Lead and Rotor: How Marines Will Shoot Down Drones with Their Rifles

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TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. — The United States Marine Corps has inaugurated its first dedicated training lanes and integrations for countering small unmanned aircraft systems (C-sUAS) during the Service Level Training Exercise (SLTE) 4-26, on July 15, 2026.

Participating units from the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions integrated C-sUAS procedures into nearly every training event, with the goal of ensuring that personnel know how to safely identify, intercept, and neutralize the threat of enemy drones.

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The crucial role of the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG) and the "Coyotes"

The success of the exercise was made possible by the support of the **"Coyotes"**, the radio callsign for Marines assigned to the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG). The Coyotes manage live-fire training in complex, high-risk conditions, simulating realistic combat scenarios to refine the decision-making processes of units.

The evolution began with a three-day session focused on:

- **Classroom theoretical instruction**
- **Practical field application**
- **Final live-fire shooting sessions**

Thanks to this initial preparation, participants developed the foundational skills to apply an anti-drone mindset to all subsequent phases of the SLTE exercise.

Drone pilots and simulated threats

A fundamental pillar of the training was the team of drone operators, without whom it would not have been possible to simulate realistic scenarios.

- **Pilot training course:** An intensive three-week program, both theoretical and practical, involving Marines from the TTECG, the 7th Marine Regiment, and the 3rd Light Armored

Reconnaissance Battalion. Pilots were trained to operate first-person-view (FPV) drones with a specific focus on tactical employment across all SLTE ranges.

- **Engagement conditions:** Marines faced moving targets at speeds exceeding **145 km/h** (90 miles per hour) at close ranges of up to **20 meters**.

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Kinetic weapons and electronic warfare

To counter enemy drones, troops combined physical (kinetic) and non-physical means, including electronic warfare. The armament employed by infantry units includes:

- **M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle** (5.56 mm caliber)
- **M1014 Combat Shotgun** (12 gauge)
- **M32A1 and M320 Grenade Launchers** (40 mm low-velocity anti-personnel munitions)

"*Small unmanned aircraft systems have been around for some time, but today they are much more prevalent on the battlefield because they are inexpensive,*" said Captain Faith Richardson, platoon commander of the TTECG. The goal of the C-sUAS lanes is to instill in Marines the confidence needed to identify and neutralize targets, completing the mission.

Toward the future: permanent training

The drone threat represents an unprecedented challenge, but one embedded in a comprehensive operational context. During the SLTE, Marines continued to operate as usual,

but faced the constant friction of enemy drones in every scenario, from urban clearance operations to mechanized patrols.

Given the excellent results and effectiveness of the protocols developed by the TTECG, C-sUAS training will become a permanent component of future exercise cycles at Twentynine Palms. Participants will bring these skills back to their respective units, ensuring that the Marine Corps remains a highly lethal, flexible force ready to dominate future multi-domain conflicts.

News link: https://www.dvidshub.net/image/9828931/slte-4-26-2nd-battalion-2nd-marine-regiment-conduct-c-suas-mout-training