DEFENCE | INTELLIGENCE | GEOPOLITICS | GLOBAL SECURITY

# INTELLIGENCE WORLD MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2026 | ISSUE 01



RUSSIA'S GERAN-5 EVOLUTION

CHINA'S SHENLONG SPACEPLANE

BELARUS'S ARMED FORCES

THE BLACK SEA MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGE

IRAN'S MARITIME INTERDICTION STRATEGY

## UKRAINE'S INTEGRATED AIR DEFENCE NETWORK

Architecture, resilience and sustainability under sustained attack

WELCOME / NOVEMBER 2026



THE OPENING EDITORIAL

# INTEGRATING DEFENCE IN AN ERA OF PERSISTENT PRESSURE

Integration, resilience and sustainment across a changing security environment.

Military capability depends on more than the platforms in service. Sensors, command links, firing units, trained personnel and sustainment must work together under operational pressure. Ukraine's Integrated Air Defence System, the cover story of this issue, examines how a layered network combines legacy and Western systems, and what shapes its resilience over time. The accompanying analysis of Patriot interceptor supply focuses on the gap between urgent demand and the pace at which usable missiles can be delivered. These subjects point to a wider planning problem: air defence must protect forces and infrastructure while managing finite interceptor stocks, maintenance demands and competing priorities. Performance therefore rests on integration and endurance as well as equipment. The issue considers how those factors affect the ability to preserve coverage, adapt to changing threats and keep a defence network functioning through sustained pressure. It also asks how repair capacity, replacement stocks and trained crews influence the time a system can remain effective.

Other contributions examine how military systems adapt and operate beyond their immediate theatres. Russia's drone-strike industry and the development of the Geran-5 raise questions about production, battlefield feedback and the limits of reported performance. The distinction between a design's stated characteristics and its observed use remains essential: output, reliability, launch arrangements and operational effect require separate assessment. China's carrier operations and the Shenlong spaceplane extend the discussion to reach, persistence and activity in orbit. In each case, visible platforms or test activity provide only part of the picture. Training, maintenance, command arrangements, infrastructure and the ability to sustain repeated operations shape what a force can achieve. The articles examine these programmes as indicators of evolving capability, while keeping claims, confirmed activity and analytical judgement distinct. This places technical developments in the context of force employment without treating potential as established performance.

Maritime security features across the Black Sea and the approaches to the Gulf, alongside the exposure of digital infrastructure to disruption. These cases show how commercial routes, military activity and critical services can be affected by pressure below the threshold of open conflict as well as by direct military action. NATO and European coverage considers readiness, simultaneous crises, Belarusian force structure and planning for a possible multinational mission in Ukraine. Announced plans and stated capabilities provide indicators; they do not by themselves demonstrate operational effectiveness. The practical test lies in coordination, available forces, command relationships, logistics and political commitment. Across the issue, we distinguish observed activity from claims and assess the constraints that shape implementation. The aim is to connect developments across domains while preserving uncertainty where evidence remains incomplete. This is a review of questions that matter for defence planning, not a forecast of outcomes. It also considers where national readiness depends on allied support and whether commitments can be sustained when several demands coincide.

**SENIOR CHIEF ANALYST | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

NOV 2026 • NO. 01

# INSIDE

## CONTENTS



## IN THIS ISSUE

04 **INTELLIGENCE HEADLINES**
Russia–Ukraine, Middle East, China and European security.

08 **RUSSIA'S GERAN-5 EVOLUTION**
Airframe changes, guidance claims and the test of scale.

11 **CHINA'S SHENLONG SPACEPLANE**
Reusable orbital operations and counterspace.

13 **THE BLACK SEA MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGE**
Surveillance gains and commercial shipping exposure.

15 **BELARUS'S ARMED FORCES**
Force structure, readiness and dependence on Russia.

18 **IRAN'S MARITIME INTERDICTION STRATEGY**
Selective pressure across the Strait of Hormuz.

20 **UKRAINE'S INTEGRATED AIR DEFENCE NETWORK**
Layered systems and endurance under sustained attack.

23 **INTELLIGENCE NEWS**
Selected defence and security developments.

