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DEEP BLUE SUCCESS OFFERS MARITIME SECURITY MODEL FOR GULF OF GUINEA

The sound of small arms fire echoes over the bay. A small ship is being ambushed by pirates. Suddenly four patrol boats cut through the water, carrying armed soldiers as they speed towards the compromised ship. Two AW109 helicopters fly in and hover over the ship. Troops rappel down ropes and take control of the ship from the pirates. Mission accomplished.



This was a demonstration on the afternoon of Tuesday 27 October at Afridex by the integrated teams of the Deep Blue Project helping to defend Nigerian waters. The project is run by HLSI (Homeland Security International known formally as "HLSI Security Systems and Technologies Limited") in conjunction with the Nigerian military.

The project has been extremely successful. Figures provided by HLSI show that in 2019/2020 there were some 35 piracy attacks off Nigeria and between 64 and 84 in the Gulf of Guinea as a whole.

Kaki Habila, Head of Department: C4I Marine Domain Awareness at HLSI, said that "from 2022, there has never been piracy in Nigeria. We are not talking about reducing it to the barest minimum. It was eradicated, removed."

In May of this year President Bola Ahmed Tinubu announced formally that piracy had been eliminated in Nigerian waters.

Habila explained how it works. "Deep Blue is actually a national integrated security and waterways protection architecture for the federal government of Nigeria. It started in 2019. The assets were launched in 2021.

"The responsibility of manning Nigerian water lies with the Nigerian Navy and the armed forces. Yet you have the civilian structures, like the ports, like the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) saddled with the responsibility to provide safety. So the integration came in to take out any bottlenecks between the military and the civilian components.

"HLSI is the technical partner that powers this project with the needed equipment, with the needed technology, with the needed training, and with the needed support, technically, to see that the project meets its target, keeping Nigerian waters safe."

Deep Blue is officially known as the Integrated National Security and Waterways Protection Infrastructure. It uses a multi-domain approach to improve maritime security in Nigeria's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). By integrating land, air, maritime and C4I (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, and Intelligence) assets, the project provides constant surveillance, intelligence-led operations and rapid response teams to drive piracy out of Nigerian waters.

"Our scope of operation as HLSI is to give the technology and technical support," said Habila. "We are not engaged in day-to-day operations, but we make sure the assets are available for the armed forces, including NIMASA, to use for their own operations. So we give the training, we give the technical support.

"Nigerian Air Force fly our special mission aircraft and UAVs. We have special mission helicopters. The Nigerian Navy are the full crew that move maritime assets at sea.

"This is where partnership comes in. We need the technology, and HLSI has the capacity to provide the technology. We have the support from the government. They sponsor the project. They believe in the sustainability of the project."

Habila believes Deep Blue's success in eliminating piracy speaks for itself. He would like to see the project expand regionally. "If Nigeria is able to get it right, there is no country in the Gulf of Guinea that will not get it right."

Editor-in-Chief
Guy Martin
Tel: +27(0)76 682 0898
Email: guy@defenceweb.co.za

Layout and design
DefenceWeb

Writers
Armand Liebenberg
Guy Martin
Hamilton Wende
Martin Czernowalow
Monday Ashibogwu
Sam Basch

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SENEGAL CALLS FOR ACTION-ORIENTED AFRICAN DEFENCE PARTNERSHIPS AT AFRIDEX

Senegal's top military officer has told delegates at the inaugural African International Defence Exhibition (Afridex) in Lagos that defence partnerships on the continent must shift from traditional assistance towards cooperation that delivers usable capability in the field.

Vice Admiral Oumar Wade, Chief of the General Staff of the Senegalese Armed Forces, made the case during a panel discussion on Tuesday 27 October. He was represented by Brigadier General Latif Kamara, Director General of the Senegalese Institute of Defence.

The panel was moderated by Major General Neil Sexton, former Director of Army Engagement and Communications in the British Army, and focused on military collaboration against insurgency and terrorism, particularly in the Sahel.

The region was described during the discussion as accounting for 50% of global insurgencies and terrorism, underscoring the scale of the security challenge facing African countries.

The panel examined military collaboration against insurgency and terrorism, with particular attention to the Sahel. Armed groups there continue to exploit porous borders, difficult terrain and weak intelligence sharing between states, while uneven capabilities and logistics among national forces complicate joint operations.

Wade's message was that partnerships should be measured by what they add to operational readiness, interoperability and the ability of African forces to respond to shared threats. Arrangements built mainly around donated equipment, training packages or other external support, he suggested, are no longer sufficient on their own.

Areas identified for deeper cooperation include joint training, intelligence sharing, coordinated planning, maintenance capacity, logistics and the development of defence capabilities that African states can sustain themselves.

The distinction carries weight in multinational operations, where the performance of each contingent depends on how well it can communicate, coordinate and keep itself supplied alongside partner forces.

Major General John Clark, Commander of the Integrated Global Defence Network at the UK Ministry of Defence, spoke on logistics coordination and resource management for multinational task forces operating in sub-Saharan Africa.

Clark focused on getting personnel, equipment and supplies to the right place at the right time. In complex theatres, he noted, logistical failures can undo well-planned missions, and differences in equipment, supply chains, communications systems and national procedures can obstruct cooperation between contributing countries.

Better coordination of planning and resource allocation, according to the discussion, allows task forces to avoid duplication, make fuller use of what each country brings and keep deployments going over long periods. It also helps match operational objectives to the capabilities actually available.

The panel placed practical military cooperation alongside a wider debate at Afridex on how African countries can build defence capabilities suited to their own security needs.

Among the issues raised were local defence production, equipment maintenance and through-life support, technical skills development and clearer frameworks for cooperation between armed forces. Participants also pointed to the institutional groundwork that multinational operations require: common procedures, compatible communications and agreed arrangements for command, coordination and accountability.

The Sahel experience shows that hardware alone does not defeat cross-border insurgency. Intelligence, logistics, regional coordination and the capacity to sustain operations over time are equally important, as is addressing the conditions that allow armed groups to recruit and operate.

Afridex brings together military officials, industry and other stakeholders to discuss technology, equipment, industrial capacity and cooperation. Whether such engagements produce lasting results will depend on how far discussions turn into working partnerships and sustained capability development.

Wade's intervention set out a benchmark for that test. In his view, African defence cooperation should be assessed less by the number of agreements signed or the volume of assistance delivered, and more by the capabilities developed, the operational gaps closed and the degree to which African forces can conduct joint missions with greater independence.

The central message from the panel was that defence partnerships should be measured by their operational impact, not merely by the assistance provided or agreements concluded.





NIGERIA A CENTRAL PILLAR OF REGIONAL SECURITY – AFRICOM CHIEF

General Dagvin Anderson, Commander of the United States military's Africa Command (Africom), speaking at Afridex 2026 on Tuesday 27 October, delivered a strong message on US-Africa security needs and on developing stronger and more varied ways of cooperation between the US, the continent and the world.



"We can't talk about the future of global security without talking about Africa. It sits at the crossroads of global commerce and security, bridging the strategic terrain between the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific. It is a continent of immense consequence, and what happens here in Africa will shape the 21st century," he said.

"Africa is not only the world's supplier of critical resources - minerals like copper, cobalt, lithium, and others that are vital to the advanced defence systems and the global high-tech economy - but the most defining feature of Africa and its future are its people, specifically the youth. By 2050, if estimates are correct, Africa will account for a third of the global working-age population. If left without opportunity, [they will] become a source of profound instability. At the heart of this demographic and economic surge stands Nigeria."

NIGERIA PIVOTAL TO WEST AFRICAN STABILITY

"Nigeria is a central pillar of regional security. You cannot have a stable West Africa without a strong, stable, prosperous Nigeria," Anderson said. "We also recognise that Nigeria's success is deeply intertwined with the success of its neighbours in the entire region. We are clear-eyed, though, about the challenges that we face as well. The opportunities across Africa are matched by complex transnational threats, threats that respect no borders. These are threats that the United States, our African partners, and our European partners share. We face the threat of adaptive terrorist organisations that are global in nature. We also face the scourge of a growing narcotics trafficking. Over the past two years, we have witnessed an alarming six-fold increase in cocaine trafficking from South America through Africa.

"So because of this, we understand that this is a shared concern, and that we understand there's a toxic and symbiotic relationship between the drug cartels and violent extremist organisations. When it comes to terrorism, the United States very clearly understands this is a global fight. It's not just about the training, but it's about the ability to understand and share information and intelligence across borders."

Anderson clearly put both meeting African challenges and its growing defence capacity as showcased at Afridex at the centre of joint security.

"We also know what it means to work together, and we know that we cannot achieve lasting security alone. And today, unfortunately, the epicentre of these global networks is in Africa, whether it's ISIS's leadership that has moved to Africa, or Al Qaeda, which seeks to establish a caliphate in the Sahel in West Africa. These are the growing threats that we have watched, and we provide an

understanding of those global networks that we need to partner here on the continent, where people have a local understanding and can help not only with the security, but build the stability and governance that follows.

"That is why the defence exhibition here - and looking at the industrial capabilities that are showcased at Afridex - are vital, not just for the technologies they bring, but about creating joint prosperity, about investing in our defence industrial base and investing in our youth. That is the ultimate counterterrorism strategy of providing an alternative path for the youth, providing a sense of hope and future. And because security leads to stability, which is necessary to allow investment, without that, we won't have shared prosperity. We as the United States want to help willing and able partners when and where our interests align."

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND TACTICS

"We have to continue to develop the capabilities that can adapt to the changing character of war, and stay ahead of the terrorists as they also have access to these same technologies, because we are living through an inflection point in human history, where we're transitioning from the industrial age and industrial age warfare to the digital age and what the digital age brings to warfare," Anderson said.

"We need the right technology in the right place but more importantly we need new ways of thinking, new ways of fighting, and new ways of harnessing that energy. Victory is decided by the speed of relevance, cognitive agility, and the ability to operate across multiple domains simultaneously.

"We cannot afford our own defeat at the hands of agile digitally enabled terrorists or cartels who are rapidly changing and adapting their tactics and this is why we're looking at initiatives across the continent."

But he clearly outlined that military readiness can never be the complete solution.

"As we look at this, critical to this is how we link the economic sector, commercial sector with the defence sector and it's not just about production, it's about how we do this to greater effect. How do we bring those capabilities to bear rapidly? How do we evolve them with our forces and develop them? It's also about talking about how we do this and how we operate and partner together."

