing and critical components.

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI's) 2025 trends in international arms transfers showed that between the periods 2016–20 and 2021–25, sub-Saharan Africa's "major arms" imports increased by some 13%. Nigeria, Senegal, and Mali emerged as the top three arms importers, while, with 22%, 12%, and 11% of imports by sub-Saharan African states, China, Russia and Türkiye represent the most significant suppliers for African militaries.

However, the supply disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the surge in demand for munitions and the weaponisation of strategic dependencies exposed by the Russo-Ukrainian war, alongside the rapid depletion of advanced weapon stockpiles not just of Persian Gulf states but of a superpower during the war with Iran, have exposed the need for greater resilience, production capacity and self-sufficiency right around the world.

Africa's own security environment has grown ever more complex in recent years too: the Sahel has been destabilised through apparently endemic Islamist insurgencies, while the southward spread of these insurgents threatens the relative security of West Africa's coastal states. There are also continued conflicts and insurgencies in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Mozambique, and simmering tension between Ethiopia and Eritrea. All have been compounded by the proliferation and weaponisation of low-cost, often consumer-grade, drones and other emerging technologies.

As such, many countries right across the continent have begun re-evaluating their approach to security and defence procurement. Some, such as Togo, have sought greater diversification in defence partnerships, limiting an overreliance on a single defence partner.

The logic here is deceptively simple: an overreliance on one partner leaves countries' defence and security overly exposed to external manipulation or political dictates. As a consequence, diversifying supply ensures that if one partner imposes too many conditionalities, they can simply shift to another. While it is true that diversification helps to insulate from potential global shocks, questions remain as to whether it can realise meaningful autonomy of action.

Relying on entirely imported systems still leaves states dependent on foreign technologies that are governed by licensing regimes, export controls, and external cloud services, limiting operational sovereignty and potentially exposing the state's security apparatus to foreign exploitation.

Others, such as Nigeria, Morocco, and Rwanda, alongside the more established South Africa and Egypt, have taken a different route, seeking to build up, modernise or reinvigorate their domestic defence industrial base.

Proponents of localisation often contend that if a country is able to produce the bulk of the most critical systems domestically, it obtains a level of freedom of action that simply cannot be bought or obtained from foreign suppliers.

It is important to note here that, while it might be tempting for some to call for complete self-reliance, this would not just be extremely costly but ultimately an impossible goal to achieve. As such, partnerships remain key: partnerships between African governments and companies, and partnerships between Africa and the wider world.

Africa cannot and should not seek to isolate itself, but future defence partnerships cannot simply mean the transfer of complete systems. Where economically viable, they should involve the localisation of assembly, production, and ultimately of intellectual property through both co-development and technology transfer.

Here are where continental partnerships perhaps have the greatest potential. While there are various models available for such partnerships, a particularly interesting, albeit controversial, option that emerged at South Africa's recent Defence Industry Lekgotla (a first-of-its-kind dialogue between the South African government and its defence industry in the democratic era) was the notion of shared sovereignty.

At its core, shared sovereignty sees friendly nations pooling resources to enhance strategic capabilities and ultimately security, building a joint African or sub-regional satellite network, for example.

While African countries may not have the resources to build such capabilities on their own, many, if not most, of the skills and knowledge required to do so are already present across the continent's more advanced economies: South Africa has a highly advanced and world-class indigenous aerospace and defence industry; Nigeria has a rapidly developing industrial and technical skills base; Egypt, has established aerospace and manufacturing sectors; not to speak of countless other African countries making significant strides in their own defence industrial development.

As such, the question that confronts Africa's defence planners should not be "How can we become self-sufficient?" but rather "How can we, as a continent, work together with ourselves and willing external partners to increase security through both security of supply and autonomy of action?"



WEST AFRICAN DEFENCE IMPORTS SOAR

While the volume of arms imports by states across Africa overall decreased by 41% between the 2016-2020 and 2021-2025 periods, West African arms transfers rose sharply as the security situation in the region deteriorated.

