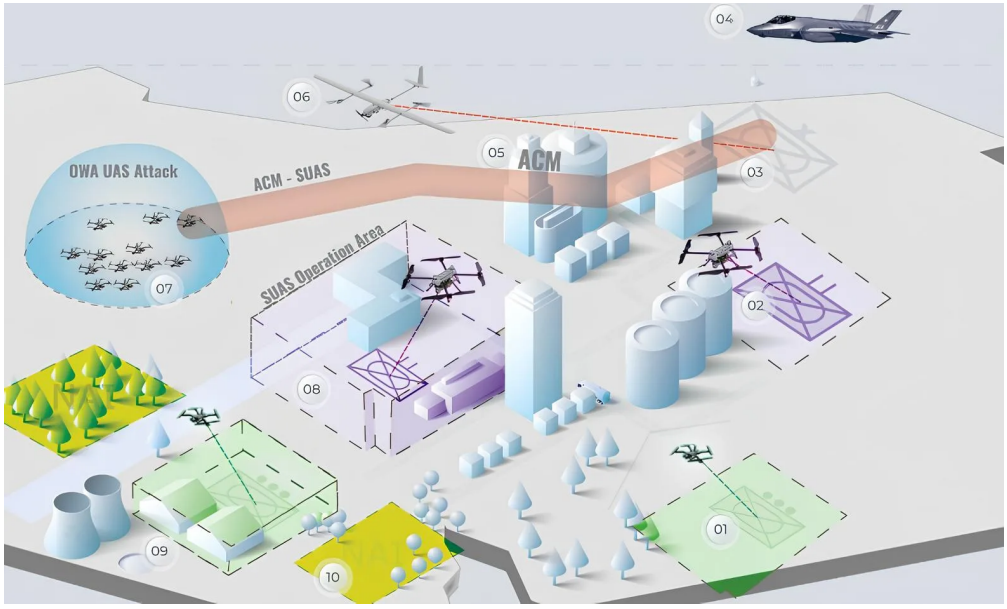


The New Invisible Front: The U.S. Army Sets the Rules for Drones on the Field

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In recent years, **small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS)** have taken on a decisive role in modern conflicts, particularly thanks to the testing ground represented by the war in Ukraine. Tactical drones, now present at every level of engagement, are radically transforming the concept of air power and battlefield management. The U.S. Army has compiled these experiences in the document "*Small Unmanned Aircraft System Airspace Management and Control – A Handbook for Army Leaders*," published on September 12 and drafted by the *Center for Army Lessons Learned* (CALL).

The Operational Memory of the U.S. Army

CALL, an entity responsible for collecting and disseminating learned lessons, has the task of transforming experiences gained in operational theaters and exercises into codified procedures, manuals, and guidelines. With the new handbook, the institution provides military leaders with a concrete tool to tackle the challenges posed by the integration of sUAS into the airspace close

to the ground. The goal is to promote collective learning and the dissemination of common operational standards, capable of ensuring freedom of maneuver and operational safety.

The document highlights how the massive increase in drones entails an unprecedented level of complexity in managing military air traffic. The coexistence of piloted and unmanned vehicles, artillery, and air defense systems requires continuous synchronization between various tactical levels and, increasingly, between different armed forces and allied countries. For this reason, the manual introduces the concept of *Unit Airspace Plans* (UAP), or **airspace plans** that must be developed and constantly updated even at the company and battalion level.

Roles and Responsibilities in Transformation

The reorganization of tasks is another crucial point. The **Air Defense Airspace Management** (ADAM) at the brigade level sees its importance increased, acting as a link between units employing drones and the overall air traffic picture. Companies and battalions, on the other hand, are called to integrate the use of sUAS with active surveillance of the sector's airspace. Operators, therefore, are no longer mere drone pilots but must develop constant situational awareness and multi-level coordination capabilities.



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Dynamic Deconflicting and Automation

The core of the manual is represented by the concept of *dynamic deconflicting*: a preventive planning of routes, altitudes, and coordination zones, which must remain flexible and adaptable in real-time. Added to this are safety measures such as emergency procedures, alternative

landing sites, and the management of potential enemy interference or adverse weather conditions. Digital tools like the *Tactical Airspace Integration System* (TAIS) and automated mission tracking systems become indispensable to ensure responsiveness, reduce the burden on operators, and maintain operational continuity.

A Look to the Future

The CALL manual aims to serve as a practical guide to tackle an ever-evolving challenge: managing the increasing density of drones on the battlefield. While offering concrete solutions – realistic SOPs, process automation, integrated planning – the issue of regulatory and doctrinal adaptation remains open, which must evolve in step with technological development. In the coming years, the ability of armed forces to fully integrate sUAS into their maneuver concept will be one of the determining factors of military superiority.

News link: https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2025/09/10/266200da/small-unmanned-aircraft-system-airspace-management-and-control-a-handbook-for-army-leaders.pdf