He referred to the difficult problem of the desperation of unemployed youths who often turn to insurgent groups for a sense of purpose and identity and to find alternative ways for them to believe in a decent future.

It was, he said, "an even more important effect in my opinion of being able to take power and manpower away from the terrorists without firing a shot. So it's equally important to not just conduct the operations, but to talk about it, to identify a future, the fact that Nigeria has an opportunity for these youth to transition away, but then creating the economic opportunities for that youth so they can look elsewhere and not to terrorism, not to cartels, not to illicit activity. We have to invest, we have to engage, but we have to create the security to allow that stability and governance to prosper.

"And so with that, we share that desire to pursue this through trade, not aid. We're looking at ways of doing market-driven development. We need to find a sustainable model that benefits all parties.

"How do we harness that power of the United States and the West to coordinate that and engage constructively here in Africa to find wins for both partners? And in closing, I just want to leave you with one simple truth that we have learned. We can surge assets. The United States is very good at that. But you cannot surge trust. Trust is built over time. There is great hope for the future and great opportunity in the partnerships here on this continent. But I believe we must move with relentless urgency. We must iterate, innovate, and advance our technologies and tactics faster than the threats we face. We must work together to ensure that security, stability, and prosperity, and not extremism and violence, define our futures. Because this future is what we all take dearly, because it's the future of our children," Anderson concluded.





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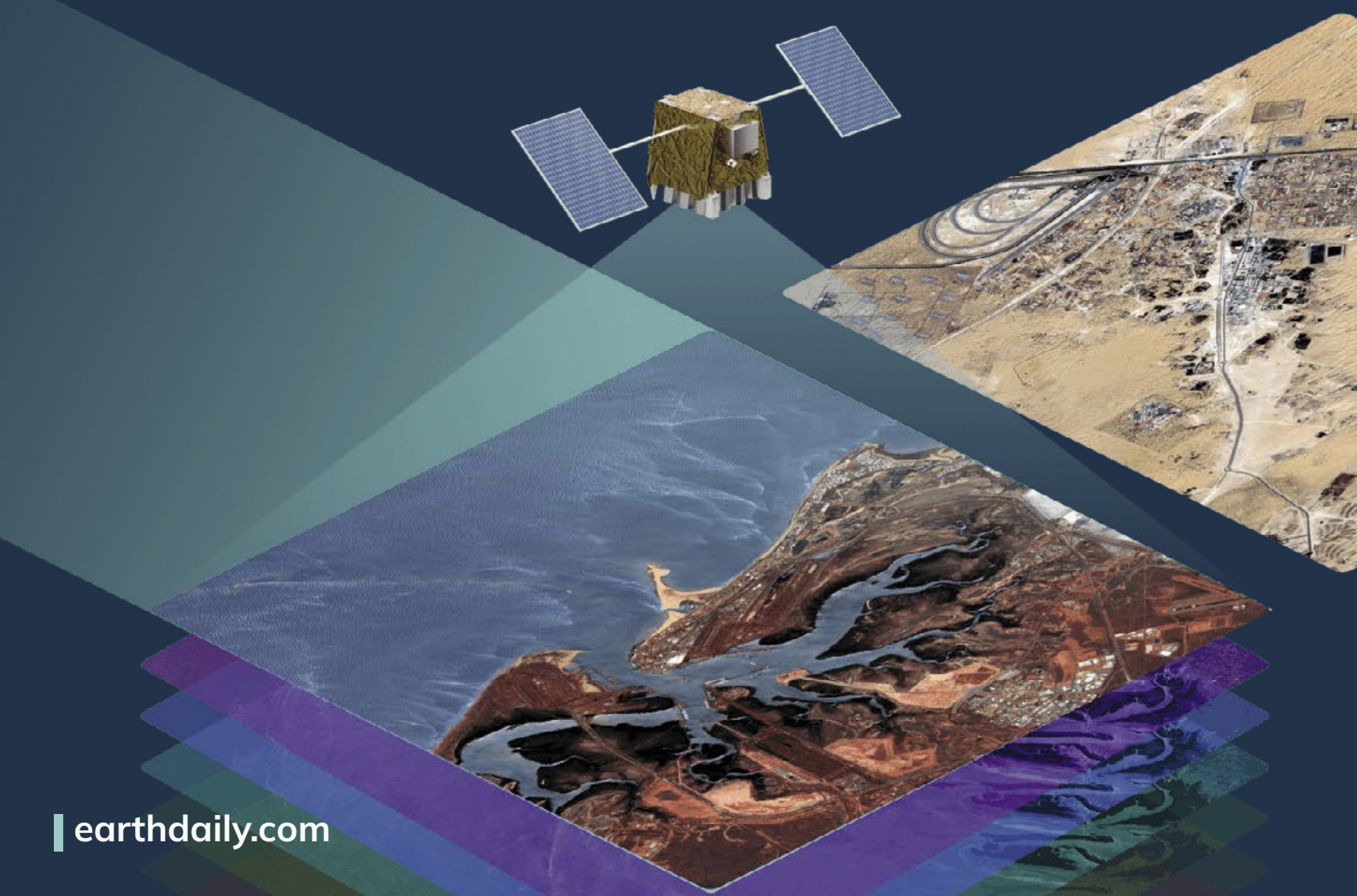

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NEW AIRCRAFT SET TO SIGNIFICANTLY BOLSTER NAF COMBAT CAPABILITIES

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) is set to experience a significant capability boost over the next few years as it continues to actively pursue its force modernisation programme. As part of this, the NAF recently outlined elements of its latest procurement plans with it expecting to procure up to 67 new manned and unmanned aircraft, including 12 AH-1Z attack helicopters from the United States, 12 Aksungur unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and another six T129 attack helicopters from Turkiye, in the coming years.





This is according to a statement and infographic released by the Nigerian Air Force Headquarters on 25 October. The statement sought to outline the progress that the NAF has made towards improving operational effectiveness, personnel welfare, training, and force modernisation as Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal Sunday Kelvin Aneke, marks one year since assuming office on 30 October 2025, following his appointment by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu.

The infographic indicated that there is a substantial pipeline of new fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and unmanned aircraft expected to join the Nigerian Air Force. These acquisitions are not just aimed at modernising the NAF's ageing fleet, but at meaningfully expanding its operational capabilities and readiness.

According to the NAF infographic, the expected acquisitions include 24 M-346 fighter/ground-attack aircraft from Italy's Leonardo; one H225 multi-role helicopter from Airbus Helicopters; 12 AH-1Z attack helicopters from Bell Textron; six T-129 ATAK attack helicopters (on top of those received in 2024) from Turkish Aerospace Industries; seven additional AW109 Trekker Bs from Leonardo Helicopters; three C-295 transport aircraft from Airbus; 12 Aksungur unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from Turkish Aerospace Industries; and two CH-4D UAVs from China's CASC.

It should be noted that neither the NAF HQ statement nor the infographic provided any specific information on contract status, funding, or expected delivery dates for these aircraft. As such, it remains unclear if any orders have been placed.

The statement also noted that, apart from these "expected" additions, September saw the delivery of five new helicopters: three AW109 Trekker Bs and two H125s.

The NAF said that the addition of the Trekkers has already enhanced the service's ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), close air support, armed escort, and combat search and rescue capabilities, while the H125s have materially boosted asset availability, "giving commanders greater flexibility across multiple theatres."

In addition to the NAF's new and potential assets, the statement also indicated that the NAF has continued to make sustained progress on a number of platform overhauls and modernisations over the past year.

This includes the reactivation and upgrade of six L-39ZA aircraft in both Slovakia and Nigeria, two of which are expected to be completed by the end of October 2026. Work also continues on the reactivation of a single ATR in Abuja. One C-130 is also currently undergoing Periodic Depot Maintenance in Portugal.

Moreover, the statement confirmed that, as part of the NAF's ongoing revitalisation efforts, it has been able to log over 6 100 flying hours and more than 2 900 sorties, covering "precision strikes, armed reconnaissance, surveillance and close air support", between November 2025 and September 2026.

Recognising the fact that a modern, capable air force requires more than aircraft, the NAF statement notes that, under the leadership of Air Marshal Aneke and guided by the principle of "Welfare for Enhanced Warfare", Aneke's own command philosophy is described as being: "To enhance and sustain a highly motivated professional, and mission ready force capable of delivering decisive air power effects in synergy with surface forces for the realisation of national security objectives."

As such, over the past year, the NAF has actively sought to improve personnel's working conditions and experience through sustained investment in "personnel allowances, medical support, accommodation and infrastructure, alongside the reactivation of welfare airlift services for personnel in frontline theatres." This has resulted in 284 infrastructure projects being approved, of which 145 have been successfully completed.

With the first anniversary of Aneke's term in office approaching, the NAF statement said that he and the service remain committed to building "a professional, accountable and responsive force delivering stronger airpower, safer skies and a more secure Nigeria."

BRINGING UKRAINIAN BATTLEFIELD LESSONS TO AFRICA

James Westlake, founder of Skua Defence, believes the advances made in warfighting technology and tactics in the Ukraine war have much to teach militaries around the world – and African forces especially.



"I started Skua about a year ago, because Ukraine is leading in the innovation and development of new systems and capabilities in unmanned systems that have application in many other countries around the world. I really believe that several of the acute challenges faced by our partners in this region are very similar to solved problems in Ukraine," he said during the Africa International Defence Exhibition (Afridex).

He said the "big two" priorities were persistent surveillance over very large areas and protection against drone threats. For surveillance, he explained that forces may need to monitor hundreds of kilometres around the clock for extended periods, looking for small enemy or threat vehicles and troop movements across a large space.

SHAHED-TYPE THREATS INCREASINGLY RELEVANT TO AFRICA

On drones, he said the threat ranged from small attack drones and suicide drones targeting front-line positions to longer-range systems similar to Shahed-type drones, which could threaten ports, energy facilities, logistics networks and even cities. He noted that such systems were already appearing around Africa, including in Mali, Burkina Faso and Sudan. To effectively protect against such threats it is a six month minimum process to build that capability.

He said that both large-area intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and drone protection represented real threats in the region. He added that he believes Ukrainian solutions could significantly raise capability levels in these areas.