26 **CLOSING NOTE**
A more complex security landscape.

# Headlines

## Russia–Ukraine War



# Russian Strikes Halt Three Ukrainian Power Plants as Ukraine Targets Russia's Yaroslavl Refinery

### DTEK GENERATION STOPPED

Russian missile and drone attacks on 3 November forced three of DTEK's five thermal power plants to stop generating electricity. The company did not identify the facilities, disclose how much capacity was offline or provide a repair timetable. Ukrainian officials reported emergency power outages in Kyiv and at least six other regions. President Volodymyr Zelensky reported 289 drones, 17 ballistic missiles and 59 cruise missiles in the nationwide barrage; those figures describe the overall attack, not the weapons used against any individual plant. The confirmed consequence at the three DTEK sites is a suspension of generation. Its duration and wider effect on electricity supply remain undetermined.

### YAROSLAVL: REPORTED DAMAGE

During the night of 2–3 November, Ukrainian UAVs struck the Slavneft-YANOS refinery in Yaroslavl. The regional governor reported damage to refinery infrastructure, a fire and injuries to two employees. He also said Russian defences had repelled an attack involving 124 drones; that claim does not establish how many UAVs reached or hit the refinery. Available imagery appears to show a substantial fire, but affected processing units have not been identified. No halt to crude processing or reduction in refinery output has been confirmed. The visible fire is evidence of an incident, not a measure of production lost. The scale and duration of any disruption remain unknown.

### EFFECTS NOT YET COMPARABLE

The events place energy infrastructure under pressure, but their operational effects cannot yet be compared on equal terms. DTEK reported that three plants had stopped generation; at Yaroslavl, damage and fire were reported while the impact on output remains unclear. Nationwide attack totals do not establish the effect at an individual installation, and visible fire does not quantify production loss. Assessment should separate strike reach, physical damage and operational consequence. The evidence supports continued pressure on energy systems, while the cumulative cost and duration of disruption remain open questions. Restoration depends on damage and parts availability, neither disclosed in sufficient detail.

### INDICATORS TO FOLLOW

Key indicators are the return of DTEK generation, any confirmed restoration timeline, identification of damaged refinery units and verified changes in processing or output. Grid conditions and emergency power measures will help establish whether the plant stoppages have wider supply effects. Further evidence on refinery damage, repairs and restart conditions is needed before estimating economic or military consequences. Repeated attacks could increase demands for infrastructure protection, reserve generation and grid management, but cumulative effects require evidence over time. No disclosed restoration or throughput data currently support a quantitative estimate.



# Headlines | Middle East



# Reported Qeshm Strikes and Oman Vessel Attack Heighten Uncertainty Around Hormuz

### QESHM: REPORTED STRIKES

U.S. officials said U.S. forces carried out limited strikes on Qeshm Island on 2 November. One described the action as defensive, aimed at Iranian forces using surface-to-air missiles against U.S. assets in the Strait of Hormuz. Iranian state media reported explosions. The Pentagon referred questions to U.S. Central Command, which did not respond to Reuters' request for comment. Officials said the strikes did not mark a return to major combat operations. Public reporting has not established the exact sites, weapons used or extent of damage. 'Limited' remains the U.S. description; no independent effects assessment has been released.

### ATTACK OFF OMAN

On the evening of 2 November, the Indian-flagged commercial dhow MSV AL JUSUFI was attacked near Limah on Oman's Musandam coast while sailing outbound through the Strait of Hormuz. Indian authorities said 14 Indian nationals were aboard: one seafarer died of injuries sustained in the attack and 13 were rescued by Omani authorities. UKMTO recorded the Indian Government's report and said the vessel's status was unknown. India's shipping minister described the striking object as unidentified. Neither the public Indian statements nor UKMTO identified the attacker, launch point or precise weapon. The casualties and rescue are confirmed; the vessel's condition and the method of attack remain unresolved.