This is according to a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). It noted that the combined arms imports of West African states almost doubled (+82%) between 2010–14 and 2020–24. Nigeria accounted for by far the biggest share (34%) of arms imports to West Africa in 2020–24.

"The growth in arms imports to West Africa has been striking. While the volume of imports remains relatively small, it has important geopolitical implications," said Katarina Djokic, Researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

"States like Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal seem to be rapidly increasing their imports. Arms suppliers are using arms exports to boost their influence in this part of the world, including emerging suppliers—primarily Türkiye—alongside more established actors such as China, France, Russia and the USA."

The main suppliers to Africa in 2021–25 were the USA (accounting for 19% of African imports of major arms), China (17%), Russia (15%) and France (8.3%).

Morocco (rank 28 globally) and Algeria (rank 33) are by far the largest recipients of major arms in Africa. Their long-running tensions with each other are a major driver of their arms imports.

The three largest arms recipients in sub-Saharan Africa were Nigeria (receiving 16% of subregional imports), Senegal (8.8%) and Mali (8%). China, which supplied major arms to 23 states and accounted for 22% of subregional imports, was the largest supplier to sub-Saharan Africa. Russia was the next largest supplier (accounting for 12% of imports), followed by Türkiye (11%).



GULF OF GUINEA PIRACY AT HISTORIC LOWS WHILE INCIDENTS OFF SOMALIA SURGE

Only two incidents of piracy were recorded in the Gulf of Guinea between January and September 2026 as littoral states in the region continue to improve maritime security.

This is according to the latest International Maritime Bureau (IMB) piracy update, released in mid-October by the International Chamber of Commerce Commercial Crime Services Division. It commended west and central African nations bordering the Gulf of Guinea for continued efforts to ensure piracy and armed robbery incidents remain at low levels.

Regional maritime security is getting a boost through the recently established Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF), which takes aim at piracy and other crimes affecting 26 diverse countries from Senegal to Angola. The CMTF was launched on 1 June 2026 by Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The Gulf of Guinea was once regarded as the world's hotspot for piracy but sustained regional efforts have curbed piracy over the past few years – Nigeria, for example, has been removed from major piracy watchlists. However, the region also faces illegal bunkering, armed robbery, kidnapping, transnational organised crime, illegal fishing and terrorism. Kidnappings and other violent attacks show that maritime insecurity remains a threat – something the Lagos, Nigeria-headquarter CMTF aims to address. The task force will undertake surveillance, interdiction, intelligence gathering, patrols, search and rescue, and other maritime security operations.

The task force is envisaged to have 1 500 personnel and a fleet that includes ships, aircraft, and electronic maritime surveillance capabilities. Nigeria is contributing three ships, one helicopter, and seven vehicles.

SOMALI PIRACY SURGES

While maritime security improves in the Gulf of Guinea, the situation off Africa's east coast has deteriorated. The IMB's latest report noted a resurgence of incidents involving Somali pirates from January to September, with Somali pirates responsible for eight vessel hijackings and 94% of all crew taken hostage globally.

Globally, there is a downward trend in the number of reported incidents (51 reported incidents in the first nine months of 2026, down from 116 in the same period last year and the lowest reported figured since 1992). Of the 51 incidents this year, the IMB said 36 vessels were boarded, eight hijacked, four fired at with three attempted boardings during the period under review. In 86% of the incidents - with the majority taking place under cover of darkness - perpetrators accessed vessels either underway or at anchor.

On the increased activity of Somali pirates, IMB Director Michael Howlett is on record as saying: "While incident levels are at their lowest in more than three decades, the recent uptick in Somali piracy activity is a reminder that the threat remains. Incidents this year have also shown that strict adherence to Best Management Practice recommendations remains one of the most effective ways to deter hijacking attempts and protect crews. Continued vigilance is essential to safeguarding seafarers and the vital trade routes on which the global economy depends."

Although Somali pirates were responsible for eight vessel hijackings this year, most hijacked vessels were released with crews reported safe. However, the April 2026 hijacking of the Palau-flagged product tanker Honour 25 and the deaths of five crew and another five injured during a rescue attempt in September were reported as the first deaths at the hands of Somali pirates in more than a decade.

