

SPECIAL EDITION: AIRBUS DEFENCE SUMMIT - 2026

ROTOR



Engineering the shield that protects us

SAVING AT THEIR SIDE P.04

Vertical thinking: designing a strategy to navigate the new normal

SAVING AT THEIR SIDE P.6


Uncrewed collaborative combat aircraft


SAVING AT THEIR SIDE P.16

The Airbus answer to one-way attack drones


SAVING AT THEIR SIDE P.28


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04
SAVING AT THEIR SIDE

Engineering the shield that protects us

20
EXPLORING IDEAS
Products in focus

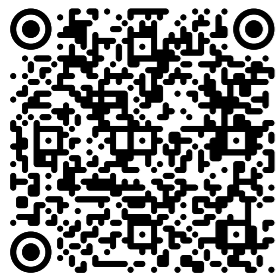
26
EXPLORING HORIZONS
One H160 can hide another...

28
SAVING AT THEIR SIDE
The Airbus answer to one-way attack drones

30
SAVING AT THEIR SIDE
The NH90's new lease on life

32
SAVING AT THEIR SIDE
An ally in a crisis:
how the Airbus A400M
aircraft rewrote the rules

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ENGINEERING THE SHIELD

ARTICLES—
Ben Peggie,
Álvaro Frieria,
Alexandre Marchand
and Jonas Schramm

THAT PROTECTS US

The rules of the world have changed and in this increasingly volatile context, conflict has changed too. When facing a multitude of rapidly evolving threats, the capacity a country has to defend itself has never been more vital. Defence is important for us all. By equipping its customers and air forces to prevent crises, protect citizens and restore stability, Airbus is shaping the future of defence to ensure European countries and their allies remain strong, independent and resilient. Furthermore, investing in defence drives the high-tech innovations and growth that help secure the Europe of tomorrow.

VERTICAL THINKING: DESIGNING A STRATEGY TO NAVIGATE THE NEW NORMAL

Helicopters are the backbone of disaster relief and military missions. In an increasingly blurry global security context, their role remains vital for decades to come.

ARTICLE — Ben Peggie

Defence and security operators are responding to diversifying and intensifying threats, explains Mathilde Royer, Executive Vice President Strategy and Sustainability at Airbus Helicopters. "Climate-related natural disasters have been on the rise for years, and now many countries are enhancing their preparations for conflict. Combat tactics and strategies are also changing, with increasing use of uncrewed aerial systems (UAS), and we expect to see an increase in hybrid warfare operations in the future." Royer insists on the importance of rotorcraft in this context. "When responding to critical situations, dual-use helicopters can offer a tactical advantage in military operations, rescue people from catastrophes and restore vital infrastructure." With specialised military aircraft, such as the NH90 and Tiger, as well as militarised versions of its civil range, Royer believes that Airbus Helicopters provides ideal solutions. "In this changing world, we must move beyond the silo of aircraft-only platforms toward integrated, multi-domain ecosystems. The H160M offers new possibilities to military operators, while the flexibility and adaptability of the modular H145M means that it is tailored for multi-mission requirements, for which there will be a strong demand, as the deployment of hybrid warfare tactics proliferates and evolves. The HForce system and Airbus' modularity allow the H145M and H225M to pivot rapidly between light attack, firefighting, and tactical transport — as recently demonstrated by Hungary's rapid deployment to Albania," says Royer.



▲ **Mathilde Royer,**
Executive Vice President
Strategy and Sustainability
at Airbus Helicopters

► *The VSR700 will be able to supply battlefield intelligence but could even be equipped for light attack or target acquisition missions.*



at their side

◀ *Hungary's H225M helicopters were deployed in Albania for firefighting missions in the summer of 2025.*

◀ *Teaming drones like the Aliaca with crewed helicopters will offer operators significant advantages in combat missions.*

A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

Integrating drones will be vital in future conflicts. "Airbus Helicopters offers a range of tactical UAS for high-risk intelligence and multi-role operations," says Royer. She highlights assets such as the Flexrotor, CapaX and VSR700 that are able to perform intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions at first but which will ultimately be multi-role. Cargo is also a likely mission, but teaming will be a game-changer. "Collaborative teaming with UAS will enhance helicopter survivability and lethality in contested battlefields," says Royer. Airbus Helicopters' HTeaming solution will facilitate stand-off attacks, with UAS performing stand-off ISR missions and target acquisition in the future. "The integration of air-launched effects [drones or effectors launched from helicopters], will deliver the capacity to strike at very long range. Helicopters will evolve into multi-role airborne hubs for drone-swarm command," emphasises Royer. Airbus' long-term strategy revolves around spearheading next-generation rotorcraft (NGRC) to ensure European strategic autonomy. "Rather than relying on non-European platforms or transatlantic partnerships, we are proactively leading the effort to shape a truly sovereign solution," she says. "Through our leadership in the European-funded ENGRT project, we are maturing the critical technologies - such as modular open systems and advanced connectivity - necessary for future military rotorcraft. Airbus is uniquely positioned to offer NATO nations the most competitive solution that is conceived, built and sustained within Europe. We are not just building a platform; we are ensuring the future of European defence industrial independence, while making sure that all critical missions can be successfully accomplished." As Royer concludes: "In an era of unpredictability, the helicopter remains a dependable tool of flexibility." By supplying the necessary versatility to respond to these challenges, Airbus is ensuring that while the battlefield may change, the relevance of the vertical lift asset remains absolute.

SOVEREIGN STRENGTH: POWERING EUROPE'S DEFENCE RESURGENCE

► Within the multi-domain operations environment, Airbus is developing an interconnected network of capabilities spanning various domains.

In a shifting global landscape where traditional alliances are under pressure and geopolitical volatility is the new norm, European governments are fundamentally re-evaluating their security architecture. Alex Schoder, Head of Air Power Strategy at Airbus Defence and Space, explains the company's essential role in supporting the continent's defence objectives.

ARTICLE — Álvaro Frieria

The erosion of long-standing dependencies has elevated strategic autonomy from a theoretical concept to an urgent operational necessity. "The war in Ukraine was a wake-up call that we can no longer depend solely on the US," says Alex Schoder.

