

French Armed Forces order Airbus U050 Capa-X drone

Marignane, France, 10 September 2026 – The French Aeronautical Maintenance Directorate (DMAé) has placed an additional order with Airbus Helicopters following the successful evaluation of an initial U050 Capa-X system acquired at the end of 2025. This order covers the supply of four systems, each comprising two U050 Capa-X Uncrewed Aerial Systems (UAS), with two intended for the French Navy and two for the French Army as part of the Light Tactical Drone System (SDTL) evaluation programme. Delivery of the systems is scheduled for 2027.

"We are honoured that the DMAé has selected our U050 Capa-X drone to equip the French Navy and Army. This is a testament to their trust and a decisive milestone for the programme, which officially enters its operational phase," said Victor Gerin-Roze, Head of Uncrewed Aerial Systems at Airbus Helicopters. "This initial version of the U050 Capa-X is designed to evolve both in its design and the scope of its missions to adapt to the constantly changing needs of the armed forces. This is the core advantage of its modularity, which allows us to reinforce and expand its capabilities over time," he added.

Following a land and sea evaluation campaign conducted with various French forces in 2025 and early 2026, the U050 Capa-X successfully met the requirements of the SDTL programme. The system proved fully satisfactory, demonstrating a very small logistical footprint, with the complete setup fitting onto two pickup trucks, as well as a proven 7-hour endurance, dual-payload capacity, and an operational range of 100 km.

The U050 Capa-X is a 120 kg uncrewed aerial system capable of operating up to 100 km from its ground station via a direct data link. It offers up to 10 hours of endurance and a maximum payload capacity of 20 kg. As a modular drone, it can carry multiple payloads simultaneously and be rapidly configured to suit various missions.

In this initial configuration, it is equipped with an optronic pod dedicated to imagery intelligence (IMINT) for gathering and exploiting imagery for surveillance, reconnaissance, and operational analysis. It also integrates a signals intelligence (SIGINT) capability, enhancing its versatility in the field. This baseline architecture is designed to evolve, allowing for the integration of new capabilities based on operational requirements.

The Aeronautical Maintenance Directorate (DMAé) is a joint-service organisation reporting to the Chief of the Defence Staff. It is responsible for the performance and through-life support of aircraft and aeronautical equipment, ensuring asset availability while maintaining controlled costs.

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