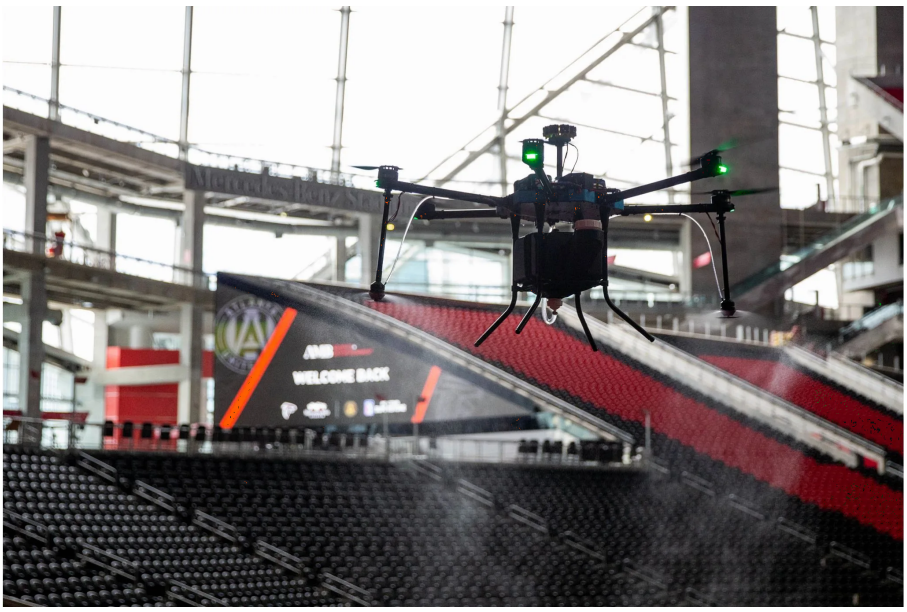


World Cup 2026: the Pentagon plans Integrated Command and Control C/Drones

Published on 25/12/2025

The U.S. Department of Defense is accelerating towards a goal that, until recently, seemed almost unrealistic: making all counter-drone (counter-UAS, or cUAS) systems used by military bases and federal agencies speak the same language. In practice, creating **a single command and control (C2) architecture** capable of "orchestrating" sensors and effectors from different manufacturers, purchasable through a government **digital marketplace**. The idea is to reduce fragmentation, deployment times, and licensing costs, and above all, to improve the sharing of the "threat picture" between installations and authorities.

Why now: small drones, many, and difficult to manage in a coordinated way

The starting point is simple: **light drones are increasingly widespread and accessible**, and consequently more plausible in scenarios ranging from sabotage to intrusions on critical infrastructure to threats during large public events. Hence the need for a “layered” defense, where **detecting, identifying, tracking, and neutralizing** is not a mosaic of separate systems, but an integrated and interoperable process. The Joint Interagency Task Force 401 (JIATF-401) – Army-led task force – describes exactly this: a network that integrates sensors, “effectors” (also non-kinetic) and mission command systems into a reactive and shared framework.



World Cup 2026: the Pentagon plans Integrated Command and Control C/Drone

The JIATF-401 is seeking **“a single” C2 system** capable of operating and coordinating any cUAS component purchasable on the marketplace. The reason is not just technical: **sharing software and data between multiple installations is costly**, as it often requires extensive and expensive licenses. The task force director, **Brig. Gen. Matt Ross**, spoke of an ambitious goal: ensuring that “every new capability” can immediately connect to a **common C2 framework**, with a push to close decisive steps in about 90 days, despite an “enterprise license” normally requiring much more time.