RESOURCING AND PRODUCTION RAMP-UP

With European defence spending rising by 9%, a procurement resurgence is underway to meet urgent readiness needs. As Schoder highlights, a significant portion of this defence investment needs to address growing personnel strength and long-neglected infrastructure. "Simultaneously, our militaries must modernise systems and build combat mass through a swift short-term ramp-up," he says. Airbus customers are pursuing national acquisition reforms to rise to the challenge. The company supports these efforts and advocates for collective institutional innovations, such as contracting via agencies like the Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation (OCCAR) and NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). Furthermore, frameworks like the European Defence Fund (EDF) and European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) provide essential

means to tap into capital for development and advance joint procurement. "Business models like the Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport Fleet (MMF) may be replicable, allowing nations to pool and share resources effectively," Schroeder adds.

TECHNOLOGY FOR A COMBAT-READY EUROPE

Airbus addresses the urgent requirement for European readiness through a four-pillar framework, Schoder explains. First, the company is extending portfolio competitiveness by enhancing programmes like the A400M, C295 and A330 multi-role tanker transport (MRTT). In parallel, it is developing next-generation programmes, such as single aisle derivatives for maritime patrol and electronic warfare, uncrewed collaborative combat aircraft to team with crewed fighters like the Eurofighter, or the cost-effective Bird of Prey interceptor drone. With regard to the latter, Schoder notes: "The layer of economic attrition is now in the spotlight. An interceptor costing € 1 million against a € 40,000 Iranian-produced drone is unsustainable when facing massive barrages." Furthermore, Airbus is ensuring its entire portfolio is



▲ Alex Schoder, Head of Air Power Strategy at Airbus Defence and Space

future combat air system (FCAS)-ready, creating a 'system of systems' environment where legacy and future assets plug into a unified digital network for better decision making. Finally, the company is innovating as a services provider to ensure maximum platform availability and the ability to rapidly scale support in high-intensity environments.

AI AND SPACE: ACCELERATING DECISION-MAKING

Alongside the proliferation of uncrewed systems, the AI revolution is exponentially expanding decision-making capabilities. "Pairing these advancements with field assets is critical for any future force," highlights Schoder. Airbus has launched an internal AI hub to maximise capability reuse and an AI accelerator to partner with startups, enabling rapid transitions to formalised programmes. The realm of space remains vital for resilient communication and superior information gathering. By consolidating efforts instead of engaging in industrial attrition, Airbus has succeeded in collaborating with Leonardo and Thales to create a European space champion. This partnership will deliver essential capabilities more effectively, protecting strategic interests. "European sovereignty arises when nations collaborate to protect shared values and when they mutualise resources. By working together, partners achieve far more than they could alone, reducing the risk of being constrained by the shifting policies of external players," concludes Schoder.



◀ Airbus military aircraft flying together (from left to right and from top to bottom): C295, Eurofighter, A330 MRTT and A400M



Celebrating a successful HTeaming demonstration between the Flexrotor and the H225M.



Singapore ASIA

TEAMING FOR TEAMING: AIRBUS CONNECTS WITH SINGAPORE FOR PIONEERING COLLABORATION

Imagine a rescuer that could stay in the air for 14 hours, day and night, relaying videos and images, mapping terrain and supplying instant information to its colleagues - without getting tired or needing a break. Look no further than the Airbus Flexrotor, especially when it is working in perfect synchronisation with an H225M, thanks to HTeaming.

ARTICLE—Ben Peggie

For a search and rescue mission, visibility could be the difference between life and death. So, in January 2026, an Airbus Flexrotor uncrewed aerial system (UAS) was teamed with a Republic of Singapore Air Force H225M for the very first time using Airbus' HTeaming system, to simulate this vital operation. By using HTeaming, the Flexrotor could provide vital intelligence directly to the H225M's crew, and would allow the pilots to directly command and control the drone, using a specialised datalink that enables immediate data processing without overloading the pilot's workload.

RELATIONSHIP GOALS

Teaming brings significant advantages to combat search and rescue (CSAR) and SAR missions. Firstly, in terms of situational awareness, it is a game changer. The Flexrotor significantly extends the visual range beyond what can be seen from the helicopter it is linked to. It also minimises the chance of the helicopter crew being exposed to a high-risk environment, as it will have already surveyed the area. Finally, it facilitates quicker decision making, as the data is received directly by the pilots. This means pilots can take almost immediate action once they have seen something interesting or potentially found what they are looking for. The demonstration was conducted with the support of Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) and the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF). Programme Manager Lim Jiaxu explains the added value of HTeaming. "Teaming is a game changer for more dynamic operations. The increased stand-off distance isn't just about safety, it's also about mission effectiveness. Helicopter air crew can obtain real-time data in order to make informed decisions."

▼ The Republic of Singapore Air Force's Major Lim Ryan, Staff Officer in the Air Plans Department



► An Airbus crew member watches on as the Flexrotor prepares to take off.



► A close-up view of the HTeaming tablet. The tablet enables the crew to benefit from real-time information from the Flexrotor.

For the Republic of Singapore Air Force's Major Lim Ryan, Staff Officer in the Air Plans Department, the demonstration was extremely useful: "The Flexrotor UAS provided forward intelligence of the area of operations, enhancing the situational awareness of the air crew, which enabled them to make real-time tactical decisions, improving threat reaction and increasing mission success, given the additional stand-off range that the Flexrotor provides."

MOTIVATED TO MAKE TOMORROW'S MISSIONS MORE EFFICIENT

When it introduced HTeaming, conscious of its future importance, Airbus Helicopters designed the system to be fully agnostic, compatible with any type of helicopter and to be able to take control of any type of drone. Lim Jiaxu also recognises that this demonstration represents only part of the journey toward that end, but it is hugely motivating to imagine what could come next. "This successful demo offers a glimpse into the exciting potential that teaming has to offer," he enthuses. "It drives DSTA to push further, working with Airbus and the RSAF to shape new solutions that could significantly enhance operations. This is just the beginning. We are already working with Airbus to push this technology further to enhance mission effectiveness for more complex missions."

