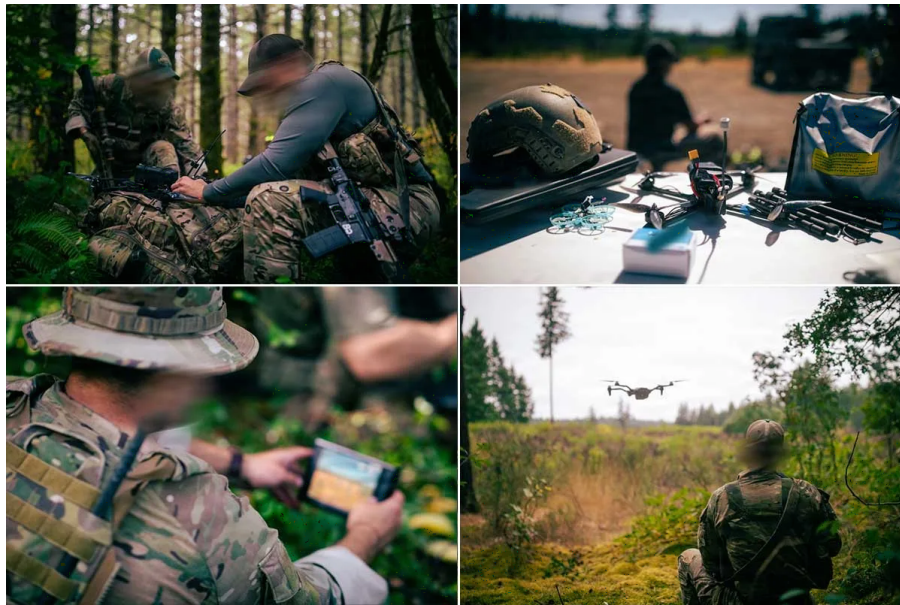




US Special Forces, tactical drone competition: lessons learned will be distributed among units

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The United States Army Special Forces are accelerating the integration of drones into their operational capabilities. A concrete sign comes from the first Best Drone Team Competition organized by the 1st Special Forces Command (Airborne), concluded with the victory of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne).

The competition took place from August 24 to 28, 2026 between Fort McClellan and the Clarke Range Complex, in Alabama, involving 15 teams of Green Berets from the various units of the command.

The operators were not evaluated simply on their ability to pilot a drone, but above all on their ability to integrate unmanned systems in solving complex tactical problems.

The scenarios included activities in both urban and rural environments, in which teams had to identify how to best use small unmanned aerial systems, adapting to operating conditions and inserting information provided by drones into the tactical decision-making process.

Being able to pilot a drone is not enough

This is precisely the most interesting point of the American initiative.

According to the U.S. Army, the drone alone does not necessarily constitute a tactical advantage. The real value arises from the military's ability to understand its characteristics, identify where it can truly be useful, and integrate it with other tools available on the battlefield.

For this reason, the competition brought together not only Special Forces teams, but also specialists in robotics and personnel tasked with developing new tactics, techniques, and procedures.

The goal is to create an extremely rapid process: identify an operational need, procure the most suitable system, train, verify it in realistic scenarios, and most importantly distribute what has been learned to other units before the technology, or the threat, changes again.

A philosophy that directly reflects what has been observed in contemporary conflicts, where the drone innovation cycle can be much faster than the traditional acquisition and training timelines of the Armed Forces.

The 1st Special Forces Group prepares the team

The preparation of the winning team had begun before the competition.

The 1st SFG(A) had identified its own Operational Detachment Alpha, ODA, and began training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, in the State of Washington.

During this phase the operators had identified some gaps in available capabilities, leading the command to accelerate the acquisition of necessary equipment.

Official images show among the systems used in training also the Skydio X10 and Neros Archer FPV drones, employed in ISR activities and in the testing of operating procedures.

From the winning team to the entire unit

The victory, however, seems to be considered almost secondary to what will happen now.

The commander of the 1st Special Forces Group, Col. Ronald J. Hudak, has ordered that the experience gained by the operators be transformed into knowledge usable by the rest of the formation.

The lessons learned during the competition will be used to develop new training, practical instructional material, and procedures intended to increase basic competence on unmanned systems within the Group.

The goal is significant: not to create only a few highly specialized operators in drones, but to make their knowledge transferable to as many military personnel in the unit as possible.

This is probably the true meaning of the Best Drone Team Competition.

US Special Forces seem to now consider the drone no longer as a tool reserved exclusively for the specialist, but as a capability destined progressively to become an integral part of the operator's tactical competence.

On a battlefield where sensors, FPV drones, ISR systems, and autonomous platforms evolve rapidly, the ability to learn, modify procedures, and transfer lessons learned could become as important as the technology itself.

News link:

https://www.army.mil/article/295099/special_forces_drone_competition_highlights_armys_rapid_transformation