Westlake is a former officer in the British army who served in Afghanistan and did training deployments in Uganda, which gave him insight into African conditions. He also has a history with both Russia and Ukraine. He studied Russian and lived in the country for a year, also travelling extensively in Ukraine.

"I started to meet people, started to appreciate the country. And I have a base of contacts going back 20 years so that's a role that I think a British intermediary can be really useful in.

"I'm thinking about new generation versus next generation warfare. Next generation warfare is what we generally talk about at defence conferences, and it's high-

tech, bleeding edge, what can we do next with the latest scientific and engineering breakthroughs, just things like stealth, submarines, satellites or quantum computing, and all that's really high-tech stuff. And that's how the superpowers will fight and win the next war.

"But new generation as opposed to next is the actual evolving reality of war. The way it's fought now with mid-power militaries, mid-tier militaries, who don't have stealth and satellites and submarines, but they are driving a revolution - that I think is almost just as significant right now," Westlake said.

AFFORDABLE SYSTEMS AND NETWORKS CHANGING BATTLEFIELD DYNAMICS

"They are fighting a war by using mass instead of expensive technology, using lots and lots of relatively cheap stuff that is brought together with new levels of off-the-shelf computation and communication stuff. That is what I call new generation warfare.

"When it comes to that type of warfighting it's a much bigger risk than we fully appreciate. It's emerging really quickly, and it's the way most of our potential adversaries around the world will fight.

"It is how Iran is fighting back against the US. They're not going to defeat the US in a conventional battle, but they can absolutely project power for much longer than anyone thought by using lots and lots of cheap mass networks."

And in much of Africa, non-state actors are rapidly adopting this technology. "They once were restricted to sniping attacks, roadside bombs, short raids, maybe suicide bombing, things that we were fighting 20 years ago. They now have, in their arsenal, the ability to do strikes at 20, 50 kilometre ranges with very cheap systems.

"They also have the ability to jam communications with very, very cheap electronic warfare (EW) systems: we never thought [there] would be a non-state EW [capability]. You can buy jammers off Chinese Amazon equivalents that will stop many radio systems used by our friends in this region from working.

"And it's going to really accelerate. It's the classic hockey stick curve. You go from one drone one month, to 10 the next, to 100 the next, to 1 000 the next, because people realise how effective this is and it's cheap."

UKRAINE LEADING IN ADAPTING TO NEW-GENERATION WARFARE

He said that, when it came to understanding and responding to these threats, Ukraine is leading the way. He explained that Ukraine had adopted and innovated new-generation systems and tactics, and was developing them in real time.

He noted that the Ukrainian army had not been prepared in 2022 to fight in the way it was fighting at present. According to Westlake, Ukraine moved from operating only a handful of drones in 2022 to producing millions per year, with the overwhelming majority manufactured by Ukrainian companies.

UGVS SEEN AS NEXT MAJOR BATTLEFIELD DEVELOPMENT

"I think UGVs (unmanned ground vehicles) are the next big story that's coming through. You go from a few hundred or thousand units being produced per month at the beginning of this year to now tens of thousands of UGVs being produced in Ukraine and being used across the battlefield from resupply, logistics, casualty evacuation. There are now documented cases of unmanned systems holding positions, even taking positions," Westlake said.

"In Operation Vivaldi, UGVs were carried by heavy-lift drones over Russian lines and then attacking Russian forces in the rear and just creating all sorts of chaos. Other UGVs were demining the routes that would be used. These are concepts of warfighting that no one imagined in 2022, but the Ukrainians have developed under extreme pressure and under extreme necessity."

SKUA AIMS TO BRIDGE AFRICAN AND UKRAINIAN DEFENCE ECOSYSTEMS

James and his Ukrainian partner, Viktor Tarran, who is also a military veteran, are at the beginning of building their business. Tarran is founder of a large private drone training centre near Kiev called the Kruk Centre.

"The way it works in Ukraine is a lot of this is privatised and decentralised. An individual brigade commander can choose where to send his men to learn, say, counter UAS skills. It creates this free market that's great for the warfighters because they get access to a competitive training landscape where everyone's trying to be better.

"Our core mission is to help take Ukrainian capabilities to our friends faster than Russian capability finds its way to the adversaries. We aim to be a platform that makes that engagement work more successfully because what we do see is people struggle to interact with Ukrainian ecosystems effectively.

"We at an are early stage. We are mostly doing training now, bringing out a team of Ukrainian instructors, who can look at the drone training and go, 'Okay, this is the level you're at now. Here is some quick advice to just pump you up on the spot during this exercise, but thinking longer term, here is what the training programme you need to do looks like.' And the ambition is to build on that, to deliver more of that."

Afridex is their first venture into Africa, and they are seeing a steady stream of interest. "It is definitely ramping up and I'm having a number of interesting conversations for sure," Westlake said.



EMBRAER SEES AFRICA AS KEY GROWTH MARKET FOR C-390 AIRLIFTER

Embraer (stand 2166) is continuing to pursue opportunities to supply its C-390 Millennium multi-mission military transport aircraft to African nations, with multiple sales campaigns active across the continent.



The company is seeking to build on the C-390's growing international success, which began with Portugal's selection of the aircraft in 2019. Since then, the programme has attracted customers across Europe and Latin America, with interest also expanding into the Middle East and Africa.

Jose Gustavo, Embraer Defence's Vice President of Sales and Business Development for Europe and Africa, confirmed that Embraer had delivered nine aircraft to Brazil (out of 18 ordered), four to Portugal (out of six ordered), two to Hungary (out of two ordered) and one to the Czech Republic (out of two ordered). Deliveries to Uzbekistan (two) and South Korea (three) are expected soon. 2027 will be an important year as several European operators begin flying the aircraft. The Netherlands has five C-390s on order, Austria four, and Sweden four. Portugal and the UAE have options for ten each and the Netherlands nine. Meanwhile, Lithuania and Slovakia have selected the type and Greece recently approved the purchase of three to replace its ageing C-130 Hercules. In August, Colombia's Air Force signed a contract for the acquisition of two KC-390s.

Morocco is among the African countries publicly discussing the C-390 with Embraer, although Gustavo said other negotiations remained confidential. The C-390 has been demonstrated to South Africa on two occasions and has also flown to Rwanda, Nigeria, Morocco, Ghana, and Namibia. Embraer believes that the C-390 – which already has over 40 firm orders – can easily reach 100 orders and sees a market for 450 C-390s over the next 20 years, with 13% of that from Africa.

To make a potential deal more attractive, Embraer offers transfer of technology – including local components manufacturing or even a full assembly line – as well as establishing a domestic maintenance capability.

Embraer describes the C-390 as a "trend setter" as it offers high speeds (greater than turboprops), quick turnaround time, multi-mission capabilities, efficient running, and low life cycle costs. It uses truly 21st century technology including fly-by-wire systems, a glass cockpit, two readily

available International Aero Engines V2500 jet engines (rather than four engines like the Il-76 or C-130) for less maintenance, the latest avionics (Rockwell Collins Pro Line Fusion) etc.

The C-390 can carry a 26 ton payload at a speed of 870 km/h but beyond transporting personnel and cargo, the aircraft can be configured for medical evacuation, including intensive care facilities, and firefighting using a modular roll-on, roll-off system. In firefighting guise, the aircraft can carry up to 11 000 litres of water or fire-retardant.

Air-to-air refuelling is an established capability, with the aircraft having demonstrated refuelling of Saab Gripen fighters. Qualification has been completed for the Gripen E/F, while work on the Gripen C/D is continuing.

Maritime surveillance is another potential application. Gustavo said the C-390's range and fuel efficiency, combined with radar and targeting-pod sensors, could support day-and-night maritime surveillance missions. Embraer has begun discussions with the Brazilian government on possible configurations.

According to Gustavo, the C-390's efficiency and availability could allow operators to achieve operational capabilities with fewer aircraft than might otherwise be required. He also emphasised the advantages of a modern design, including improved technology and maintainability.

Embraer is continuing to develop the C-390, with future enhancements expected to focus on evolving operational requirements rather than major changes to the airframe. These include improved connectivity and data links, collaboration with autonomous combat systems, and a boom-refuelling capability being developed in partnership with Northrop Grumman. The boom would complement the existing hose-and-drogue system, although its design remains under development.

The C-390's customer base is growing, with a $4.4 billion order backlog for the aircraft, and production is being ramped up. Gustavo said positive feedback from existing operators is helping demonstrate the aircraft's capabilities and availability to prospective customers, and added that Embraer wants to deepen its partnerships across Africa.



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TERRA INDUSTRIES EYES GLOBAL DEFENCE MARKET

Terra Industries (stand 4160), based in Abuja, Nigeria, is a brand new company working to take the African defence industry by storm. Founded in mid-2024 by two young entrepreneurs, Nathan Nwachuku (23) and Maxwell Maduka (25), it has raised over $50 million in seed capital, mostly from the United States.



"We are a global defence tech company working to sell systems that protect critical infrastructure across Africa and the global south," Tage Kene-Okafor, the company's Director of Communication said at Afridex.

"We started off in Nigeria, but we're expanding across the continent and our vision is to be the default infrastructure defence provider and partner across the global south."

The company is not anywhere near there yet, but is growing rapidly.

"We have a 15 000 square foot factory in Abuja, and we're building a 34 000 square foot factory in Ghana, and we've raised funding from global defence investors like HVC, Valor Equity, Lux Capital, and Silent Ventures, and we're looking to ramp up production as we expand across the continent," Kene-Okafor said.

At present Terra has five main products: the Archer, a fixed wing hybrid vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) drone with persistent surveillance capability for where there is no runway; the Iroko, a foldable, rapid deployment multi-role drone for ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance), inspection and mapping; the Kama interceptor drone; the Kallon solar-powered perimeter watch tower that classifies people, vehicles and threats around the clock; and a minesweeper unmanned ground vehicle for route clearance and combat support, called the Duma.

"These are mostly indigenous names from across the continent that we attach to our products," Kene-Okafor said. "Depending on the partners we're working with, we can pair these systems together. Or it could be a standalone system for our clients," he added.

"We also have other products in the pipeline. We are also building a cyber division, because at Terra, what we're trying to do is become a multi-domain systems and data intelligence company.

"We plan to have capabilities across air, land, maritime, cyber, and space. So that's the five core defence areas. At the moment in air and land is where we have our systems, but we're trying to build capabilities in cyber, in space, and in maritime.