THE BRAIN BEHIND THE MISSION: AIRBUS AND THE FUTURE OF COLLABORATIVE COMBAT

In modern warfare, success hinges on cognitive superiority. By pioneering software-defined crewed-uncrewed teaming, the company is transforming pilots into mission architects and securing Europe's sovereign control over its skies.

ARTICLE—Álvaro Frieria

In late 2024, the evolution of air power took a landmark step. During an AI-supported surveillance mission, two uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) executed a complex, synchronised flight pattern dictated not by pre-programmed routines, but by real-time collective intelligence. Enabled by Mindshare, Airbus' AI-enriched mission autonomy software, these UAS – from the Czech company Primoco – collaborated seamlessly with ground control to detect threats and exchange data instantaneously. This was no laboratory experiment. The mission required only human supervision, shifting away from the restrictive one-to-one ratio of remote control toward a one-to-many ratio enabled by increased operational autonomy. By

providing the autonomous 'glue' that allows crewed and uncrewed platforms to operate as a single force, Mindshare is moving rapidly toward operational deployment in Europe.

THE OPERATIONAL EDGE

For modern air force commanders and pilots, collaborative combat fundamentally rewrites the mission manual. Humans alone cannot manage the complexity of electronic warfare, drone swarms and multi-domain coordination at a speed of relevance without digital support. The advantage of teaming is twofold. For the pilot, the role shifts from a focus on direct aircraft control, to piloting the crewed fighter while managing high-level orchestration of the associated team

▼ Airbus Defence and Space is developing an open mission system to enable collaborative operations between German Air Force Eurofighters and uncrewed collaborative combat aircraft (UCCA).



▲ Airbus' Mindshare autonomy software orchestrates crewed and uncrewed platforms in real time, enabling dynamic mission reconfiguration while decoupling software development cycles from platform development.

▼ Through the hardware-agnostic open system architecture approach of MARS, assets from air, sea, land and space domains can be seamlessly integrated into a 'system of systems.'



of uncrewed assets. By delegating high-risk tasks – such as forward sensing or saturation attacks – to uncrewed teammates, cognitive load and physical risk are reduced, while maintaining strategic oversight. These systems provide 'combat mass' without requiring increased personnel expenditure.

SOFTWARE-DEFINED DEFENCE

Historically, upgrading military hardware was a decade-long process. Today's platforms, while technically advanced, are often digitally fragmented. Airbus is bridging this gap by prioritising an adaptable, software-defined paradigm. "We are moving from platform-centric development to software-centric capabilities," explains Robert van Tilborg, Head of Business Development for Future Air Power at Airbus Defence and Space. "By decoupling software from hardware lifecycles, we can upgrade operational capabilities in weeks or days rather than decades." This allows air forces to adapt to emerging threats at 'software speed,' ensuring mission logic evolves as quickly as the adversary. "Future combat aircraft will act as nodes and decision makers in a distributed combat network – processing, sharing, and exploiting data in real time and in a collaborative manner," van Tilborg adds.

ARCHITECTING THE MISSION

Airbus experts describe this ecosystem through a biological lens. The 'body' is represented by Multiplatform Autonomous Reconfigurable and Secure (MARS) software, an onboard mission system built on open standards. It provides the framework for applications that coordinate platform capabilities, enabling assets such as the Eurofighter and future uncrewed combat aircraft to operate jointly. Mindshare acts as the 'brain,' providing the mission autonomy and teaming logic to outpace adversaries. Finally, CrossBond serves as the 'nervous system,' a secure connectivity layer currently being tested on the A330 MRTT tanker to transform the aircraft into a flying communication hub. These advancements are a fundamental driver for European strategic autonomy by ensuring full sovereign control over critical data. "Information superiority will be determined by the ability to sense, decide and act faster across a network," van Tilborg concludes.



ESSENTIAL FOR SURVIVAL

In the increasingly challenging geopolitical situation, countries across the world are analysing how to ensure their armed forces remain as strong as possible. Airbus Helicopters' Head of Programmes, Stefan Thomé, explains how the company's policy of continuous development has built a range ready for essential missions.

ARTICLE — Alexandre Marchand

◀ *The versatility of the H145M allows it to perform a variety of missions.*

"Military requirements in particular drive innovation... because military products are built for either superiority or survival – or both," says Stefan Thomé. While Airbus offers the largest dual range of civil and military helicopters on the market, Thomé is highlighting the key role that continuous development has in terms of delivering military helicopters that are designed and built to be decisive. Far from being a range of civil helicopters with some basic adaptation for military operations, the company's military products are significantly enhanced by a series of ongoing innovations. For proof, Thomé also points to France's H160M Guépard and the mid-life upgrade to the Tiger as two of Airbus Helicopters' largest ongoing investments. Such improvements will also pave the way for the next generation of military rotorcraft.

CO-CREATING EVOLUTIONS

Continuous development is also becoming something that operator and OEM work on together. Previously, rigidly defined multi-year contracts agreed between OEM and client introduced new technologies, but there has been a shift in doctrine. "Those times are gone," says Thomé. "Instead, militaries co-create and co-develop solutions, industry and militaries together create solutions – that's something new." Thomé talks about Airbus Helicopters products benefitting from an entire ecosystem that supports the development of new technologies. Universities, suppliers, partners and of course, Airbus' own Innovation teams constantly research and test new possibilities. Ongoing capability demonstrations given to military operators then lead to the continuously evolving functionality at the heart of Airbus Helicopters' products. "Modular architectures also provide the customers with the ability to plug in their own changes," states Thomé. An example of this in the current range is the H145M. "The helicopter's versatility means users can take this helicopter and quickly convert it from, let's say, a training helicopter to a reconnaissance helicopter, and from a reconnaissance helicopter to a light attack helicopter," points out Thomé. Continuous development of its connectivity technology puts the H145M firmly on the cutting edge, allowing it almost to act as a flying command post, like a node in a vital data network, dramatically reducing crew workload and

at their side



▲ *Drones and unmanned aerial systems such as the VSR700 will act as force multipliers on the connected battlefields of the future.*

enhancing situational awareness in the cockpit. Unsurprisingly, the company's current pinnacle of continuous development in its military range is the H160M. Special military systems, weapons and FlytX avionics all make it substantially different from the civil version. Thomé also draws attention to how well the helicopter's automation is being received: "Crews around the world are excited about the degree of automation which we have put in the H160M, for example its auto takeoff function, which makes flying this helicopter a whole new experience."