The Honour 25 rescue followed another operation in September in which the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) freed the Sibu 1, a tanker sanctioned by the US that Somali pirates had hijacked in August. However, 28 of the 41 pirates arrested in that operation later escaped while being transferred to jail.

"While these incidents," the IMB said, "highlight the continued capability of Somali pirates to target vessels in the region, they are not comparable in scale or reach to the deep sea piracy operations that characterised the 2008-13 Somali piracy era".

Howlett said the drop in reported Gulf of Guinea incidents is encouraging and reflects the positive impact of sustained efforts by the authorities, adding the momentum should be maintained through continued vigilance and timely reporting.





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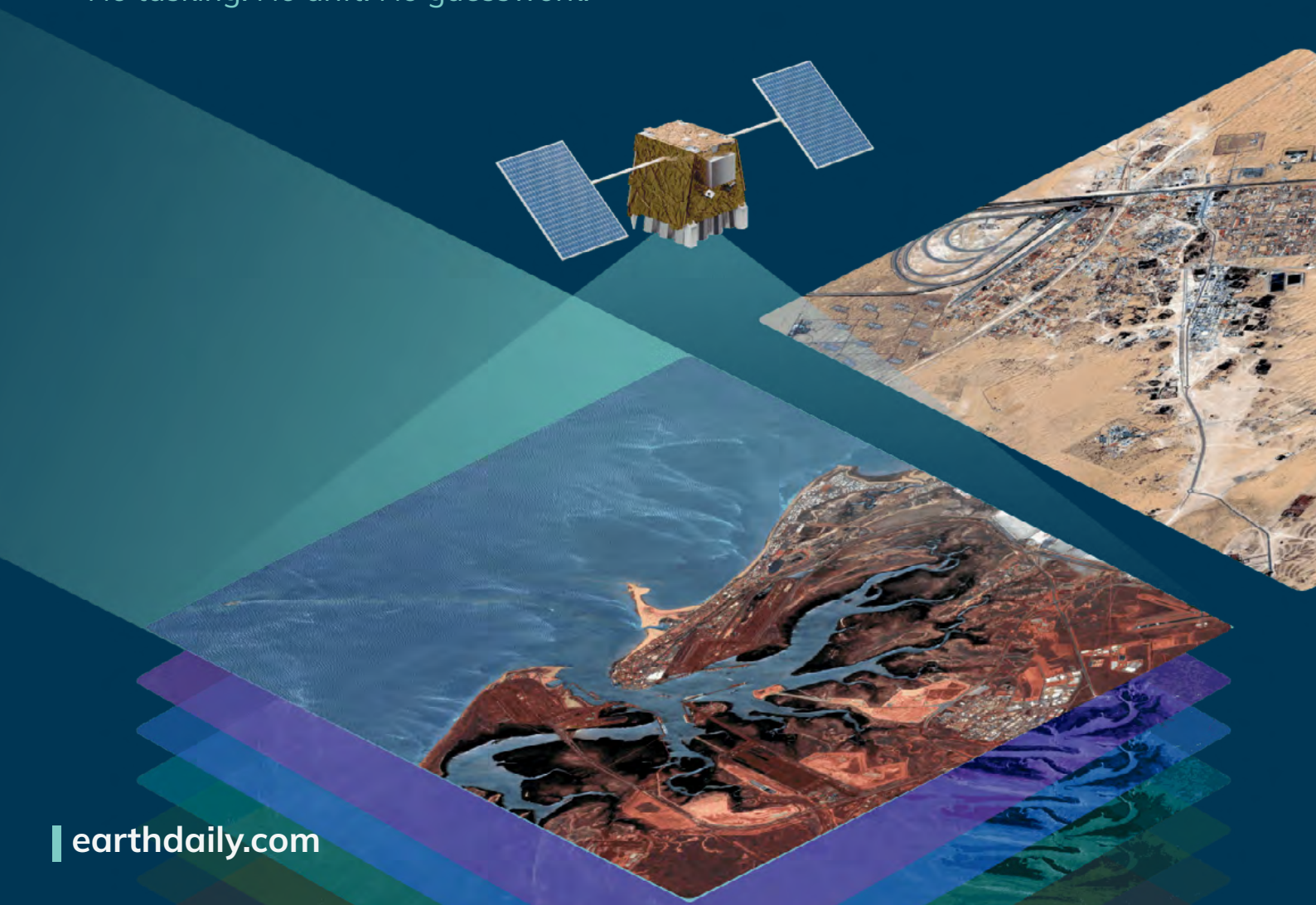

