

MALET: The U.S. Army's new kit to turn mortars into drone munitions

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The U.S. Army has officially unveiled the **MALET** (*Munitions Air-dropped Lethal Effects Tool*), a new system designed to allow frontline troops to rapidly convert conventional 60 mm and 81 mm mortar rounds into drone-dropped munitions.

MALET is part of the Army's broader program known as **CLIK** (*Picatinny Common Lethality Integration Kit*), which is intended to integrate lethal payloads onto unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), including small drones.

Development of the kit stems from the U.S. Army's need to catch up in a combat tactic that first emerged a decade ago, when ISIS began using commercial drones to drop munitions during the Battle of Mosul (2016-2017), a tactic that subsequently evolved significantly and became systematized in the war in Ukraine.



How MALET works

Work on the MALET system began in 2024 at the U.S. Army Armaments Center. The primary goal was to avoid the need to introduce entirely new munitions in the field or force soldiers to make cumbersome and dangerous improvised modifications to the ordnance.

The system consists of a **clip-on kit** that adds two key elements to the mortar round:

- **An integrated fuze mechanism:** allows the munition to detonate safely only after it has been released from the drone.
- **Stabilizing fins:** provide the aerodynamic, visual, and trajectory stability required during descent toward the target.

A key strategic advantage is the **reversibility of the process**: installing and removing the MALET kit does not damage the round. If the mission changes or the munition is not used, the soldier can return the ordnance to its original configuration for use in a conventional tube mortar.



Extended range and integrated logistics

When fired from conventional tube mortars, 60 mm and 81 mm ammunition covers distances between 2 and 3,5 miles (approximately 3-5,5 km). Carried by drones, their range increases exponentially. Although the Army has not specified which drones were used in the most recent tests, a program solicitation indicates an intention to employ MALET on drones with an operational range of between **20 and 40 km** (approximately 12, 5-25 miles).

From a logistics perspective, using existing mortar stocks already widely available in warehouses avoids the expense and procurement lead times of purpose-built drone munitionsField testing and CLIK integration Recent tests conducted by the U.S. Army using live 60 mm rounds confirmed the system's maturity. During simulations, the munitions were released from moving UAS, maintaining the correct in-flight orientation and

detonating within the designated target area.

The MALET kit integrates with the other prototypes in the modular CLIK system:

1. **AUDIBLE** (*Armament UAS Delivered Immediate Battlefield Effects*): a rapid-release system adaptable to other munitions as well, such as M67 grenades.
2. **Gunslinger**: fire-control software designed to calculate target and drone movement variables to optimize impact accuracy.

Pursuing an already established tactic

Despite the enthusiastic tone of the announcement, the U.S. Army is in fact late to a technology that is now already widespread. Last year, the Army was already the target of criticism for celebrating on social media as “innovative” a simple system for dropping M67 grenades from quadcopters — a practice long established among militias, drug cartels, and extensively on the Ukrainian front.

The transition from improvised field solutions to a standardized, safe, engineered system such as MALET nonetheless represents a necessary step toward incorporating drone warfare into official U.S. armed forces doctrine.

The next phases call for MALET kits to be distributed during major military exercises planned for this fall, in order to collect feedback directly from operational soldiers before large-scale production and fielding.

News link: https://www.twz.com/land/this-is-the-armys-new-malet-kit-that-turns-mortars-into-drone-dropped-weapons