CONNECTED TO THE FUTURE

Airbus' in-service range of military products continues to evolve and Thomé highlights the teaming capability which "significantly extends the horizon of our helicopters. We intend to be drone agnostic, so it does not matter which drone we team with." Of course, a future where teaming and connected battlefields co-exist necessitates further development. "Whenever you connect products, connectivity and sensors, then data is involved," explains Thomé. "Receiving, sending, processing and storing data, as well as data security, is becoming increasingly important. And we cannot think of our products – whether helicopters, drones, ground stations – in isolation. We need to think of them as networks. This digital aspect is really another key strategic and important element for products, especially future military aircraft."



▲ *Stefan Thomé, Head of Programmes at Airbus Helicopters*



UNCREWED COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT

Everything you need to know.

ARTICLE — Jonas Schramm

HOW WILL UNCREWED COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT TRANSFORM AIR COMBAT?

Fighter jets will no longer operate alone. Instead, they will fly with a team of autonomous uncrewed collaborative combat aircraft (UCCA) that follow the pilot's every command. Science fiction? No. Airbus is making it a reality, targeting putting the UCCA capability into operation with the German Air Force by 2029.

▲ Airbus works with Kratos Defense & Security Solutions to provide an operational UCCA to the German Air Force by 2029.

WHAT IS AN UCCA?

An UCCA is an autonomous, armed aerial platform designed to operate alongside fighter jets. It can fly in formation, engage threats and react to changing battlefield conditions without the need for a ground operator to manage its every move. The main idea behind the UCCA is to increase 'combat mass' during operations and extend the reach of crewed aircraft.

HOW DOES AN UCCA COLLABORATE WITH A CREWED PLATFORM?

This is where the concept of crewed-uncrewed teaming comes in: crewed combat aircraft such as the Eurofighter act as the command centre, while the UCCA is the operator's 'extended arm'. The pilot provides high-level mission objectives, which the UCCA then executes at the level of autonomy it has been granted. UCCA can take on specialised roles: for instance, one might engage an enemy target while another might jam enemy radar or scan the battlefield and relay real-time data back to the pilot. All of this is made possible by a sophisticated mission system - the 'brain' behind the mission - which allows humans and machines to work together seamlessly.

WHY ARE UNCREWED COLLABORATIVE COMBAT AIRCRAFT CRITICAL IN MODERN DEFENCE?

In modern warfare, the side that can process information and act fastest has the advantage. It's not just about the first 24 hours of a conflict; it's also about endurance. Against this backdrop, UCCA act as force multipliers. They can be produced in greater numbers and at a lower cost than crewed jets, providing the necessary scale to counter threats and ensure air superiority without overstressing existing resources. At the same time, they provide support for pilots, who can reduce their workload by delegating tasks to these autonomous systems. An UCCA also ensures that human pilots remain out of the immediate line of fire by taking on high-risk tasks.

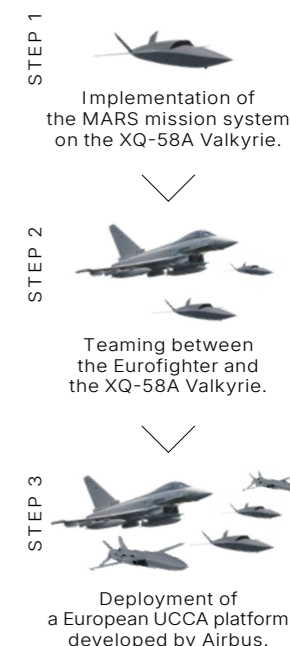
HOW IS AIRBUS ADVANCING THIS CAPABILITY CONCRETELY?

To provide these capabilities to the German Air Force and its European partners by 2029, Airbus is taking an agile approach under fully sovereign means. In partnership with Kratos Defense & Security Solutions, Airbus will utilise the proven, cost-effective

XQ-58A Valkyrie platform as the basis for an UCCA operated under sovereign control. Customisation is the key factor: Airbus will equip the platform with its own, European-developed MARS mission system. By integrating this open architecture into the Valkyrie, Airbus will enable the German Air Force to begin operational testing, training and concept development immediately. Airbus is currently integrating MARS into the Valkyrie while preparing the first two aircraft for their maiden flights, scheduled for later this year. The next critical step will be to connect the Valkyrie to the Eurofighter to create the first operational European fixed wing crewed-uncrewed team. Meanwhile, Airbus is developing a European UCCA in a higher weight class. This platform is designed to cover a wider capability spectrum to support even more sophisticated operational requirements of the armed forces in Europe and beyond. This step-by-step approach — equipping an existing platform with its own software while simultaneously developing a new one — will allow the German Air Force and other interested armed forces to respond flexibly to new threats in the medium and long term.

▲ The Eurofighter is due to serve as a command platform for the Valkyrie from 2029 onwards.

