

Next-generation Warfare: Combat Drones Become Fastest-growing Weaponry in Global Military Arsenal

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Around this time last year (2020), Azerbaijan had conquered almost the entire Armenian exclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. If the war had attracted global attention, it was mainly because of one feature.

And that was the widespread use of armed drones of Turkish production, which decimated and demoralized the unprepared Armenians from the air.

In fact, the importance of armed drones nowadays is such that almost all the major countries are acquiring more and more armed drone systems. A side effect of this proliferation is an increase in their exports, a fact that was conclusively proved last week with the release of two reports.

On November 25, Reportlinker.com announced the release of ‘Aircraft Insulation Market by Platform, Type, Material, Application and Region – Forecast to 2026’. According to the report, the global aircraft insulation market size is projected to grow from \$5.5 billion in 2021 to \$8.2 billion by 2026, at a CAGR of 8.3% from 2021 to 2026.

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Based on this, the report says that the UAV platforms happen to be the fastest segment of the aircraft insulation market. It is not much affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. And major players of this market are DuPont (US), Triumph Group, Inc. (US), Transdigm Group, Inc. (US), Zotefoams (UK), BASF SE (Germany), Rogers Corporation (US), Safran Group (France), and Evonik Industries (Germany).

The other report coming on November 23, estimates that the Global Defense Drone Market will generate \$16,902.0 million and exhibit a CAGR of 7.9% from 2021 to 2028, owing to increasing defense expenditure in many countries around the world.

The Asia-Pacific region is anticipated to observe the fastest growth by 2028, the report, which, incidentally, is prepared by “Research Dive”, a market research firm based in Pune, India, says.

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Based on payload, the small drones sub-segment is estimated to generate a revenue of \$7,901.2 million by 2028 and hold dominating market share over the forecast period. This is majorly owing to the effectiveness of small drones to lift a payload up to 25 kg, and perform computerized command, communication, control, and information functions.

Based on application, the combat operations sub-segment is expected to generate a revenue of \$6,556.2 million by 2028 and is predicted to witness the fastest growth during the analysis period. This is mainly due to the rising need for upgrading the existing unmanned aerial attack systems for threat elimination missions and target identification in military aviation.

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Based on region, the Asia-Pacific market for defense drones is expected to surpass \$4,071.7 million by 2028 and witness the fastest growth in the global industry over the forecast period. The increasing military expenditure of major countries in the region, such as China, India, Japan, Australia, and others is the major factor predicted to boost the regional market growth by 2028.

...Turkish Bayraktar TB2 is now export-hit and Ankara has ensured that the development and production of the drone can run as autonomously as possible. Among TB2's customers are now Ukraine and Poland.

The US, of course, is the leader in the market as it has used drones in conflicts for long, particularly in asymmetric conflicts with low intensity – both to cover ground groups from the air and to target suspected terrorist targets. In Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, and Yemen, the US MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper systems have been used extensively.

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Proliferation Of Military Drones

All told, if military drones are becoming increasingly indispensable for the armed forces all over the world, there are essentially four reasons behind this trend.

One, they are less costly but pretty effective as operational intelligence platforms for proper data flow and they provide real-time surveillance to detect ballistic missile threats.

Two, they can be used in remote locations where the communication systems are poor. They are thus able to provide vital data, irrespective of location. As a result, the control center of the user is able to plan and prepare for uncertain attacks. They, thus, help in making well-informed decisions.

Three, and this is a corollary of the above, in heavy fighting zones, drones help in providing information to the command center to identify the targets better, improve safety, and

protect infrastructures from any kind of external threats or risks. In this sense, they greatly reduce putting military personnel in harm's way or in combat....

Four, drones are proving also lethal to enemy combats as regular airplanes. This means that it is easier to neutralize enemy power using a drone with minimal human casualties.

However, the biggest criticism against military drones is that they often cause collateral damages to civilian lives and property.....No wonder why US MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper are such dirty words in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria.

But then, modern warfare is increasingly becoming insensitive to civilian opinions. National interests weigh over notions of rights and wrong in fighting wars, particularly when the enemies happen to be those who have the scantiest respect for these very notions of rights and wrongs.

And that explains why the armed drone market is growing and will grow further.

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