"Cyber is one where we've made an investment in a company, a Nigerian company called Aeon. We have

a partnership with the company to provide cyber defence for critical infrastructure, and also for financial infrastructure across Nigeria and the continent. Cyber-attacks are becoming more prominent, and we want to protect our partners from physical threats - we also want to do that for cyber. Cyber threats are very complex, so that's an area we are working on."

Terra has not yet made meaningful inroads into actual defence work with state actors but is making progress with commercial deals. "We've been operating for two years now, and so far we've been working with commercial partners, only from Africa for now. But the broader vision is to expand across the world and that will happen soon. I can't give specifics, but from next year, we'll actively start working to get partners outside of Africa, in regions like South America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East," Kene-Okafor said.

"For our commercial partners, what we're doing is protecting critical infrastructure: power plants, mines, oil pipelines. We have a telemetry solution and a security solution. Infrastructure is one of the first places that countries attack like what you see in Russia and Ukraine, the US, Iran. But we also see that in the Sahel theatre.

"Our vision is that if we can build military-grade systems that are smaller than the ones used in state-on-state wars, we can build them to protect infrastructure against non-state actors, which is mostly the threats that we face in Africa. We want to build global systems that are more affordable, that can do a good job.

"I'm working with commercial partners across the continent, protecting mines, protecting oil pipelines, farmlands, and we have customers in Nigeria, Ghana, and Zambia, and some other African countries. Some of these are active conversations, so I can't divulge them now. We want to build a robust pipeline of commercial partners across the continent, but at the same time, we're talking to governments as well. We have dual-use technology, technologies so the systems can work for commercial and military use.

"We are from Nigeria. We have our first factory there, but we don't see ourselves as a Nigerian company, more so like a global company with factories in Africa. Our second factory is in Ghana, but we plan to build more across the continent.

"We've sold the Archer, the Kallon tower. These are the ones without kinetic effects. This equipment is for surveillance, for reconnaissance, for inspection. So if you need eyes on the ground to detect threats, these are perfect for you, because ultimately, what we're trying to do is speed the intelligence layer for security for these companies.

"They can decide how to deal with it, so if I own, like a mine, I want to detect threats before, you know, they are at my doorstep, and that's what these systems are helping me to do," Kene-Okafor said, emphasising Terra Industries' slogan of "Defending the Global South."



JOTOV & SON MAKES FRESH PUSH INTO WEST AFRICA

Bulgarian company Jotov & Son has a long history in Africa. Slavi Tonev, the company's Head of Trade and Marketing, said it had worked on the continent for many years and had previously deployed specialists to repair aircraft in Kano, in northern Nigeria.



He said, however, that the company had not undertaken any projects in Nigeria since then. Tonev added that Nigeria was a substantial market and that Jotov & Son was now seeking a local partner as part of a broader effort to expand its business across West Africa.

Tonev said military aviation was Jotov & Son's main business area. The company provides training for military pilots and engineers on site, supplies aircraft and simulators, and deploys its own personnel and technicians to support projects around the clock for the duration of each contract.

He said the company had Sukhoi Su-25 aircraft and Mi-24 combat helicopters, both widely used and well-known Soviet-era platforms. As Bulgaria was formerly part of the Soviet bloc, such equipment had been held by the Bulgarian armed forces, which occasionally released it for purchase by private companies such as Jotov & Son. He added that the company sold both new and used aircraft, although not currently in Nigeria, with sales instead directed to some countries in East and Central Africa.

Beyond military aviation, Tonev said Jotov & Son had BTR armoured personnel carriers in stock, BM-21 122 mm rocket systems and modernised T-55 tanks. The company also holds other equipment, including additional types of armoured personnel carriers, and supplies these systems alongside ammunition and weapons ranging from small-calibre cartridges to large artillery rounds.

On display at Afridex were a range of ammunition types, pistols and assault rifles in both NATO and Soviet calibres. Tonev added that business was good.

He said the company had not yet concluded any contracts or memoranda of understanding at Afridex, but remained confident. He explained that its participation in the exhibition was a first step towards establishing contacts, from which it hopes to secure contracts in due course. As a private company, he noted, Jotov & Son often had to wait longer than state-owned companies, and such business took time.

The company had also exhibited at the Africa Aerospace and Defence exhibition in South Africa, but Tonev said it had unfortunately not made any useful local contacts on that occasion.

Tonev said the company currently has a large quantity of military equipment available in Bulgaria, including armoured personnel carriers, combat helicopters, aircraft, ammunition and weapons.

He said none of this equipment was destined for nearby Ukraine and that Jotov & Son was focused on African markets. He added that, across much of Africa, Soviet-pattern equipment remains in service and would continue to be used for several years. In his view, acquiring more advanced NATO-standard systems takes time, particularly for training local personnel to operate them. He said many African countries preferred equipment with which their personnel were already familiar, adding that the AK-47 performed well in difficult conditions.

Tonev said Jotov & Son also provided refurbishment and maintenance services for countries with older equipment for which they lacked spare parts. He said the company had recently undertaken projects of this kind, including one involving a BM-21 multiple rocket launcher system in very poor condition. The customer had asked the company to propose an overhaul and subsequent modernisation programme.

He explained that Jotov & Son employed numerous retired Bulgarian Army officers, including colonels and generals, who continued to work with the company after leaving the military at a relatively young age. Their experience, he said, helped the company manage such projects and select the most appropriate professional overhaul and modernisation solutions.

Training was conducted in the customer's country, with Jotov & Son deploying its own personnel there. Tonev added that business was good, "but let's keep it confidential."

PROTECTION OF PERSONNEL DRIVES TAG DYNAMICS' VEHICLE ETHOS

TAG Dynamics (stand 2150) from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has a large stand at Afridex, which reflects the importance of Africa to the company, which manufactures armoured vehicles and tactical platforms and sells them globally.

"For us, our clients are from different countries, but our top market is Africa," said Yasmine Oulkouch, sales manager. She said this was why the company was attending Afridex: to meet private-sector, government and security-sector representatives, including those from ministries of defence, navies and police forces.

Oulkouch said the company wanted to expand further in Nigeria, describing it as a large but complex market because of its federal structure and different states. She added that expanding in Nigeria, as well as in other countries, was one of the company's key objectives at the exhibition.

She explained that the company specialises in the design and manufacture of armoured vehicles for military, civilian and non-governmental organisation customers. It works with a range of client profiles and has a portfolio of customers around the world.

TAG Dynamics manufactures armoured vehicles for law enforcement and military, cash-in-transit, passenger cars and SUVs and speciality vehicles as required. "We also manufacture ambulances," Oulkouch said. "We don't only have APCs or MRAPs. We also manufacture ambulances. Our portfolio is extensive."

She said TAG Dynamics has been engaging with representatives of the Nigerian Government, other governments and private individuals interested in armoured vehicles, describing the exhibition as beneficial for the company.

In Nigeria, she said, the company worked with the Ministry of Defence and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA). For security reasons, she declined to disclose how many vehicles had been sold, noting that the users of military and armoured vehicles were protecting their countries.

She said TAG Dynamics views its business as protecting people and keeping them alive in hostile environments. Its slogan, "Keeping you safe when it matters", reflects a mission to safeguard lives, including personnel involved in border control and counter-terrorism operations.

She added that the company takes a long-term view of its business and maintains relationships with clients for decades.

She said TAG Dynamics is not focused on one-off transactions. Since 2009, it has worked with largely the same clientele, providing not only products but also after-sales support, including maintenance, training and warranties for all of its products.

She explained that the company follows up with clients throughout the life of their equipment, describing this long-term support as one of its key strengths. There is no fixed support period, she added: the company remains available to clients whenever they face a problem, need assistance or require a service.

The company does business across Africa. She said it had attended the Africa Aerospace and Defence exhibition in South Africa the previous month, describing the event as enjoyable and commercially fruitful. While she declined to give details, she confirmed that it had generated business.

She said the company's priority was to care for its clients and provide the best possible service, because its products concern people's lives. "This is really important to us," she emphasised.



UKRAINE WAR LESSONS SHAPE WB GROUP'S PUSH INTO AFRICA

WB Group is one of the largest private defence companies in Poland. Founded in 1997 as a small startup, it has grown into a multi-million dollar enterprise. It manufactures communication systems, command and control systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and fire-control systems.



"We are a leader in Poland," Patrick Stec, WB Group Product Manager told DefenceWeb at Afridex.

He explained that WB's Fonet is a communication module used, for example, in artillery systems. It collects information from different sensors inside a vehicle and presents it on a single monitor.

This allows one crew member to view all relevant vehicle information, while also enabling communication between personnel inside the vehicle. He added that Topaz forms part of the Fonet system and is an intelligent ballistic calculator. Using specific data, it can direct a tank's turret to the precise position where a round should land.

Stec said Fonet and Topaz were among WB's first products to be deployed by both the Polish Army and the United States Army.

BATTLE-TESTED IN UKRAINE

The Ukraine war has been pivotal to the company's business and to the development of its pivotal technology, as Stec explained: "It escalated the growth of drones. And because of that, our drones were being used there. For example, our flagship model, FLYEYE, is a reconnaissance UAV launched simply by hand, which is unpopular these days. And it is equipped with an engine. But once it reaches a certain altitude, the engine is turned off. So it preserves power, stays completely silent, and it glides.

"When the radar tries to detect this, it looks like a simple bird. So to detect it, you cannot rely on the radar technologies as such. You need to physically see it in order to establish that this is a UAV. And then, reconnaissance is one thing. But neutralisation is the second, which is why we have come up with a kamikaze drone, a loitering munition." This is drone known as WARMATE, which works closely with FLYEYE.

He said WB's drones can carry explosive payloads ranging from 3 kg to 10 kg or more, depending on the target to be neutralised.

In Ukraine, it focuses on the smaller WARMATE 3 system, referred to as FLYMATE. The FLYEYE reconnaissance drone and the FLYMATE strike drone can be deployed simultaneously, even before a target has been identified. Once FLYEYE detects a target, the operator can launch FLYMATE and guide it to the designated location to engage it.

As targets are often moving, Stec said the reconnaissance drone needs to remain airborne to track them. The two systems can communicate through the operator, enabling the target to be engaged as quickly and accurately as possible. He added that experience gained from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, including lessons learned and subsequent technological developments, has been incorporated into its products, contributing to their advanced capabilities and popularity.