The UCCA roadmap of Airbus





Products IN FOCUS

Eurofighter

The supersonic defender



Max. speed:	2,495 km/h (Mach 2.0)
Max. payload:	7,500 kg
Range:	2,900 km with drop tanks
Service ceiling:	Above 16,764 m (>55,000 ft)

Mission profile

- Multi-role combat aircraft
- Air policing
- Strategic precision strikes

H145M

The multi-role battlefield support



Max. speed:	241 km/h
MTOW:	3,800 kg / 1,600 kg (max sling load)
Range:	637 km
Seating:	2 crew / 10 troops

Mission profile

- Special operations
- Light attack
- Utility

H160M

The next-generation combat helicopter




Max. speed:	263 km/h
MTOW:	6,050 kg / 1,600 kg (max sling load)
Range:	732 km
Seating:	2 crew / 12 troops

Mission profile

- Special operations
- Maritime security
- Search & rescue

A400M

The 21st century airlifter



Max. speed:	890 km/h (Mach 0.72)
Max. payload:	37,000 kg
Range:	8,900 km (ferry)/3,300 km (full payload)
Service ceiling:	12,200 m (40,000 ft)

Mission profile

- Cargo transport
- Tactical paratrooper deployment
- Front-line aerial refuelling

A330 MRTT

The strategic support



Seating:	Up to 300 passengers / troops
Max. payload:	111,000 kg (fuel) / 45,000 kg (non-fuel)
Range:	Up to 16,000 km
Fuel offload:	Up to 70 tonnes (1 hr loitering mission)

Mission profile

- Air-to-air refuelling
- Passenger and troop transport
- Aeromedical evacuation

Tiger

The proven attack rotorcraft




Max. speed:	280 km/h
MTOW:	6,600 kg
Range:	800 km
Seating:	2 crew

Mission profile

- Armed scout
- Attack
- Escort

NH90

The NATO-worthy ally



Max. speed:	270-300 km/h
MTOW:	11,000 kg / 4,100 kg (max sling load)
Range:	900+ km
Seating:	2 crew / up to 20 troops

Mission profile

- Special operations
- Combat search & rescue
- Anti-submarine warfare

Kratos XQ-58A Valkyrie

The affordable combat mass



Max. speed:	1,050 km/h
Max. payload:	600 kg
Range:	5,500 km
Max. ceiling:	13,700 m

Mission profile

- Combat

1 / 2

Take a closer look at some of the defence and security products from the Airbus portfolio.

...

Eurodrone

The large, long-endurance RPAS



Max. speed:	500 km/h
Max. payload:	2,300 kg
Endurance:	Up to 40 hours
Service ceiling:	12,200 m (40,000 ft)

Mission profile

- (Armed) ISTAR
- Maritime surveillance
- Anti-submarine warfare

Aliaca

The versatile scout



Max. speed:	95 km/h
Max. payload:	3 kg
Endurance:	6 hours
Data link range:	100 km

Mission profile

- Maritime & land surveillance
- Wildfire monitoring
- Traffic monitoring

German Heron TP

The adaptable sky-eye



Max. speed:	401 km/h
Max. payload:	1,600 kg
Endurance:	27 hours
Service ceiling:	12,496 m (41,000 ft)

Mission profile

- (Armed) ISTAR
- Maritime surveillance
- Signal intelligence

OneWeb

The LEO telecommunication constellation



- Global network:** +600 Airbus-built satellites, operated by Eutelsat
- Low Earth orbit:** 12 synchronised orbital planes at 1,200 km altitude
- Performance:** Seamless mobility, low-latency connectivity
- Industry standard:** Built in Europe

Mission profile

- Global high-speed internet
- Real-time data for LEO apps
- Multi-mission, versatile/scalable

Flexrotor

The expeditionary all-rounder




Max. speed:	140 km/h
Max. payload:	>8 kg
Endurance:	up to 14 hours
Data link range:	up to 150 km (LOS), subject to endurance (BLOS)

Mission profile

- Maritime & land surveillance
- Intelligence gathering
- Wildfire monitoring

Capa-X

The modular multi-tasker




Max. speed:	150 km/h
Max. payload:	20 kg
Endurance:	>10 hours
Data link range:	>100 km (LOS), unlimited (BLOS)

Mission profile

- Electronic warfare
- Logistics
- ISTAR

HTeaming

The best partner for teaming




- Gives helicopter crew **full control of drone** from a tablet or the cockpit
- Increases **tactical advantage** and keeps crew out of harm's way
- Compatible with the **entire range** of Airbus helicopters

Mission profile

- Target acquisition
- Reconnaissance
- Search & rescue

Mindshare

The brain behind the mission



- AI-enriched software** for crewed-uncrewed and uncrewed-uncrewed teaming
- Autonomous mission execution** by multiple uncrewed platforms with human oversight
- Force multiplier** which enhances collective capabilities, protects the pilot, reduces personnel and cognitive burden

Mission profile

- Automated wide area surveillance
- SEAD / DEAD operations
- Collaborative combat and attack

...

SAVING

How does defence affect your life?

Far from the battlefield and close to home, defence and security assets can play a key role in our everyday lives.

at their side

Maritime surveillance



NH90
Anti-submarine

Disaster relief



H175M

CAPA-X

Search & rescue



H145M

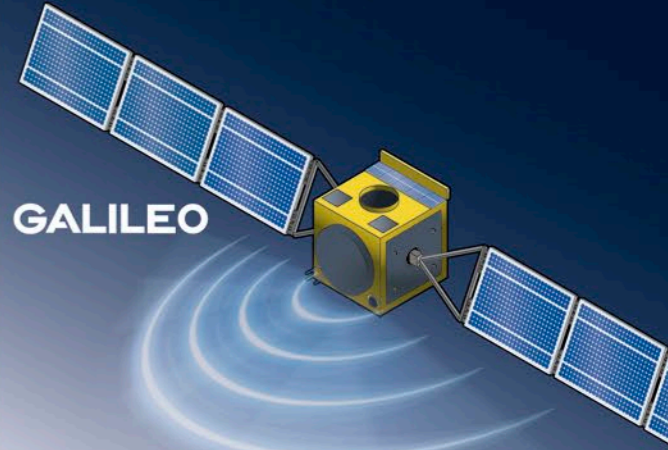


ALIACA

Firefighting



H225M



GALILEO

Global navigation

FLEXROTOR



A400M



C295

STYRIS

Securing the airspace



EUROFIGHTER

Protecting essential services

CYBERSECURITY

ROTOR

Infographic: BeatrizSantacruz.com and Airbus



One H160 CAN HIDE ANOTHER...

By offering various levels of potential militarisation, the H160 allows for a response to a wide range of governmental missions, starting today.