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DRONES RESHAPE AFRICA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Across conflicts and insurgencies in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other parts of Africa, the rapid proliferation of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones, is driving a transformation of the African security environment.





In just over a decade, UAVs have gone from a relative novelty to being ubiquitous within the African battlespace. Previously, the use of militarised UAVs was largely limited to expensive Western systems; however, the rise of more cost-effective Chinese and Turkish UAVs in recent years has led to more expansive adoption of both armed and unarmed UAV usage among African states.

While estimates vary, today it is thought that in excess of 13 African militaries operate armed medium-altitude long-endurance (MALE) UAVs, while many more make use of the technology to accomplish and support tasks ranging from logistics support to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR).

Nigeria, Egypt, Algeria, Ethiopia, the Libyan National Army, Morocco, and Côte d'Ivoire are all known to have the Chinese Wing Loong II in active service. Additionally, countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Zambia, alongside Algeria, Nigeria, and Ethiopia, operate either or both the CH-3 and CH-4 from China.

Turkish UAVs such as the Bayraktar TB2 have also seen widespread adoption, with a growing number of African countries listing it in their inventories. These are thought to include Niger, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Kenya, among others. Moreover, these and many more African countries, such as Ghana and South Africa, also make extensive use of unarmed UAVs as part of surveillance, border security, and reconnaissance operations.

Indeed, the continent's militaries have enjoyed substantial success following their adoption. Nate Allen of the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS) cites the significant role that Emirati, Iranian, Turkish, and Chinese supplied UAVs played in Ethiopia's successful repelling of a rebel advance on the capital during the 2020–2022 conflict.

However, this proliferation has not been limited to the continent's national armed forces, as an increasing number of paramilitary, insurgent, extremist, and rebel groups acquire often low-cost consumer-grade UAVs, adding yet another layer of complexity to the continent's security environment.

From the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in Sudan to Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) in the West-Central Sahel, the ACSS estimated that non-state armed groups in at least nine African countries have acquired and used military UAVs, with deadly consequences for both civilians and security forces alike.

JNIM and other groups actively use UAVs to drop improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on government forces as they seek to expand their presence and control throughout the Sahel. A notable example includes a 2025 attack on Djibo, Burkina Faso, where reports indicate JNIM made use of various small UAVs to drop IEDs contained in plastic bottles.

This proliferation of UAVs across the continent has also seen a number of African countries seek to either localise production or develop their own independent capabilities as they seek to confront their national or regional security challenges.

Nigeria's BabaSky Technologies (UNICCON Group) and Briech UAS, among others, have all made significant strides in developing both armed and unarmed unmanned systems. Briech UAS, for example, unveiled Nigeria's very first domestically produced attack UAV in late 2025. The Damisa, a kamikaze-style UAV, is capable of carrying a payload of up to 180 kg, with a maximum range of 1 200 km.

BabaSky, for its part, demonstrated the UNIKAM-FO1 just this year. The company described the UAV as a fibre-optic-controlled loitering munition that is completely resistant to electronic jamming and signal spoofing.

South Africa's domestic defence industry has, for example, decades of experience in the unmanned field, with the state arms manufacturer Denel producing its unarmed Seeker since the 1980s. More recently, Milkor has developed and begun manufacturing the Milkor 380, a MALE UAV, the largest such system designed, built, and manufactured in Africa.

Notably, Algeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Kenya, among others, have made significant strides in developing their own combat UAV capabilities in line with the continent's increased push for greater self-reliance in the defence space.

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