### NO VERIFIED OPERATIONAL LINK

The events occurred in the same strategic maritime setting, but timing and proximity do not establish a connection. The reported action on Qeshm is attributed to the United States by officials; the attack on the commercial vessel remains unattributed. There is no verified evidence that the Qeshm strike prompted the vessel attack or that both formed part of a coordinated operation. Qeshm's position beside the Strait gives the reported strikes regional significance, but available evidence does not show a change in Iranian maritime activity or a direct effect on shipping. The two incidents should therefore be assessed separately until further evidence emerges.

### INDICATORS TO FOLLOW

For shipping operators, uncertainty centres on the dhow's status, the circumstances of the attack and any implications for passage through the area. Follow UKMTO and national maritime advisories, official investigation findings, confirmed vessel damage, further details on the striking object, and any verified changes in route patterns or navigational guidance. A single attack does not establish a general closure of the Strait, a persistent interdiction capability or a change in the overall threat level. New information could help distinguish an isolated incident from a sustained shift in maritime risk. Conclusions should remain limited to what authorities and operators confirm.



# Headlines

## China & Indo-Pacific



# Beijing Talks Reaffirm China–Russia Defence Ties without New Operational Commitments

### THE BEIJING MEETING

On 3 November, Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov met Zhang Shengmin, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission, in Beijing. The Chinese Defence Ministry said Zhang called for stronger strategic communication, military mutual trust and exploration of additional areas of cooperation. He linked the relationship to both countries' sovereignty and security interests and regional stability. The Russian account stressed continued coordination, strategic consultations and practical cooperation. Both readouts presented the relationship as continuous and politically significant. Neither publicly described a specific new operational arrangement, exercise or implementation timetable. No public statement tied the meeting to a specific operational plan or theatre.

### INTENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Statements about mutual trust, coordination and cooperation can preserve political alignment and institutional contact. They do not, by themselves, establish common planning, interoperability, shared command arrangements or operational readiness. The published accounts identify no new exercise, deployment, transfer, procurement plan or schedule. That absence does not prove such matters were excluded from private discussions; it means no verifiable new commitment appeared in the public readouts. The distinction matters when assessing defence ties: broad declarations indicate intent, while exercises, procedures, technical exchanges and sustained combined activity provide stronger evidence of implementation.

### WHAT THE READOUTS SHOW

The meeting is a visible act of military diplomacy, but the public accounts provide only a partial view of the discussions. The language supports an assessment of continuity in the senior military channel and an intention to maintain strategic coordination. It does not establish a change in either country's force posture or demonstrate a deeper level of operational integration. Public statements may omit sensitive details, so the absence of a disclosed commitment should not be treated as proof that no private understanding exists. Assessment should remain tied to evidence that can be corroborated over time. No change in posture can be inferred from the meeting alone.

### INDICATORS TO FOLLOW

Follow-up should focus on named practical measures: future bilateral or multilateral exercises, recurring senior consultations, new coordination mechanisms, technical exchanges or agreed programmes. Their scale, complexity and frequency would help determine whether public intent is translated into force-level cooperation. A single meeting does not establish imminent joint activity or a change in either force's deployment. The public accounts identify no cooperation linked to a specific theatre. For now, the significance lies in continuity of a high-level military channel and a public signal of strategic alignment; its operational effect remains uncertain. Any further activity should be compared with prior engagement over time.



# Headlines

## NATO & European Security



# Multinational Force Ukraine to Test Post-War Deployment Plans in November Exercise

### EXERCISE FRAMEWORK

Exercise KOALICJA 26.2 is scheduled in Poland from 9 to 22 November. The UK and France will jointly lead the first exercise of the Multinational Force Ukraine (MNF-U), with about 2,800 personnel from 11 countries. The stated aim is to rehearse arrangements for a possible future mission and improve readiness across participating forces. The exercise is not a deployment into Ukraine. The published figure describes exercise participation; it does not establish the size or composition of any future force. Its value will be to expose planning gaps before governments decide whether and under what conditions a mission could proceed. The exercise tests planning, not political consent.

### COMMAND & MOVEMENT

The exercise is planned to test command and control, force protection, and the movement of personnel, equipment and supplies. Units are expected to arrive by air, sea and land before onward movement by road and rail towards Nowa Dęba. The UK contribution is expected to include 300 personnel, RAF Typhoons and a Voyager refuelling aircraft. Turkey is to establish a maritime element in Istanbul and test mine-clearance arrangements. These activities will test coordination across national contingents and domains. Public plans, however, do not yet show how quickly forces can be assembled or sustained. Arrival and onward movement must be sequenced.

