



The French Army turns tank crews into FPV drone pilots

Published on 31/10/2026

During 2026, **the French Army began a major reorganization of its cavalry units.**

Drawing on lessons learned on the battlefield in the conflict in Ukraine, **the 1° Reggimento di Fanteria di Marina converted one of its three light cavalry squadrons into an experimental all-drone formation: the first hunter drone squadron.**

The results achieved during exercises were so clear-cut that they convinced military leaders to **expand the project nationwide, setting a target of creating around 15 squadrons dedicated to combat drones** by the summer of 2027. The momentum is also reflected in international deployments, with the first deployment of a unit to Romania as part of Missione Aigle and further exercises in Poland, **applying the classic principles of light cavalry — reconnaissance, speed, flanking maneuvers, and destruction** — through the use of lightweight, stealthy remotely piloted aircraft.

Battlefield Impact and NATO Vulnerabilities

The effectiveness of the new doctrine was demonstrated during the NATO exercise in Estonia, where **a team of just 10 French pilots, representing 5% of their battlegroup's active strength, faced a U.S. unit equipped with M2A4 Bradley tracked vehicles, accounting for 20% of the total losses inflicted on the enemy in a single day.** In subsequent national maneuvers, FPV pilots virtually destroyed four regimental command posts, logistics convoys, and counter-drone batteries.

However, simulations on realistic terrain showed that **drones do not solve every problem and have significant vulnerabilities. First, electronic warfare and frequency jamming can neutralize entire swarms,** allowing enemy armored forces to advance. Second, **the constant need for manpower remains evident: without dismounted soldiers armed with conventional weapons such as rifles, mortars, and anti-tank missiles, the enemy can break through the lines when drones cannot fly because of bad weather or interference.** Finally, during training at the CENTAC center, troops adapted by adopting visual and thermal camouflage strategies — including **the use of camouflage umbrellas to break up silhouettes from above — and fielding 12-gauge shotguns for close-range defense against FPVs.**

Logistics and the Industrial Future ("Queen and Workers")

The introduction of drones is also radically changing how a cavalry squadron manages its logistics. **A 120-person unit with 100 pilots requires fewer traditional heavy munitions, but needs a constant supply chain of batteries, field generators, and hundreds of airframes, given that a single pilot can use between 10 and 20 loitering munitions during a single day of intense combat.**

To push operational capabilities further, the regiment is working with several defense companies on next-generation technologies, including the "Queen and Workers" concept. **In this system, multiple aircraft are launched from canisters mounted on the rear of an armored vehicle: a mother drone autonomously identifies targets using artificial intelligence and guides kamikaze drones to impact.** Thanks to these solutions, autonomous terminal guidance aims to increase drone accuracy from the current 10–30% to 80–90%, extending operational range to 10 kilometers for attacks and 20 kilometers for reconnaissance.

As French commanders have emphasized, **drones will not make traditional tanks obsolete, but they are reshaping combined-arms warfare**, where the primary objective is to dominate the tempo of battle and deny the enemy the time needed to decide and react.