



Airbus unveils the European drone equipped with missiles for air defense

Published on 26/03/2025

Airbus has unveiled the new European drone, based on a **small unmanned aircraft** used for training **over 20 years ago**. **LOAD** (*Low-Cost Air Defence*) is the new "**anti-drone drone**" designed to tackle one of the **key challenges of modern air defense**: **reducing the interception costs** of **low-cost drones** with **high-cost traditional systems**.

The drone's design was announced on March 26 during a fair dedicated to unmanned systems in Bonn, Germany. The project is based on the **Do-DT25**, a platform developed in the early 2000s and used as an **aerial target for shooting exercises**. For this reason, it was designed to be "**cheap and expendable**".

Reusable and armed with guided missiles

The new **UAV military anti-drone drone** developed by **Airbus** will be able to carry **up to three guided missiles**, with an **operational range of 100 km**. Launch will occur via

catapult, and at the end of the mission, the aircraft will return to base **landing with a parachute**, ready for a new operation.

A **prototype with two missiles** is expected to fly **by the end of the year**, while the final version is planned **for 2027**.

Although specific technical details for LOAD have not been provided, the **Do-DT25** on which it is based has a **length of 3.1 meters**, a **wingspan of 2.5 meters**, can reach a **maximum speed of 300 knots (about 555 km/h)**, and remain in flight for about **one hour**.

Assisted autonomy and anti-drone capabilities

According to Airbus promotional material, LOAD will position itself **midway between a loitering munition and an air combat drone**. It will be **controlled by a ground command station** and will be able to **coordinate with other drones using radar data and airspace images**, to **search, detect, and — with authorization — autonomously engage enemy kamikaze drones**.

Concerns about autonomy, but concrete progress

In recent years, several experts have expressed **concerns about the increasing use of autonomy in weapon systems**, raising doubts about the actual effectiveness of **guarantees of maintaining human control in attack decisions**, as stated by **Airbus** in the case of **LOAD**.

The **autonomous capabilities** promised for this drone seem to derive from the experience accumulated with the **Do-DT25** platform. Already in **March 2023**, Airbus had successfully demonstrated the **autonomous guidance and control** of multiple **DT-25 drones**, managed by an **A310 MRTT tanker aircraft**. The experiment highlighted significant progress in **relative navigation, in-flight communication, and cooperative control algorithms**.

Integration with Eurodrone and technological independence

As the next step, Airbus plans to **integrate LOAD with other unmanned aerial platforms**, such as the **Eurodrone**, making it operational even in **areas not covered by ground**

defense radars.

Consistent with the European goal of **reducing dependence on the United States**, Airbus emphasized that the new drone **does not contain U.S. technology**, resulting in **exemption from ITAR regulations** (International Traffic in Arms Regulations). This will allow **the export of the system without constraints imposed by Washington**, leaving decisions **exclusively to the European user nations.**

News link: <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2025/03/26/airbus-announces-missile-slinging-drone-for-air-defense/>