ARTICLE — Alexandre Marchand



Airbus Helicopters is preparing to conduct a first firing campaign with the H160M equipped with a 12.7 mm axial machine gun. "This is a major event for a military aircraft, which features a very high level of integration of its weaponry with its sensors, its avionics, its mission system and even the autopilot," emphasises Vincent Chenot, head of the H160M programme. "This integration allows us to develop innovative firing modes to maximise the performance of firing passes, not only for the axial machine gun but for other future armaments." This integration results in automatic target tracking, with the autopilot ultimately responsible for piloting the aircraft's trajectory in yaw and pitch to guarantee firing accuracy. The H160M will also be equipped with the TopOwl helmet, identical to that of the Tiger, with identical modes and functions, and it will use the same electronic warfare suite as the combat helicopter. "With its large-format touchscreens, the new FlytX avionics installed on the H160M further facilitate mission management," notes Charles Lanzalavi, technical manager of the programme. The H160M carries a mission assistant for this purpose, developed with Airbus Defence and Space. "This highly integrated and automated avionics will offer users the possibility of conducting complex missions with a crew of only two people. For the navy, this will involve pilots operating a latest-generation tactical radar equipped with numerous modes, without having to involve a third crew member." The aircraft will also be natively equipped with a capability for collaboration with drones. The H160M's weapon pylons and the associated reinforcements of the structure give it significant growth potential for new developments, such as the integration of new types of air launched effects, missiles, but also remotely operated munitions (drones). "The H160M's weapon pylons must anticipate these needs in terms of physical interfaces," specifies Chenot. The French Defence Procurement Agency (DGA) has green-lit studies on the integration of MBDA's Akeron LP missile. The Akeron LP is a long-range, lightweight multi-role air-to-ground missile, versatile enough to handle anti-tank missions as well as anti-surface or possibly anti-drone missions. The H160M can be fitted with two internal 250-litre auxiliary tanks, further extending its already impressive range.

By 2030, at the end of the development and qualification work, all these characteristics will ensure the H160M has power and endurance. "But not all users will necessarily require such a level of performance," emphasises Chenot. "By taking advantage of the developments already carried out for the Gendarmerie [French national police] and French Navy, we are already able to offer a version of the H160 today that is perfectly capable of performing a very wide range of military missions." The French Navy has been using its aircraft since 2022, and the Gendarmerie received its first aircraft in 2025. These aircraft are notably equipped with a Safran EOS410 electro-optical turret, a searchlight, a hoist and fast ropes, and optional armour. The mission system coupled with specific communication means and data links will enable complex missions. Interoperability with drones constitutes a strong axis of development, with a flight demonstration planned. The integration of cabin-door weaponry is also conceivable. The missions planned for these aircraft include protecting vessels and coastal areas, observation, counter-terrorism, and reconnaissance or support for ground forces. "The H160 already delivers an extensive suite of capabilities today; these will only be bolstered in the coming years as the H160M pushes into the highest end of the operational spectrum," concludes Vincent Chenot.

◀ *The H160M's weapons pylons will be able to incorporate new weaponry in the future.*

The Airbus answer to one-way attack drones

One-way attack drones are rewriting the rules of engagement by pitting low-cost threats against expensive air defences. Is there no way to balance the scales? Let us introduce you to Airbus' Bird of Prey.

ARTICLE — Jonas Schramm



With their simple construction, off-the-shelf electronics and piston engines, one-way attack drones are a staple of the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. Dubbed 'flying mopeds' by Ukrainians, 6,462 Russian attacks with Geran-type one-way attack drones (including decoys) were registered in March 2026 alone — 208 per day. These drones overwhelm air defences and challenge long-held beliefs about the nature of warfare. In theory, the equation should be simple: whoever has the most sophisticated technology will prevail. However, one-way attack drones show that the current maths of air defence simply doesn't add up. While the threats cost barely tens of thousands of euros, the interceptors used to bring them down can cost millions. Moreover, the number of interceptors

is limited due to their inherent cost. This discrepancy illustrates the need for effective, cost-efficient countermeasures: scalable solutions that are integrated into a functional command and control (C2) architecture and are capable of keeping up with the evolution of these threats, including new versions with a higher speed due to jet propulsion and more complex flight trajectories enabled by AI.

Bird of Prey: the Airbus answer

Airbus Defence and Space is working on a practical answer for this threat: the Bird of Prey. Developed in partnership with the defence start-up Frankenburg Technologies, it is more than just another uncrewed aerial system; it is a drone hunter. Based on the Airbus

▲ *Bird of Prey can autonomously engage threats over large distances.*

► *In March 2026, the Bird of Prey successfully completed a demonstration flight, engaging a one-way attack drone with a Frankenburg missile.*

Do-DT25 airframe, this target drone has evolved into an aerial interceptor. After being launched from a catapult, Bird of Prey can engage enemy threats over long distances. Frankenburg Technologies provides its Mark I air-to-air missiles that engage their targets autonomously when fired. While the missiles are 'fire-and-forget', the Bird of Prey platform is reusable. Once all the missiles have been fired, the aircraft can be recovered, restocked and deployed again. Combining a reusable platform with relatively simple yet effective missiles ultimately results in a lower cost per interception — precisely what is required in the fight against one-way attack drones. Bird of Prey operates through the Airbus Integrated Battle Management System (IBMS), which allows for seamless integration into NATO's air defence architecture. Built entirely on European technology, the solution is free of any American International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), making it fully sovereign.

From concept to combat ready

In just nine months, Bird of Prey has progressed from an idea to a demonstration flight, which took place at the end of March

in a military training area in northern Germany. In a realistic mission scenario, it searched for, detected and classified a medium-sized one-way attack drone before engaging it with a Mark I missile. The engagement process is largely automated. From identifying the threat to destroying it, the system takes care of most of the heavy lifting. Still, the human operator always stays involved. After identifying the threat, the system prompts a request for engagement. Once the operator grants permission (or, depending on the chosen setup, does not intervene), Bird of Prey proceeds to neutralise the threat. It is this synergy between an autonomous system and human oversight that enables rapid decision making to counter the threat of one-way attack drones. Airbus and Frankenburg are already planning additional live trials throughout 2026 to further operationalise the system for global customers. As the 'drone wars' intensify, Bird of Prey offers more than just a new weapon system, it offers a means of winning the war of attrition.