EXPANDING PRESENCE

However, Stec emphasised that WB's portfolio extends beyond drones to include command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C4I) systems, battle turrets, armament systems and communications platforms.

The WB group is now a truly global company. "I think we have around total 20-something subsidiaries, if not 30 now, not only in Poland, but around the world. We are in the US, in France, in Ukraine, we are also in Georgia, India, and Malaysia," Stec said.

"But as you can see, not yet in Africa. We are talking with many different partners, countries, and governments in order to produce something here, especially manufacturing. Because having a central base here would help not only us to deliver the product quicker, but it will also enable the locals to develop the solutions based on the experience that they have learned here."

BORDER SECURITY EMPHASIS

WB's AMSTA digital border and critical infrastructure system is something Stec believes African nations can use successfully. "Until now, for example, border patrols went into a field once every two hours or so, and either they found something or they didn't. And if they did find something, or someone, maybe they would not come back. That is why I believe that this system is very crucial, especially in the future.

"It enables early detection based on seismic signals. It can differentiate a person from a vehicle, but also low-flying drones that fly below the radar level."

Stec explained that once a target's location and direction of movement has been established, a FLYEYE reconnaissance drone could be deployed to determine whether it is armed and how many potential targets pose a threat. Once the situation has been assessed, the operator can decide whether to deploy a WARMATE loitering munition or send in troops, depending on whether the target is considered high-value. He said this decision-making capability is a key feature of the system.

Stec acknowledged that WB Group cannot pursue every opportunity simultaneously but emphasised the strategic importance of Africa, given the continent's mineral wealth and its economic and political significance. He highlighted the company's advanced technologies, which he said have been battle-tested in demanding operational conditions.

He added that WB's engagement with the African market extends beyond Nigeria, noting that it had recently participated in an event in Morocco to present its solutions there as well.

For Stec, selling his systems is also personal. "As a young person, maybe I am a little bit naive. But for me, preserving peace is the key to the future. Seeing the conflicts that happen, not only in Africa, but even in Europe, where the conflicts are happening every day, and they're growing, it makes me personally sad.

"You need more information, you need to react upon it, and you need to preserve your people's lives, the soldiers' lives, so that they do not go and fight something that they are not capable of fighting."







GHANA ARMED FORCES RETOOL

The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) have taken delivery of a notable amount of new military hardware, with more planned, as the country rejuvenates its defence capabilities.



The GAF on 16 October announced that it had received 45 modern military vehicles, including 15 Kia KLTV utility vehicles and 15 4x4 and 15 6x6 KMTV troop carriers, advancing a massive national retooling drive across all frontiers.

The vehicles are expected to improve troop transportation, facilitate movement across difficult terrain and enhance the Army's ability to respond swiftly to operational demands.

The acquisition forms part of the government's broader efforts to modernise the Ghana Armed Forces, strengthen national security and improve its capacity to safeguard Ghana's territorial integrity.

Earlier this year, the Ghana Navy acquired the Ghana Navy Ship (GNS) Pru, commissioning the vessel on 10 February 2026 at the Sekondi Naval Base. Speaking at the ceremony, Deputy Minister of Defence Ernest Brogya Genfi said the ship would enhance maritime patrols, protect offshore resources, combat illicit maritime activities and contribute to regional and international maritime security.

The Chief of the Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Godwin Livinus Bessing, said the commissioning of GNS Pru would strengthen the operational capacity of the Navy to respond to evolving and asymmetric maritime threats.

This River class ship (P47) is a 42 metre Flex Fighter design acquired from Singapore's Penguin Shipyard. Ghana previously commissioned four 40 metre Flex Fighter vessels in February 2022 (Ghana Navy Ships Volta, Densu, Pra and Ankobra). (The Nigerian Navy has also acquired three 40 metre long Flex Fighter Max patrol vessels from Penguin.) The Flex Fighter family derives from Penguin's Flex series of crew boats, which are widely used for offshore resupply and support operations.

Additional assets are expected to follow for the Ghana Navy, including a fisheries patrol vessel, 72 metre offshore patrol vessels, six fast attack craft, 11 interceptor boats, and numerous smaller patrol boats. In addition, the Ghana Navy is expected to integrated six V-BAT unmanned aerial systems, and 30 riverine boats to transform fisheries enforcement and offshore infrastructure protection, the Ghana Armed Forces said in mid-October.

In December 2025, the Ghana Navy received its largest vessel: the 65 metre GNS Achimota (P46), which was acquired from Japan. It previously served as the Japanese Fisheries Agency patrol vessel Aratsu. The vessel was built by Kurinoura Shipbuilding in Japan in 1999 and has a complement of 20 people. It is employed in the Ghana Navy fleet among others for fisheries protection duties and as a training vessel for both Officers and Ratings.

The Ghana Air Force also strengthened its capabilities with the delivery of an Airbus Helicopters H175 helicopter from France on 5 March 2026, directly fulfilling the strategic vision of Commander-in-Chief John Dramani Mahama to build a standard 21st-century defence force.

Speaking in January, Mahama said "let me assure you that government remains fully committed. Plans are well advanced to procure armoured personnel carriers, offshore patrol vessels for the Ghana Navy, four brand new Eurocopter helicopters for the Ghana Air Force."

Ghana has ordered two H175Ms, one ACH175, and one

ACH160 from Airbus Helicopters 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.

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. One more helicopter and the Falcon 6X are expected to be delivered later this year followed by another two helicopters in 2027.

BROADER EXPANSION AND RETOOLING

The Ghana Armed Forces are considered among the most professional, experienced, and capable in Sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike many of its regional counterparts, Ghana has largely avoided military interference in the country's politics since the early 1990s. As a result, the GAF has emerged as one of West Africa's more dependable forces, perhaps best known for its significant commitment to both international peace operations, through United Nations peacekeeping, and regional security operations under ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and United Nations banners.

Although the GAF lacks significant offensive capabilities, it is relatively well equipped when compared to regional contemporaries, having benefited from prolonged modernisation, retraining, and reorganisation efforts supported by foreign partners. Additionally, the GAF has also benefited from modest, but fairly consistent, defence spending over the course of the 2010s. More recently, defence spending has seen a significant increase in 2024/2025, with spending rising by some 61.3 percent year on year. Notably, this higher level of spending is expected to be sustained, at least in the near term, with spending increasing to 10.77 billion GHS ($927 million) in 2026.

This uptick forms part of a renewed effort to retool and modernise the force so that it is able to more effectively face evolving global and regional security challenges. In 2025 Genfi stated that these "unprecedented" efforts would extend beyond defence procurement to include the establishment of new military units, the construction of new forward operating bases, and the upgrading of existing infrastructure to improve efficiency and operational capacity. Key government commitments include funding renewed armoured and mechanised capabilities, new light attack aircraft for the Air Force, more modern patrol boats, and enhanced special forces capabilities.

Structurally, the Army remains by far the largest and most operationally significant branch, with an estimated 12 000 to 15 000 active personnel. It forms the backbone of Ghana's internal security and border protection efforts and is increasingly oriented towards countering potential spillover effects from Sahelian instability into northern Ghana. In recent years, it has seen a significant expansion of its capabilities through the procurement (including several significant donations) of several hundred vehicles over the past decade, including just under 200 armoured personnel carriers and infantry mobility vehicles. These include Puma M36s, APC-79 Fighters, MXT-MVs, BTR-70s, and Cobras. Other capabilities have also been expanded through the acquisition of four additional Type-81 122 mm self-propelled multiple rocket launchers from China in 2023, among others.

While less significant, the Air Force has also experienced a modest boost to its capabilities over the preceding decade. Its training and airlift capabilities in particular have seen major improvements, while government has also committed to enhancing its combat (ground support) capabilities.

The Navy, by contrast, has undergone more substantive modernisation. Although a significant proportion of its vessels are nearing ageing, with many dating back to the 1980s, its overall capabilities have expanded considerably over the past 15 years. This reflects a growing recognition of the strategic importance of Ghana's Exclusive Economic Zone, particularly following the discovery of offshore oil and gas reserves. In response, the government has prioritised maritime security, committing to the acquisition of new inshore and offshore patrol vessels. These efforts, supported by foreign partners, have resulted in the addition of approximately seven vessels to the fleet, including the current flagship, the GNS Achimota.







ADX-BARRA 200 AUTONOMOUS VESSEL UNVEILED AT AFRIDEX 2026

Nigerian Senate President Senator Godswill Akpabio, acting on behalf of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, unveiled Arridex Group's ADX-Barra 200 autonomous surface vessel at the Africa International Defence Exhibition (Afridex) 2026 on 26 October in Lagos.

The ADX-Barra 200 is one of two maritime systems launched by Arridex (stand 1130) at Afridex, the other being the ADX-Barra 100. Forming part of the larger ADX-Barra series of unmanned surface vessels, they are aimed at extending the reach and capabilities of maritime forces while minimising the risk of injury or loss of life for defence and security forces in often volatile operations.

According to a statement released by Arridex, the ADX-Barra represents the first domestically designed autonomous surface vessel, with both the ADX-Barra 200 and ADX-Barra 100 having been entirely "designed, built and integrated in Nigeria by Arridex engineers."

Akpabio, on behalf of Tinubu, told those gathered that: "This administration has made the growth of our defence industry a priority, because security is strongest when a nation can build, maintain and improve its own capability."

He added: "What we have seen today is that capability taking shape, designed and built by local engineers in partnership with DICON (Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria). It deserves the support of the government and the confidence of our armed forces."

Kayode Adeleke, Arridex Group Chief Executive Officer, used the occasion to reflect on the ADX-Barra as an example of indigenous defence capabilities, noting the important role it can play in advancing maritime security, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea.

For Adeleke, the ADX-Barra platforms represent an opportunity for Nigeria and other states along the Gulf of Guinea to build a sustainable capability that is not just designed to meet today's challenges, but one that can be further developed as circumstances demand.

"The waters of the Gulf of Guinea carry the region's trade, support its coastal communities and hold much of its energy wealth. Protecting them calls for capability we can build, sustain and improve ourselves. The ADX-Barra platforms are Nigeria's first indigenously developed autonomous surface vessels, and they were built for that task," Adeleke said.

