



2023 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENTS

19–23 JUNE 2023

UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS • NEW YORK



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM



Preventing and Countering Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Good Practices and Trends in the Acquisition, Weaponization, and Deployment of UAS

CONFERENCE ROOM 12 – UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS | 21 JUNE 2023 | 09:00 – 10:30 AM (EDT/UTC-4)

Background Information

Autonomous and Remotely Operated Systems (AROS), including Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), sometimes referred to as drones, present a uniquely challenging terrorist threat to the international community. In the wrong hands, commercial UAS can be utilized as lethal weapons enabling terrorists to plan, coordinate, and launch a vast range of deadly and potentially disruptive attacks against civilians, soft targets, and critical infrastructure. Recent evidence demonstrates that the acquisitions of UAS software, hardware, and components as well as their weaponization and deployment by terrorist groups has increased over the past years with attacks occurring across many Member States. Through emerging advancements in UAS technology, increasing availability and affordability, UAS and other similar systems have become a tool in the planning and conduct of terrorist attacks. In this context, it is critical that Member States and intergovernmental organizations work closely with partners from academia, civil society, and the private sector, to keep abreast of technological advancements and foresee, address, and mitigate their risks and threats as part of a multilateral counter-terrorism effort.

UNOCT's Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Autonomous and Remotely Operated System

UNOCT Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Autonomous and Remotely Operated Systems (AROS Programme) was launched in 2021 to raise awareness and promote the exchange of good practices and guidance related to autonomous and remotely operated systems, including UAS; to enhance the capacity of Member States to investigate and counter terrorist threats related to AROS, including UAS; and to

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enhance the capacity of Member States to use AROS, including UAS, for non-lethal/non-kinetic human rights-compliant purposes. The AROS programme supports key UN General Assembly resolutions, including the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and its 7th Review A/RES/75/291 (2021). The programme is also responsive to Security Council resolutions, including UNSCR 2309 (2016), 2341 (2017), 2370 (2017), 2617 (2021), the priorities identified by the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and its Executive Directorate (CTED), including by the Delhi Declaration adopted by CTC, and the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF) Berlin Memorandum *on Good Practices for Countering Terrorist Use of Unmanned Aerial Systems*.

The programme is implemented in partnership with the United Nations Global Service Centre (UNGSC), Conflict Armament Research (CAR), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and in collaboration several United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact entities, the private sector, academia, and civil society organizations.

Conflict Armament Research

Since 2011, Conflict Armament Research (CAR) has established active field investigation capabilities to track weapons and military assistance supply networks in over 25 conflict and terrorism-affected environments globally. Its investigation teams work on the ground in active armed conflicts alongside national defense and security agencies. The teams document weapons and other related materiel including UAS at the point of use and track their sources back through the chains of supply. Its teams investigate weapons in a variety of conflict related situations—be they recovered by State security forces, surrendered at the cessation of hostilities, cached, or held by insurgent forces. All of Conflict Armament Research's data is housed in iTrace®, a European Union and German Government-funded project which provides policymakers with the precise, verified information required to understand weapon transfers in detail and, thereby, to develop effective, evidence-based weapon management and control.

Global Report on the Acquisition, Weaponization, and Deployment of UAS by Non-state Actors for Terrorism-related Purposes

The Global Report seeks to contribute to existing efforts to establish a global baseline of national experiences of UAS use by non-state actors. It highlights current overarching trends in how actors acquire, weaponize, and deploy UAS. It also raises outlier practices that may signal emerging threats and identifies priority concerns held by Member States. This report seeks to contribute to increased awareness of the risks of proliferation of UAS and potential use for terrorism-related activities, and to enhance Member States preparedness to prevent, counter, and mitigate UAS-related risks and threats posed by non-state actors including terrorists. This research is focused on understanding key trends and developments

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relating to four main areas: acquisition; weaponization; deployment; and prevention and countermeasures.

The knowledge generated is made available to help better inform capacity building efforts, and ongoing multilateral discussions among States on ways to further strengthen preventative and mitigation measures against the terrorist acquisition of technologies and materials that can be used to produce and deploy UAS.

The Global Report presents an initial collection of Member State views on this topic and constitutes an exploratory survey of expert experiences. UNOCT and CAR intend to build on, and learn from, these findings in future research — including through further global examinations — to assess how the threat of non-state use of UAS evolves and therefore inform effective mitigation and prevention strategies.

Methodology

The 90-minute Side Event will present the AROS Programme’s awareness raising, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building efforts as well as other international efforts. CAR will subsequently provide an executive summary of the Global Report, and key conclusions. A session on “Priorities and the Way Forward” will provide representatives from different parts of the world to discuss key challenges, opportunities, experiences, lessons learned, and good practices on preventing and countering the terrorist use of UAS.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced stakeholders' knowledgebase with the latest evidence on the acquisition, weaponization, and deployment of UAS for terrorism-related purposes,
- Shared good practices in preventing and countering these transnational security threats,
- Increased awareness of international policy and programmatic developments, and capacity-building and resilience-building efforts.

Logistics

The Side Event will take place on **21 June 2023 from 09:00 – 10:30 AM (EDT/UTC-4)**. The event will be conducted in-person, at the United Nations Secretariat, in Conference Room 12.

The side event will be held in English with live interpretation available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian and Spanish.

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For those wishing to attend virtually, the Side Event will also be webcasted live through UN Web TV at the following link: <https://media.un.org/en/webtv>

RSVP

- To register use the following link: <https://forms.office.com/e/8YNFMk23da>
- In-person participants should also register through Indico: <https://indico.un.org/event/1004795/registrations/10532/>

Event Organizers

This Side Event is co-organized by the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Conflict Armament Research, and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Focal Points

UNOCT

Khalil Otmane, Programme Manager, Autonomous and Remotely Operated Systems (AROS) Programme, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (khalil.otmane@un.org)

United Arab Emirates

Vanessa Tiede, Political Advisor, Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations (vanessa.tiede@uaeun.org)

United States

Darcy D. Anderson, Senior Advisor, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism, Office of Multilateral Affairs (andersonDD2@state.gov)

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Programme Agenda

	Welcoming and Opening Remarks
09:00 – 09:20	<p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mauro Miedico, Director (OIC), UNCCT & Chief, SPIB, Office of Counter-Terrorism
	<p>Speaker(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under Secretary General, Office of Counter-Terrorism H.E. Salem Alzaabi, Advisor to the Foreign Minister, United Arab Emirates Gregory D. LoGerfo, Deputy Coordinator for Regional and Multilateral Affairs, Bureau of Counterterrorism, Department of State, United States of America
	Introduction
09:20 – 09:25	<p>Speaker(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mauro Miedico, Director (OIC), UNCCT & Chief, SPIB, Office of Counter-Terrorism
	Summary of the Report
09:25 – 09:50	<p>Speaker(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonah Leff, Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research Rob Perkins, Head of Research, Conflict Armament Research
	Panel Discussion: The Way Forward
09:50 – 10:25	<p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonah Leff, Director of Operations, Conflict Armament Research
	<p>Speaker(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jean-Philippe Morange, Senior Legal Officer, Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate Agnieszka Maja Mizgalska, Aviation Security Technical Officer, International Civil Aviation Organization Kerry Chávez, Instructor, Department of Political Science, Texas Tech University Ricardo Mendes, Chief Executive Officer, Tekever Mike Monnik, Chief Executive Officer, DroneSec – Remote Participation
	Closing Remarks
10:25 – 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mauro Miedico, Director (OIC), UNCCT & Chief, SPIB, Office of Counter-Terrorism

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