

Portuguese Firm to Provide Drones to Ukraine Through British-led Fund

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Portuguese drone manufacturer Tekever has told Defense News it will provide some of its long-endurance systems [to Kyiv to support land and maritime operations](#), a move bankrolled by [the United Kingdom's International Fund for Ukraine](#).

Earlier this month, the British Defence Ministry shared a video on social media showcasing military equipment being provided by the IFU account to Ukrainian troops. Launched last summer, the first IFU deliveries — funded by Denmark, Iceland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands and the U.K. — will begin to arrive in July.

The International Fund for Ukraine is supplying critical capabilities for Ukraine, with deliveries from the first procurement round due next month.

Yesterday we announced a £92m air defence package, to be provided through the second procurement round: <https://t.co/wipYETa8Urp>
[pic.twitter.com/XOvX1yJ1qa](https://t.co/wipYETa8Urp)

— Ministry of Defence [@DefenceHQ](#) [June 14, 2023](#)

Open-source intelligence analysts were quick to identify what appears to be Malloy T150 quadcopters manufactured by the British company Malloy Aeronautics, the DeltaQuad Pro VTOL drone produced by Dutch firm DeltaQuad, and the Astero ISR system from Denmark's Nordic Wing. Two other unspecified drone models can be seen in the footage, with one shown taking off vertically and launched via catapult.

The British Defence Ministry declined to comment on specific platforms in the video.

Defense News can, however, confirm that one of the two unidentified drones is the Tekever AR3 Vertical Takeoff and Landing system, manufactured by the Lisbon-based firm Tekever.

“Yes, our Tekever AR3 system is depicted in the video produced by the UK MoD,” a company representative told Defense News. “It includes images of the drone being deployed with support of a catapult — which we can use for extended endurance operations up to 16 hours — and in an optional VTOL configuration. Each operator can easily choose which variant it wants to use for a specific mission.”

Tekever’s CEO and founder, Ricardo Mendes, added that the company is “very proud to support Ukraine and thankful to the UK MoD and IFU for allowing us to contribute to one of the most important causes of our lifetime.”

The AR3 is a small, long-endurance drone designed to provide wide-area surveillance for both land and maritime missions. It has a maximum payload capacity of 4 kilograms (9 pounds), can fly at a cruise speed of 75-90 kph (47-56 mph) and can also be recovered via parachute.

Some of the military operators of the AR3 include Portugal, the UK, and Nigeria. Hence, its label in the footage, NAF 167 (an acronym used for the Nigerian Air Force), raised the question as to where the drones were purchased from.

“I can confirm that Nigeria purchased a number of the Tekever AR3 platforms from Tekever Ltd. of Portugal. However, all the drones acquired are currently operating in Nigeria — none have been donated in any way or form to Ukraine or any other country,” Maj. MS Muhammad, deputy defense adviser to the Nigeria High Commission in the U.K., told Defense News.

He added that the drone shown in the video with the NAF 167 label, which does indeed stand for Nigerian Air Force, “must have been provided by the manufacturer, or the clip used in the said tweet might have come from the company’s promotional videos, as the model with that particular number is presently in use in Nigeria.”

It is important to note that the individual platforms showcased in the video are not necessarily the final ones that Ukraine will receive, but rather were provided by industry partners to display some capabilities provided as part of the first \$212 million defense package announced in February.

The second IFU procurement, referred to as Urgent Bidding Round 2, launched on April 11. The first capability package resulting from that second round was announced earlier this week and will include a \$188 million air defense package. Capabilities requested include sensors to detect and track cruise missiles, low-flying drones and/or ballistic missiles, air burst rounds for cannon-based air defense systems, and sensor-guided air defense cannons to defeat low-flying drones and cruise missiles.

Johan Hjelmstrand, a press officer for Sweden’s defense minister, noted much of the IFU account is unspent, and that some companies either do not go public with related contracts or that not all contracts are yet signed, but that “more packages are on the way.”

In terms of how the fund operates, Martynas Bendikas, a strategic adviser with the Lithuanian Defence Ministry’s public affairs team, explained that defense ministries contribute only with financial resources. Following this, an international public tender is

organized for specific military equipment, and all seven countries' companies can participate.

"However, so far, Lithuanian drones are being sent to Ukraine in other formats," she said.

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Featured image: A PT-8 Oceanwatch payload is seen integrated on the Tekever AR5 drone. (Courtesy of Tekever)

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