Although Arridex did not disclose the ADX-Barra 200's technical specifications in its media release, Adeleke did use the opportunity to extend an invitation to Nigeria's and other regional militaries, alongside any other interested parties, to contact the company for additional information, as well as to arrange in-person demonstrations where desired.

"We invite the services and every interested stakeholder to see them at work, through demonstrations arranged at their convenience, and to help us shape each generation that follows," he added.

With the ADX-Barra series being a product of Helagon, a joint venture between the Arridex Group and Nigeria's state-owned Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria, the ADX-Barra 200 unveiling attracted a sizable contingent of representatives from Nigeria's political and defence establishment.

Notable political figures included the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr Obafemi Hamzat, and the Minister of State for Defence, Dr Bello Matawalle. The defence industry was represented by the Director-General of DICON, Major General Babatunde Ibrahim Alaya, and the Chief Operating Officer of Helagon, Precious Omo-Agege, alongside various members of the Arridex Group's senior management.

WHY AUTONOMOUS MARITIME SYSTEMS MATTER

While the extensive use of unmanned aerial vehicles has transformed contemporary battlefields and security environments from Europe to the Middle East and Africa, developments in recent conflicts suggest that unmanned naval systems may prove equally consequential for the future of maritime security.

Ukraine, for example, despite lacking any significant conventional naval forces to speak of, has, partly through its use of unmanned vessels, been able to sink or damage approximately one third of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, forcing much of the fleet away from its Crimean headquarters.

For Nigeria and the wider Gulf of Guinea region, the ADX-Barra series reflects a similar logic: extended maritime reach without unnecessary risk to lives or injury.

With the ADX-Barra 200, Arridex Group and Helagon say they have delivered a game-changing autonomous maritime capability, designed, built, and sustained domestically.



CHINESE NAVAL HOSPITAL SHIP ARRIVES IN GHANA ON MEDICAL MISSION

The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) hospital ship Auspicious Ark has arrived in Tema Port, Ghana, for a seven-day humanitarian medical mission – a first for Ghana.



The Auspicious Ark (868) arrived on 23 October under China's Mission Harmony outreach programme, marking the first arrival of a Chinese naval hospital ship in the country. The Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) said the vessel will, until its departure on 30 October, provide medical services to the public while providing opportunities for professional exchanges between Ghanaian and Chinese military medical personnel.

Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Naval Command, Commodore Raymond Kyaano, welcomed the ship and its crew on behalf of the Chief of the Defence Staff, Lieutenant General William Agyapong, and the Ghana Armed Forces. He described the visit as an important opportunity to advance humanitarian assistance, strengthen medical cooperation and promote the health and well-being of the Ghanaian people.

The Mission Commander and Commanding Officer of Auspicious Ark, Rear Admiral Guan Bailin, expressed confidence that the visit would expand medical exchanges and strengthen professional relationships between Ghanaian and Chinese military medical teams. He said the engagements would promote the sharing of clinical knowledge and experience, particularly in naval medicine, specialised healthcare delivery and emergency medical response.

The Auspicious Ark, commissioned in 2025, departed from a port in Qingdao, east China's Shandong Province, on 22 July. It stopped in Djibouti for supplies and medical care in August. The Auspicious Ark spent seven days in Nouakchott, Mauritania, in mid-September as part of Mission Harmony-2026. On one day the vessel handled over 1 600 patients. On 25 September the Auspicious Ark arrived in Dakar, Senegal, marking the first visit by a Chinese naval hospital ship to the country. Whilst there, it recorded 6 060 patient visits and its staff performed 29 surgical procedures.

On 3 October, the vessel was in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, for a seven-day friendly visit, marking the first visit by a Chinese naval hospital ship to the West African nation. On 15 October it arrived in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, for a seven-day stop, also marking the first visit by a Chinese naval hospital ship to the country.

Mission Harmony-2026, the 12th iteration of the Mission Harmony series since 2010, is scheduled to last over 200 days, during which the ship will visit multiple African and South Asian countries to provide free medical services to local populations.

Equipped with 18 clinical departments and five auxiliary diagnostic units, the Auspicious Ark is capable of performing more than 60 types of medical examinations, treatments and procedures spanning general surgery, orthopaedics, obstetrics and gynaecology, ophthalmology and more. Its eight onboard standard operating rooms support simultaneous surgeries, while an onboard helicopter enhances its emergency medical rescue capabilities.

The voyage is the first overseas mission for Auspicious Ark, China's third domestically designed and constructed 10 000-tonne-class ocean-going hospital ship.

The more than 100-strong medical team is composed primarily of medical personnel from the PLA Northern Theatre Command Navy, along with members from the Naval Medical University and other units.

The first ten Mission Harmony missions were carried out by the hospital ship Peace Ark, and the 11th mission, which began in 2025 and concluded in April this year, was conducted by Silk Road Ark.

China's medical presence in Africa dates to 1963, when it sent its first team to Algeria, and has since included the deployment of health workers who treat patients and train local staff.

Its medical diplomacy has also provided emergency aid during outbreaks, including support during the 2014-15 Ebola crisis in West Africa and Ebola-response teams sent to the Democratic Republic of Congo in June.

DISTANT WARS MAY SPELL TROUBLE FOR THE GULF OF GUINEA

The waters of the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Bab al Mandeb, Red Sea, and Black Sea are all thousands of miles away from the Gulf of Guinea. While the conflicts that are occupying the maritime spaces of those far-off regions may seem a distant concern for West and Central Africa, the whole world has been feeling their effects for months and the impact is only growing.



Supply chains emanating from those different areas – especially grain, fertilizer, oil and gas – are all being hampered by these maritime events. As much as that may spell trouble for everyone, and particularly for fragile economies in the developing world like those of West and Central Africa, the concern for the Gulf of Guinea is actually much more acute. Piracy has been a long-standing problem in the Gulf of Guinea, and while it is at the lowest point in decades, the spike in the price of oil may sufficiently change the risk-reward calculus such that oil theft-based piracy becomes more attractive again. Even beyond piracy, there are other critical concerns, and the region needs to be prepared to address them collectively.

In 2020, the waters of the Gulf of Guinea were considered the most dangerous in the world. A staggering 95% of seafarers abducted at sea that year were taken in the region. But by 2021, things began to change dramatically, and by 2022 Nigeria – the epicenter of the region's piracy crisis – was taken off the high risk list. But piracy in the Gulf of Guinea did not start either as piracy or as a function of kidnap for ransom. Indeed, it started as oil theft from ships inside the territorial sea of Nigeria and some of its neighboring states. This armed robbery from ships evolved into piracy – violent acts against ships outside the 12 nautical mile territorial sea for private ends – when the price of oil dropped, and at the same time, the risk of being caught in those near-shore areas increased.

Over the last decade, the rise of the capacity and capability of the Nigerian Navy in particular and the Gulf of Guinea maritime security cooperative efforts – both the Yaoundé Architecture for Maritime Security and the more recently established Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF) – has dramatically increased, thereby reducing the area where pirates feel safe to operate. That change in the risk-reward calculus was a major factor in reducing the rate and frequency of attacks and effectively putting piracy on long-term hold as of 2021.

As the price of oil continues to fluctuate following the Israeli and American attack on Iran on the 28th of February 2026, the Gulf of Guinea needs to be concerned about the impact that situation could have on operations and maritime security in West and Central Africa. As life on land gets more difficult on account of the global inflation caused by that war in particular, the conditions that led to the major upsurge in maritime crime seem to be poised to return.

Throughout the entire phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea over several decades, there has always been a close nexus between attacks at sea and oil and fuel activities on land. When the price of oil goes up, oil theft in the region tends to spike, and piracy incidents increase. When they drop, there's a period of kidnap-for-ransom based piracy to make up for shortfalls in oil and gas revenue.

The historical relationship is real, but it is more conditional than a simple claim that expensive oil produces piracy. From 2010 to 2015, some Niger Delta-linked groups combined kidnapping with the hijacking of tankers carrying refined products. That business model had largely declined by 2016. Criminal groups then shifted increasingly toward kidnapping for ransom: an operation that did not require them to seize, transfer, store and sell an entire petroleum cargo.

The present shock nevertheless changes the incentive calculation. Brent closed at $72.48 per barrel on 27 February 2026, immediately before the US-Israeli attack. On the first trading day afterwards it settled at $77.74, having touched $82.37. It later reached $126.41 on 30 April, before retreating below $100 in late May. That



reversal did not erase the shock: Brent settled at $116.72 on 23 October, roughly 62% above its pre-war close. Nor is this only a financial-market reaction. In September, the IEA estimated that Gulf oil exports in August were roughly half their pre-war level, while net diesel and gasoil exports were little more than one-quarter of normal. The release of Strategic Reserves by the United States and Europe are seeking to offer temporary relief, and while they offer some hope on meeting the winter heating oil demands in the Northern Hemisphere, they do not resolve price concerns which may increase if the encumbrances on the flow of oil continue.

Those conditions could increase the attractiveness of stealing crude or refined products while simultaneously strengthening demand for illicit fuel supply – whether illegally produced, stolen or adulterated fuel. In the Gulf of Guinea, that may first appear not as classic piracy, but as pipeline tapping, illegal bunkering, artisanal refining, offshore-platform interference, collusive cargo diversion or oil theft in territorial waters. Recent cases, including the interception of a tanker carrying about 650 metric tonnes of crude with an estimated value of over N660 million ($500 000), allegedly stolen from an offshore oil terminal in Akwa Ibom, shows how these forms of maritime-linked oil theft can manifest. Those crimes can overlap with piracy networks, but they are not interchangeable. Nigeria's continuing seizures and dismantling of illegal refining sites in 2026 show that the pre-existing criminal market has not disappeared.

Even so, price is only one side of the calculation. Whether higher prices translate into increased maritime crime will also depend on the availability of suitable targets, existing criminal networks, security pressure, the ease of diverting or selling stolen product, and the expected probability of detection or interception.

While the focus is on the Middle East, the developments in Venezuela and elsewhere also open concerns regarding renewed laundering of oil. Crude taken out of the ground in one place may transferred in a manner that obscures its origin and makes it look like the oil actually came from Nigeria. In 2014, a relevant scheme was unveiled whereby stolen Nigerian crude was found to be laundered through the Salt Pond facility in Ghana. Further work revealed some of the complicit refineries that would be able to tell immediately that the crude they were receiving was not the light, sweet crude of Nigeria, but something different. As sanctioned, stolen and illicit cargoes of oil are moving at record rates, while oil prices are at record heights, Nigeria may be seen as an attractive laundering point through which to obscure the problematic origin of the shipment. That becomes all the easier as the amount of maritime traffic around Africa continues to increase on account of the blockages in traditional shipping routes through the Middle East.