In parallel, the task force is:

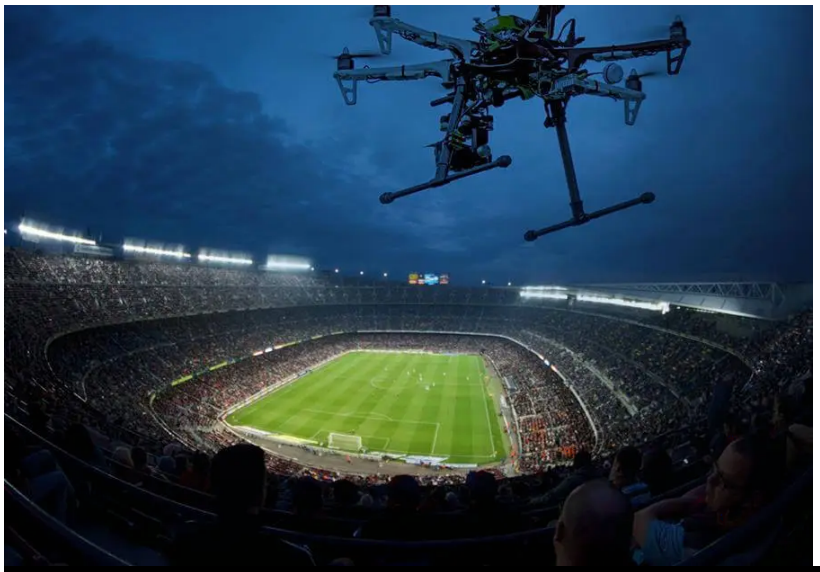
- **testing and evaluating** cUAS components and solutions to be made purchasable through the marketplace;

- **standardizing training** between the DoD, Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and FBI, so that different operators use consistent procedures and tools.

The proving ground: security of the 2026 World Cup (and beyond)

A concrete acceleration comes from the calendar: the **FIFA World Cup 2026** in the United States (with matches in cities like New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and others) requires a credible and coordinated anti-drone posture. *Defense One* reports that the **FBI**, through the **National Counter-UAS Center**, is preparing law enforcement precisely for the tournament, and that the JIATF-401 is working with federal agencies to ensure threat awareness, access to cUAS capabilities, and understanding of the operational limits of the systems.

Here an operational issue also emerges: the task force focuses especially on drones **under 55 pounds** (about 25 kg), which are more likely over urban areas and crowded gatherings. The idea is to avoid disproportionate responses (such as missiles) and focus on solutions with **low collateral damage**.



World Cup 2026: the Pentagon plans Integrated Command and Control C/Drone

The key issue is not just “shooting down” a drone, but **seeing it first** and sharing its track with those who need to react. An article from the Department of Defense (war.gov) explicitly talks about the need for a **common air picture that includes drones**, integrating data from classified and unclassified sensors and distributing sensing capabilities among federal and non-federal partners.

The JIATF-401 intends to **share data** also with the **“Golden Dome”** project (missile defense), especially for larger drones, to avoid information islands between anti-drone defense and air/missile defense. The stated idea is “to see the same threat picture” and decide when and where to share it operationally.

If the Pentagon succeeds in imposing (or incentivizing) a **common C2**, the impact will be significant:

- **For bases and local commanders:** fewer “separate towers,” more regional cooperation, and greater operational continuity when installing a new capability.
- **For the industry:** increased pressure towards standard integrations and compatibility; at the same time, those who “enter” the common framework could have a competitive advantage.
- **For public events and internal security:** success depends as much on technology as on **procedures, training, and legal authorities** (who can intervene, with what rules of engagement), a topic that in the U.S. debate remains sensitive, especially for the use of kinetic measures in crowded contexts.

Conclusions

The message, in summary, is that Washington wants to transform anti-drone defense into a **network infrastructure**: fewer isolated solutions, more interoperability, faster procurement through the marketplace, and a single C2 direction. The task force aims to have **candidates for the common system** by the early months of 2026, while the 2026 World Cup becomes the most immediate operational and political test.

News link: https://www.defenseone.com/technology/2025/12/pentagon-wants-common-network-its-counter-drone-systems/410302/?oref=d1-homepage-river