### POLAND'S HOST-NATION ROLE

Poland is providing host-nation support, including reception, staging and onward movement. The force flow will depend on reception capacity, transport coordination, movement permissions and the sequencing of arrivals. Fuel, medical support and equipment maintenance are also identified as enabling requirements. These are practical interfaces in a multinational deployment: delays at a reception point or a break in onward transport can affect the movement of the wider force. The exercise can test procedures and expose friction, but its announced design does not by itself demonstrate sustained operational capacity. Sustainment after reception remains a key test.

### MISSION BOUNDARIES

MNF-U is the military component of the Coalition of the Willing and is not connected to NATO. It is not planned as a peacekeeping or ceasefire-monitoring force. UK guidance describes a potential post-hostilities role to help regenerate Ukraine’s armed forces, reassure the air and maritime domains and support mine clearance. Any deployment would require the end of hostilities, a Ukrainian request and further conditions. Exercise performance may inform readiness; it cannot authorise a mission or settle its force size, rules or timing. A successful movement rehearsal would not demonstrate performance in a contested environment. Readiness is not authorisation for deployment.



FEATURE ANALYSIS

# RUSSIA'S GERAN-5 EVOLUTION

## AIRFRAME CHANGE, GUIDANCE CLAIMS AND THE TEST OF SCALE

What the revised designs may change — and what the evidence does not yet establish




The Russian Geran-5 jet-powered attack UAV on a fixed launch rail. OTS LIVE, 9 May 2026.

### THE BASELINE

Ukraine's Defence Intelligence lists a TELEFLY turbojet, a 90 kg warhead, 450–600 km/h cruise speed and an estimated range of up to 950 km. These figures describe the first configuration only. They provide a reference for assessing the later aircraft, not a confirmed specification for the entire family.

### THE LATE-2026 CHANGE

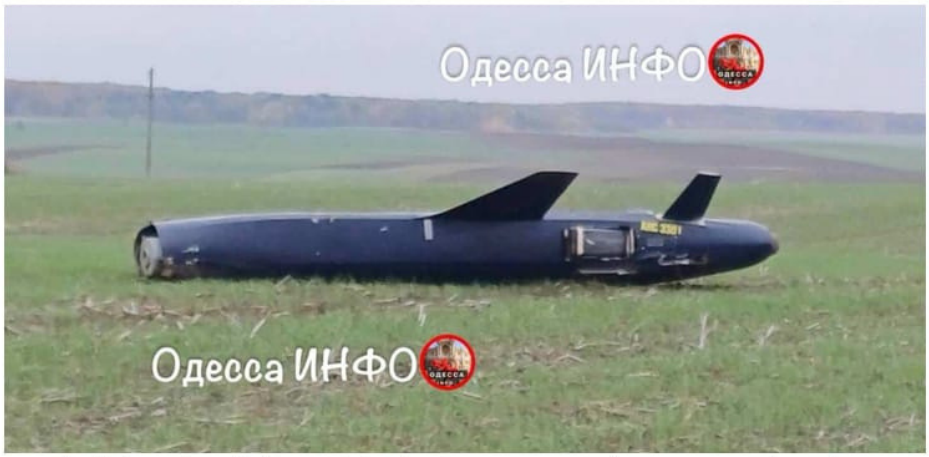
Photographs show at least two revised configurations. One moves the engine inside the fuselage, reduces wingspan and changes wing and tail geometry. Another has a compact faceted body, side intakes and a V-tail. Their relationship remains unresolved; public labels do not establish one standard design.

### THE OPERATIONAL TEST

The reported 900 km/h objective and optical-navigation capability remain unverified. Their significance depends on measured performance, deployment frequency and production scale. For Ukraine, the key issue is whether earlier detection and specialised interceptors can sustain an affordable sensor-to-interceptor chain.