It is this synergy between an autonomous system and human oversight that enables rapid decision making to counter the threat of one-way attack drones.





The NH90's NEW LEASE ON LIFE

With more than 530 aircraft in service and 500,000 flight hours recorded worldwide, the NH90 is firmly established in the military landscape. The focus has now shifted toward preparing for the future, with the launch of several projects designed to keep the aircraft at the highest standard.

ARTICLE — Alexandre Marchand

The NH90 was a highly ambitious and forward-thinking programme, both in its technical choices and its collaborative industrial framework. “Over the years, we have devoted a great deal of effort to development, qualification, the industrial ramp-up, and then resolving maturity issues,” explains Axel Aloccio, NH90 Programme Director for Airbus Helicopters. “With the industrial system and technical configurations now mature, our work today is focused more on supporting helicopters in service to provide our customers with more flight hours and better availability.” Aloccio cites various areas for improvement, while also noting an increased awareness among most customers. Numerous services are offered under the Through Life Support (TLS) contract, which nearly all nations operating the NH90 have joined through the NATO Helicopter Management Agency (NAHEMA). A new type of support contract, the NH90 Operational Support (NOS) contract, has also emerged. Currently including France, Germany, and Belgium among its customers, it offers completely integrated management of the entire logistics flow, strong commitments on parts availability, and a full range of additional services that can be activated on demand by these countries. Significant efforts have been dedicated to increasing the production and repair capacity for the most critical parts. The results are evident: in just a few years, the volume of delivered critical parts has doubled. For the past 18 months, the NH90 support system has also benefited from a new service: standard exchange. This allows NH90 customers to receive new or refurbished parts within extremely short timeframes by performing an immediate exchange with NH Industries. “This represents a major shift in mindset and demonstrates the commitment of NH Industries and the NH90 nations to work on innovative solutions to improve the programme’s logistical performance,” emphasises Axel Aloccio. In the medium term, the goal is to evolve the aircraft in both its tactical transport helicopter (TTH) and NATO frigate helicopter (NFH) variants, with a ‘Block 1’ featuring software upgrades and new capabilities in connectivity, interoperability, data transmission and electronic warfare. Development is already underway; the expected upgrades will be qualified starting in 2028, and discussions are ongoing with NAHEMA to finalise



► Crew members onboard an NH90 TTH scan the horizon



► Two Swedish NH90 TTH helicopters in action

contracts by the end of the year for retrofit activities covering more than 200 NH90s. “We are also working with NAHEMA on finalising the extension of the aircraft’s service life, which will increase from 30 to 50 years,” adds Axel Aloccio. Consequently, the aircraft recently ordered by Spain, to be delivered after 2030, will remain active until the 2080s. This very long-term vision could also apply to aircraft for future customers in Asia, the Middle East, or NATO countries. The long-term focus is the NH90 ‘Block 2.’ “We have just signed an architecture study contract with NAHEMA, which aims to offer our customers different scenarios and options for long-term improvements,” reveals Aloccio. This study will focus on: defining a new modular avionics suite to better integrate new technologies; defining a new maintenance plan for improved fleet availability and reduced operating costs; and introducing new mission capabilities, particularly regarding connectivity and collaboration with drones, in line with the needs of the 2040+ battlefield. All of this is intended to ensure the aircraft reaches the 2080s in peak condition.

◀ The German Navy received its first NH90 Sea Tiger in December 2025



▲ Axel Aloccio, NH90 Programme Director for Airbus Helicopters



An ally in a crisis: How the Airbus A400M aircraft rewrote the rules

Over a decade and with more than 250,000 flight hours logged, the Airbus A400M aircraft has confronted everything the weather can throw at it, confidently handled war-zone runways and bridged continents in its mission to provide protection, resilience and humanitarian aid. That astonishing versatility has rewritten the rules for military airlifters. Here are seven reasons why the A400M provides shelter from the storm.

ARTICLE — Álvaro Frieria

Taking action when time is of the essence

When a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Turkey and Syria in 2023, roads disappeared, hospitals collapsed and time was running out. The A400M quickly became the backbone of a multinational airborne relief effort. Up to seven customer nations joined Turkey's own fleet of ten A400Ms to provide life-saving humanitarian aid, helping to deploy ambulances, rescue teams and mobile hospitals. Similar missions followed an earthquake in Morocco and floods in Libya in 2023, with European air forces taking advantage of the A400M's rapid response capability. And during COVID-19, the airlifter provided medical supplies and intensive care unit-equipped patient transport. Most recently in January 2025, during relief operations following the cyclone that struck Mayotte Island

in the Indian Ocean, French A400Ms successfully landed at the small local airport to transport emergency equipment and deliver essential supplies.

Landing where others can't

The A400M's advanced technology enables precision landings on short, unprepared strips of less than 800 m and as narrow as 20 m, a feat that sits well beyond the capability of other heavy airlifters. This operational agility is not merely theoretical; it has been proven in the field. The French Air and Space Force demonstrated this capability on runways up to 20 m wide during a month-long deployment in French Polynesia in 2022. Missions during the Polynesia deployment included the life-saving medical evacuation of an infant to a hospital in Auckland, New Zealand. In 2018, during the Sulawesi earthquake

▲ The A400M is in service with the air forces of Germany, France, Spain, the UK, Turkey, Belgium, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Kazakhstan and Indonesia.

at their side

in Indonesia, the A400M was the only heavy-lift aircraft allowed to land on the tsunami-damaged runway in Palu, delivering bulldozers to clear rubble and provide critical aid. The latest chapter in the A400M's development unfolded in the German town of Altengrabow during the summer of 2025. Airbus conducted rigorous flight testing of the aircraft's unpaved operations capability, demonstrating an ability to operate under extended weight conditions on soft, vegetation-covered runways. These trials are unlocking greater payload and mission flexibility, confirming the aircraft's crucial role in supporting special operations and delivering humanitarian aid.