With that increase in traffic comes another concern. Not only might "Shadow Fleet" – the tanker fleet carrying sanctioned oil – vessels engage in laundering and transfers in the Gulf of Guinea, they may also be targeted or attacked. US actions against the Shadow Fleet have occurred in the Caribbean Sea, Middle East and both the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. At the same time, long range Ukrainian strikes have occurred as far as Senegal. The

strike against the MT Mersin in December 2025 showed that the region was not immune to such attacks. Were one to cause a catastrophic spill – akin to that of the Caroline Bezengi off Oman – the region would suffer considerable harm. So there are acute environmental considerations as well as security concerns, though there is an inextricable nexus between the two.

The Gulf of Guinea needs to redouble its efforts to focus on both cooperative architecture and responsive capacity. That includes the capacity to respond to both security and environmental matters on the water. While the Zones created by the Yaoundé Architecture to safeguard maritime security collectively offer a critical information sharing function and some operational capacity, the newly established CMTF offers cause for optimism on maritime response. Focused on operations, the CMTF, if fully implemented, can help mitigate some of the emerging or re-emerging concerns. But to get the operations on the water to be effective, states must also take novel policy and legal approaches, like that of Ghana, which has recently passed new legislation making it more difficult for criminals to have the upper hand.

All this requires that leaders recognise and understand the threat and continue to provide political will behind the enhancement of maritime security in the region. The world has been learning the lesson over and over that 90% of world trade happens by sea, and access to those sea routes is absolutely critical for the health and well-being of every economy. That is true for the Gulf of Guinea as much as it is true for everywhere else. Therefore, it is in the interest of every individual and every state in the Gulf of Guinea to support these efforts to secure the waters of Atlantic Africa.

Iran, Ukraine, Russia and Yemen may all be half a planet away from the Gulf of Guinea, but what is happening in those countries is already having direct impact on every person on earth. The questions are first whether that impact will also include a resurgence of insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea and second, whether the measures taken by the region over the last decade and a half offer a sufficiently high level of risk to bad actors that the substantial increase in the potential reward for illicit behavior does not hold overwhelming appeal.

Written by Dr Ian Ralby, a maritime law and security expert and President of Auxilium Worldwide, and Ebunoluwa George Ojo-Ami, a senior analyst specialising in maritime security, intelligence analysis, and unmanned systems across Africa's maritime domain.





CAMEROON TO RECEIVE METAL SHARK PATROL BOAT

Louisiana, United States-based boatbuilder Metal Shark has been awarded a US Coast Guard Foreign Military Sales (FMS) contract to produce a patrol boat for Cameroon's maritime forces.



The company on 12 October said the contract covers the supply of an 11.5 metre Metal Shark 38 Defiant patrol boat, transport trailer, spare-parts package, and operator training. The vessel will be constructed at Metal Shark's production facility in Jeanerette, Louisiana.

Cameroon is a new market for Metal Shark, the company's Senior Vice President of International Business Development, Henry Irizarry, said. He added that Metal Shark is proud to support partner nations in strengthening maritime security, operational readiness, and mission effectiveness.

The welded aluminium 38 Defiant is described as a proven military and law-enforcement patrol platform designed to support coastal patrol, maritime interdiction, port security, search and rescue, and other security missions. "Initially proven in service with the US Navy and US Coast Guard, Metal Shark's 38 Defiant platform is now operated by US partner nations across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East," the company said.

"The vessel combines high-speed performance and responsive manoeuvrability with Metal Shark's signature Defiant-series pilothouse, which provides enhanced visibility and all-weather crew protection. The adaptable platform may be configured with multiple propulsion arrangements and mission-specific equipment to meet a broad range of mission profiles."

Various powerplant options are available for the 38 Defiant, including inboard diesels or multiple outboards, giving top speeds of up to 50 knots depending on engine configuration. The vessel may be equipped with an open bow or forward cuddy cabin. In addition, the pilothouse may be shortened for those who desire an even larger aft cockpit than the standard offering.

Metal Shark CEO Chris Allard said maritime security is taking on greater strategic importance worldwide. "Metal Shark is well positioned to meet that demand, and we remain focused on expanding our global reach, entering new markets, and delivering long-term value to the United States and its partner nations."

"With over 70 US partner nation military forces now operating Metal Shark vessels, these awards further expand the company's established role in supporting maritime forces worldwide," Metal Shark added. It has delivered well over 2 000 vessels to date, including to Benin, Djibouti, Senegal, Kenya, Cabo Verde, and Morocco.

Cameroon's navy is relatively well equipped in order to secure Cameroon's oil installations and prevent maritime crime and is optimised for coastal and river patrol. It has around 40 coastal, inshore and river patrol craft as well as several combat patrol vessels.

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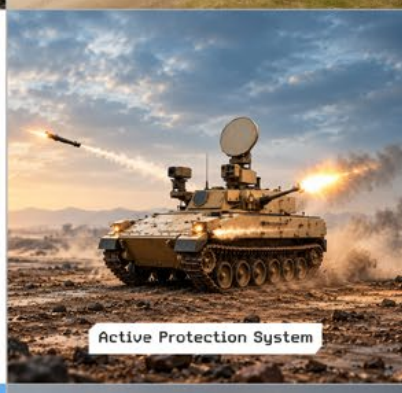
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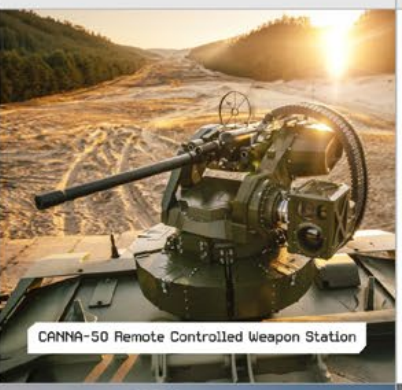
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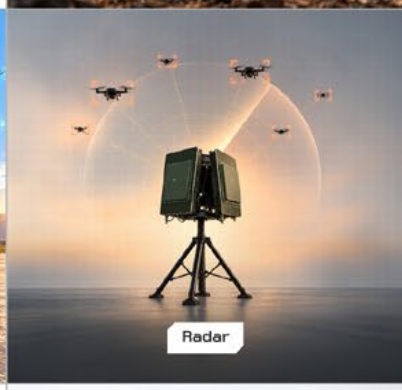
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THE FUTURE OF MILITARY AVIATION IN AFRICA

Advances in uncrewed aircraft, surveillance technologies, integrated communications and data processing are reshaping how defence organisations approach operations, capability development and force readiness.



For African nations, these developments present opportunities to strengthen security, enhance maritime awareness and improve operational effectiveness, while raising questions about sustainability, affordability and long-term support.

According to Major General Neil Sexton CB FRAeS, Co-Chair of the Afridex 2026 Strategic Conference and a former senior British Army officer, the future of military aviation will be driven by the integration of established capabilities with emerging technologies.

"One of the most significant developments in military aviation is the increasing integration of crewed and uncrewed aircraft. The question is not simply whether drones will replace existing platforms, but how these different capabilities can operate together to achieve the best operational outcome," he said.

This shift is already influencing military thinking around the world. Uncrewed systems are increasingly being deployed alongside conventional aircraft to extend operational reach, improve surveillance and provide commanders with greater flexibility.

International defence organisations are already developing concepts in which helicopters and other aircraft operate alongside drones to improve situational awareness and expand operational effectiveness.

At the same time, conventional aviation remains indispensable. Transport aircraft and helicopters continue to perform logistics, mobility and personnel movement functions that cannot easily be replicated by uncrewed systems. "Aircraft such as the Chinook are expected to remain in service for many years because of the capabilities they provide," Sexton explained.

GENUINE OPERATIONAL ADVANTAGE

For future force planners, the challenge lies in identifying where emerging technologies deliver genuine operational advantages while ensuring that essential legacy capabilities are retained. The most effective military aviation forces will be those that successfully combine both.

Recent global developments show how quickly military aviation is evolving. Advances in sensors, communications and uncrewed systems are creating new possibilities for surveillance, intelligence gathering and operational planning. Yet Sexton warns against viewing technology in isolation.

"Technology alone does not determine the most appropriate approach. One of the important lessons is the need to understand how new systems will operate within existing military structures, including the supporting infrastructure and personnel required to maintain them," he said.

This has particular relevance for Africa. Defence organisations across the continent operate in diverse geographic, economic and operational conditions, so solutions that work effectively elsewhere may not always be suitable without adaptation.

"For African defence organisations, international experience must be considered alongside national security priorities and operating conditions," Sexton said.

Geography, infrastructure and existing capabilities all influence which technologies will provide the greatest operational benefit. African armed forces also possess extensive operational experience across varied environments and security challenges, creating





opportunities for shared learning and informed future investment.

Technological integration is already having a significant impact on maritime security. Many African nations are responsible for protecting vast coastlines, extensive maritime borders and large exclusive economic zones. Maintaining awareness across these areas presents a complex operational challenge.

EXTENDING COVERAGE

Aviation remains one of the most effective tools for maritime surveillance, search and rescue operations, border security and coastal protection. Helicopters have long played a central role in these activities, but uncrewed aircraft are increasingly extending their reach.

"Uncrewed aircraft are creating opportunities to extend surveillance coverage and monitor maritime activity for longer periods," Sexton explained.

The combination of crewed and uncrewed systems is proving particularly valuable. Drones capable of remaining airborne for extended periods can provide persistent surveillance, while established aircraft continue to perform specialist operational functions. Together, they provide broader coverage and a more comprehensive view of maritime activity.

"The Royal Navy has demonstrated how a Wildcat helicopter operating from a frigate can work alongside uncrewed systems to extend its surveillance capability," he said.

For African maritime authorities, the objective is not simply to acquire new platforms but to develop a more complete understanding of activity across coastal waters. Achieving that goal requires integrating aviation assets with radar systems, satellite data and other surveillance technologies to create a comprehensive operational picture that supports faster, more effective responses.

As countries modernise their aviation capabilities, procurement inevitably becomes a central consideration. Sexton believes successful procurement begins with a detailed understanding of the operational requirement rather than a focus on acquiring the most advanced technology available.

Whether the requirement is surveillance, reconnaissance, transport, logistics or search and rescue, defence organisations must clearly define their objectives before selecting a platform. Importantly, Sexton argues that sophistication alone should never drive acquisition decisions.

"The most sophisticated aircraft is not necessarily the most suitable solution. In many circumstances, simpler and more affordable crewed or uncrewed systems can deliver the required capability effectively," he noted.

SUPPORT IS KEY

Long-term support is equally important. Maintenance, engineering expertise, spare parts, training and infrastructure must all be considered from the outset. Acquisition represents only the first phase of developing a sustainable aviation capability.

"A successful procurement decision is therefore one that delivers dependable performance, represents appropriate value and can be sustained over the longer term, rather than simply meeting an immediate equipment requirement," he said.

Alongside aircraft acquisition, modern forces must also invest in the systems that allow aviation assets to operate effectively within a broader operational environment. Sexton emphasised the growing importance of command and control systems, communications infrastructure and interoperability.

Modern aircraft generate extraordinary volumes of information through sensors, cameras and surveillance equipment. However, the value of that information depends on the ability to process, analyse and distribute it effectively.

Sexton said the growing volume of operational data is creating opportunities for artificial intelligence and advanced processing technologies to support decision-making. Nevertheless, technology cannot replace effective leadership, trained personnel and sound command structures.

Investment in communications networks and command systems must therefore accompany investment in aircraft and surveillance technologies. Without those supporting capabilities, organisations may struggle to realise the full potential of their aviation assets.

"The effectiveness of military aviation depends on the people responsible for operating, maintaining and supporting aircraft," Sexton said.

His experience during military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq reinforced the critical role played by engineers and maintenance personnel, particularly when operating in demanding environments characterised by high temperatures, dust and harsh conditions.

The growth of uncrewed aviation is also creating new requirements for specialist skills. Operating sophisticated systems beyond visual line of sight demands extensive training, technical expertise and a strong understanding of aviation procedures.

"As these capabilities become more widespread, qualified

pilots, engineers and uncrewed aircraft operators will become increasingly valuable," Sexton noted.

PRIORITISE SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

Defence organisations must therefore prioritise structured training programmes, professional development and personnel retention if they are to maintain readiness and introduce advanced technologies safely and effectively.

The benefits of uncrewed aviation extend well beyond military operations. Drones are increasingly supporting policing, search and rescue activities, emergency response operations and disaster management initiatives.

Through work with the UK's National Police Chiefs' Council, Sexton has seen the growing value of drones as first responders in urban environments. Rapid aerial situational awareness enables emergency services to assess incidents quickly and allocate resources more effectively before ground teams arrive. This is particularly valuable when multiple agencies must coordinate their efforts.

"Defence and security are increasingly complex sectors, and international cooperation allows organisations to combine specialist knowledge, technology and operational experience," Sexton said.

These partnerships create opportunities for technology exchange, specialist training and collaborative capability development. They also enable participants to learn from different approaches to engineering, logistics and long-term force planning.

Sexton is particularly enthusiastic about opportunities for smaller specialist companies to engage with major defence contractors, arguing that innovation often emerges from niche organisations with highly specialised expertise.

As Co-Chair of the Afridex Strategic Conference, Sexton hopes the event will foster genuine dialogue between delegates, speakers and industry participants. While senior military leaders and industry executives bring valuable perspectives, he believes younger professionals, technical specialists and innovators also have important contributions to make.

The value of Afridex, he said, will ultimately be measured not by the exhibition itself but by the relationships, partnerships and collaborative initiatives that emerge from it. The event offers an opportunity for African and international stakeholders to exchange knowledge, explore future requirements and identify areas of mutual interest.





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PRIVATELY FUNDED SECURITY VESSELS HANDED OVER TO NIGERIAN NAVY

The Nigerian Navy (NN) has taken into service the first of ten security support vessels funded by private industry to protect critical energy infrastructure and Nigeria's maritime interests, reflecting a strategic public-private partnership aimed at translating private-sector investment into tangible maritime security capability.



The induction ceremony of the first vessel - SSV Kali 3 - was held on 18 August at Asemoku Jetty in Delta State. The vessel is the first security support vessel (SSV) being provided by Sterling Oil Exploration Energy Production Company Limited (SEEPCO) under a memorandum of agreement with the Nigerian Navy.

The 40 metre long Kali 3 was designed and built in Nigeria at the Okpai HM Shipyard in Delta State, in collaboration with the Nigerian Navy, to Bureau Veritas standards. The initiative highlights the growing contribution of indigenous shipbuilding capacity to national security and economic development, the Nigerian Navy said, adding that the vessel is designed for a range of maritime security operations, including coastal and offshore surveillance, interdiction, anti-piracy operations, maritime law enforcement and escort duties. Two RHIBs are mounted for rapid boarding. A draft of 2.5 metres allows operations in shallow waters.

It has an endurance of 10-12 days and will protect crude oil tankers, liquid natural gas (LNG) carriers, offshore supply vessels and other oil and gas assets across Nigeria's maritime domain. Under the arrangement with SEEPCO, the Nigerian Navy will supply personnel to man and operate the vessels.

"As a company whose operations are closely connected to the country's waterways, we understand the importance of a safe and secure maritime environment to the oil and gas industry, as well as to the communities and economic activities that depend on our waterways. Ultimately, the initiative is about strengthening the operational capacity of the Nigerian Navy, supporting maritime security and demonstrating how public-private partnerships can contribute to building a stronger and more self-reliant maritime sector in Nigeria," SEEPCO said of the SSV initiative.

"We are celebrating not only a new security vessel, but also indigenous capacity, local content and a successful partnership between the private sector and the Nigerian Navy," said Monday Onyeme, Deputy Delta State Governor. "A secure operating environment is essential for investment, production and economic growth. Delta State therefore remains open for business, and we will continue to work with investors, security agencies and other stakeholders to sustain the peace and security required for businesses to thrive," he added.

THE CMTF GULF OF GUINEA AT 150 DAYS

Thursday, 29 October, marks 150 days since the Combined Maritime Task Force for the Gulf of Guinea (CMTF-GoG) was officially launched in Lagos, Nigeria. With the first iteration of Afridex taking place in the CMTF-GoG's host city, it is worth reflecting on what it is, what has been achieved so far, and what still needs to be done.





As the first African-led regional maritime security task force, the CMTF-GoG represents a significant milestone in the continent's journey to take greater control over its own defence and security environment.

The task force enjoys a broad mandate aimed at enhancing the maritime security of the Gulf of Guinea in light of an increasingly complex threat environment. Maritime patrols, anti-piracy patrols and interventions, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) operations, search and rescue, alongside support for humanitarian and peacekeeping missions and other regional security operations, are all included within its scope of operations.

Such a broad scope and the vast and complex geography of the Gulf of Guinea mean the CMTF-GoG will need to rely on a range of regional, but also international, partners if it is to succeed and not fade into obscurity.

As of writing, the CMTF-GoG nominally consists of just six pioneer members, these being Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia, along with Nigeria. Thus far, Nigeria has been playing the leading role, not only hosting its launch and headquarters but also being the only member nation that has publicly pledged naval assets, helicopters, land-based facilities, and administrative staff.

The CMTF-GoG has also received endorsements and pledges of cooperation from a range of regional and international bodies, including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the International Maritime Organisation, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, Interpol, and the European Union.

Since its June launch, however, there have been little to no substantive updates on the member countries' efforts to fully activate the CMTF-GoG, nor has there been any real indication of sustained momentum towards increasing its membership.

What little has been reported indicates that the primary focus has been on establishing operational arrangements, deploying assets, and developing coordination systems.

Indeed, all of its members, with the notable exception of Nigeria, have said little publicly. Nigerian military and government officials have, for their part, continued to vocally express the country's support for the task force, actively encouraging more African states to join in order to expand the task force's reach and, ultimately, its effectiveness.

In September, Nigeria's Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Idi Abbas, used the opportunity of a meeting with Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Standby Force Chief of Staff, Brigadier General Sheikh Massaquoi, to call on other African states to become more active in regional security initiatives.

"As Africa's security challenges become increasingly interconnected, no nation can confront them effectively in isolation," Abbas said.

Meanwhile, Chief of Defence Policy and Plans, Air Vice Marshal (AVM) Francis Edosa, told the Third Maritime Security Symposium in Lagos, on behalf of Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Olufemi Oluyede, that the country was working towards its full operationalisation and the deployment of Nigerian Navy assets assigned to the task force.

While Nigeria's continued and avid public support for the CMTF-GoG is laudable, it, combined with the relative silence of the other five founding members, is perhaps where the most significant danger to the CMTF-GoG lies.

The CMTF-GoG should not and cannot remain, or be perceived to remain, a Nigerian project. As the Institute for Security Studies' Timothy Walker and Martin Ewi argued in June, the other members need to stand up and commit their own resources and take on a greater share of the burden.

Beyond this it is also important that the CMTF-GoG identifies partners who can assist with supplying additional patrol vessels, maritime patrol aircraft, ISR, and communications equipment. More Gulf of Guinea states need to join if it is to move forward as a truly regional project.

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL DEFENCE EXHIBITION ON DISPLAY























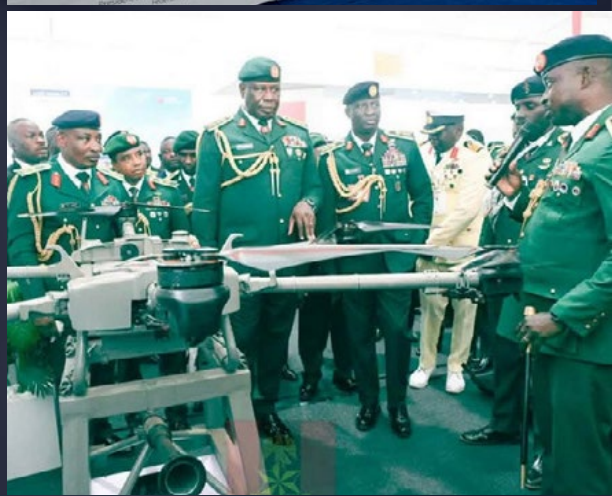

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