"The aircraft that saved our skins"

The A400M is a mainstay of emergency evacuation. During the 2023 conflict in Sudan, European nations relied on its agility to evacuate nationals amid the chaos. In 2021, six nations scrambled 25 A400Ms to evacuate thousands from Taliban-controlled Kabul, with pilots crediting the aircraft's enhanced vision system (EVS) for navigating through smoke, darkness and contested airspace. "Not a day I will forget in a hurry; one of my most challenging in 25 years of flying. The EVS is an amazing piece of kit and an essential tool to aid situational awareness in night operations...it pretty much saved our skins," highlights a Royal Air Force pilot.

Uniting allies, reaching the other side of the world

The A400M is Europe's leading heavy tactical lift aircraft and is essential for NATO operations in the European theatre. Seamlessly interoperable with allied forces, the A400M fleet delivers vital supplies to Ukraine and supports air policing missions on the Alliance's eastern flank. The aircraft can be rapidly converted for air-to-air refuelling to ensure mission continuity, whether refuelling allies' fast jets or helicopters in the air, or supporting critical operations worldwide. During the Pacific Skies 24 air exercise involving France, Germany and Spain, the A400M performed transcontinental logistics, search and rescue and rapid deployment missions. During its annual Pégase exercise in the Indo-Pacific, France demonstrated its autonomous

The A400M is a mainstay of emergency evacuation.



▲ Air forces including the Royal Air Force deployed the A400M in April 2023 to evacuate thousands of citizens from Sudan, ensuring their safe return following the outbreak of civil conflict.



▲ The A400M's latest 2026 tests on grass strips unlock greater payload and mission flexibility.



▲ The A400M's unpaved runway capability makes the aircraft a vital asset for supporting special operations and delivering humanitarian aid in the most challenging environments.



... power by deploying an air base-equivalent force (five A330 MRTTs, four A400Ms and ten fighter aircraft) 11,000 km to Malaysia/Singapore in 30 hours. Finally, the Royal Air Force performed a record-breaking 22-hour non-stop flight from the UK to Guam, demonstrating the A400M's ability to provide air mobility and military effectiveness anywhere in the world. In the words of RAF Air Mobility Force Commander, Air Commodore Dan James: "The A400M is the first-responder for UK Defence."

Precision aerial delivery: mission agility, anywhere

The A400M can deploy 116 paratroopers at altitudes up to 38,000 ft via the rear ramp or simultaneously via side doors, allowing, for example, Special Forces to land faster in a smaller area. Its airdrop capabilities include 25-tonne cargo loads at 38,000 ft. The Royal Air Force airlifted 16 supply containers in a single mission to Antarctica to support British scientists in the field, tripling previous capacity. In the Middle East, the RAF delivered hundreds of thousands of humanitarian aid parcels with pinpoint accuracy, alongside A400Ms from other operators. This is how RAF Air Mobility Force Commander, Air Commodore Dan James, describes the mission: "The performance of the aircraft compared to the Hercules – and I've flown Hercs for 20 years - you're just not concerned about performance in a 'hot and high' situation with the A400M. And if you look at the operation we did to resupply fuel drums to the British Antarctic survey, in six days we accomplished what would previously have taken more than two weeks, simply because the A400M's capacity and capability is so much better. It's a fantastic aircraft and an absolute pleasure to fly."

▲ The A400M features advanced fly-by-wire flight controls that enable high manoeuvrability and specialised tactical missions.

◀ A Spanish Air and Space Force A400M performs simultaneous air-to-air refuelling of two A/F-18 jets.

▼ The A400M is certified for automatic low-level flight, a unique capability for a military transport aircraft of its class.

"We fly very low and very fast"

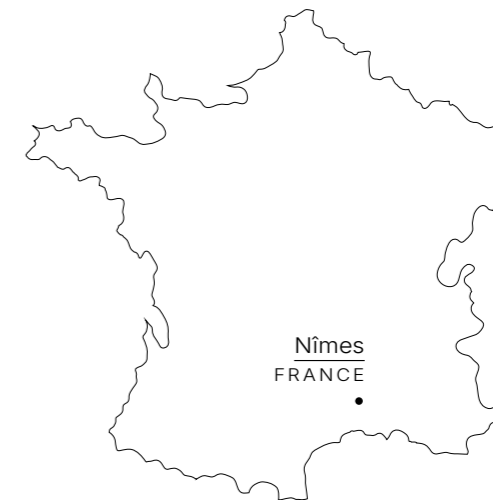
The A400M can be flown manually at very low altitude but the aircraft pioneers a new capability: fully automatic low-level flight at 500 ft (152 m) during day or at night, even in cloud or low visibility conditions — a first for a military transport aircraft. But why is it important to be able to fly tactically a few metres above the ground? This 'terrain masking' reduces the risk of detection, making it ideal for Special Forces missions, penetrating enemy lines to gravity-drop supplies or evading ground threats. "We fly very, very low; we fly very, very fast to get away from any potential threats that might detect us or even try to harm us," says French A400M commander Dorian (who prefers to go by one name).

The future is today: increased payload, hub node, firefighter

Looking ahead, the A400M programme continues to evolve. Plans for the future include enhanced connectivity features, increased payload capacity up to 40 tonnes, and the ability to act strategically as a mothership for releasing uncrewed aerial vehicles or remote carriers. Another future development is to transform the aircraft into a firefighting platform by integrating a roll-on / roll-off firefighting kit with 20,000 litres of capacity without modifying the aircraft. These ongoing developments ensure that the A400M will remain a highly versatile and capable military transport aircraft for decades to come.

"The A400M's capacity and capability is so much better. It's a fantastic aircraft and an absolute pleasure to fly."

AIR COMMODORE DAN JAMES,
RAF AIR MOBILITY FORCE
COMMANDER



▼ Airbus successfully completed a series of test drops and demonstrations of the A400M firefighting demonstrator kit in Nîmes, France, in 2025.



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