**KEY JUDGEMENT** The evidence points to iterative airframe development rather than a single mature K5-K model. Faster flight and more resilient navigation could raise the burden on Ukrainian air defence, but current public reporting does not establish the performance or scale needed to quantify that effect.

## AIRFRAME / GERAN-5 EVOLUTION (CONTINUED)




An unidentified winged missile photographed in the Odesa region, 27 October 2026. Image: Odesa Info Live.

### BASELINE REFERENCE

| | |
|---|---|
| Length | **6.5 m** |
| Wingspan | **3.2 m** |
| Max take-off weight | **up to 850 kg** |
| Warhead | **90 kg** |
| Cruise speed | **450–600 km/h** |
| Estimated range | **up to 950 km** |

Baseline figures: Ukraine's Defence Intelligence. They do not automatically apply to revised airframes.

### THE BASELINE

The first Geran-5 remains the only configuration with a relatively detailed public component description. Ukraine's Defence Intelligence identifies a conventional airframe, an externally mounted turbojet, inertial and satellite navigation, cellular telemetry and a mesh modem. This is the reference configuration; its published performance figures do not automatically apply to later designs.

### FIRST REDESIGN

Imagery reported in September shows a revised airframe with the engine moved inside the fuselage, a smaller wingspan, swept wings and a simplified tail. The change may reduce external drag and alter the aircraft's packaging. It also increases engineering demands on the intake, thermal management, maintenance access and structure. The reported 900 km/h objective remains unverified; no measured flight data are public.

### SECOND AIRFRAME

A separate vehicle photographed in the Odesa region has a compact, faceted fuselage, side intakes, swept or diamond-like wings and a V-tail. The different geometry supports the assessment that at least two late-2026 configurations exist. Public reporting does not establish whether they are successive prototypes, parallel variants or a single development line. K5/K5-K labels do not resolve that distinction.



Recovered airframe photographed from above. Photo: Militarnyi.



Ukrainian police inspect a recovered winged missile. Source: National Police of Ukraine.

**ASSESSMENT** The photographs show distinct airframe configurations, but do not settle their designation or development relationship. The key unknowns remain measured performance, repeat deployment and production scale.

## AIR DEFENCE / GERAN-5 EVOLUTION (CONTINUED)



### THE COUNTER-UAV TEST

Ukrainian forces have reported interceptions of jet-powered Geran-5 targets by specialised UAVs. Janes reported two interceptions in a one-month period, citing Ukraine's former defence minister. A separate reported engagement involved a target at about 425 km/h and above 3 km altitude. These cases show that interception is possible; they do not establish a persistent nationwide success rate.

### GUIDANCE CLAIMS

Ukrainian reporting attributes optical terrain-reference navigation to the revised family. If confirmed, image-aided correction could reduce reliance on satellite navigation in GNSS-denied sectors. Public reporting does not identify the sensor, processor, map database, accuracy, weather tolerance or update rate. The capability is plausible within a broader effort to improve autonomous navigation across Geran variants, but evidence for the exact Geran-5 fit remains incomplete.

### AIR-DEFENCE IMPLICATIONS

Speed compresses the detection-to-engagement timeline, but it is only one part of the problem. Radar coverage, track quality, cueing delay, interceptor availability and launch geometry shape the engagement opportunity. A faster target may reduce the effectiveness of early low-cost interceptor designs, while specialised interceptors can preserve high-end surface-to-air missiles for targets that warrant their use. The defence remains a sensor-to-shooter system, not a contest of maximum speeds alone.

### INDUSTRIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The programme appears to seek cruise-missile-like speed and route resilience at lower cost than conventional precision missiles. Airframe diversification suggests continued experimentation with propulsion installation, aerodynamics and guidance. The key unknown is whether the revised configurations can enter sustained production without unacceptable penalties to range, payload, reliability or maintenance. Public reporting does not yet provide variant-specific production rates, sortie frequency or a stable serial configuration.

### KEY JUDGEMENT

The evidence supports real airframe diversification, but not a single fully characterised K5-K standard or the most ambitious performance claims. The operational effect will depend on repeat deployment, verified speed and guidance performance, production scale, and the ability of Ukraine's layered defence to sustain affordable interception.

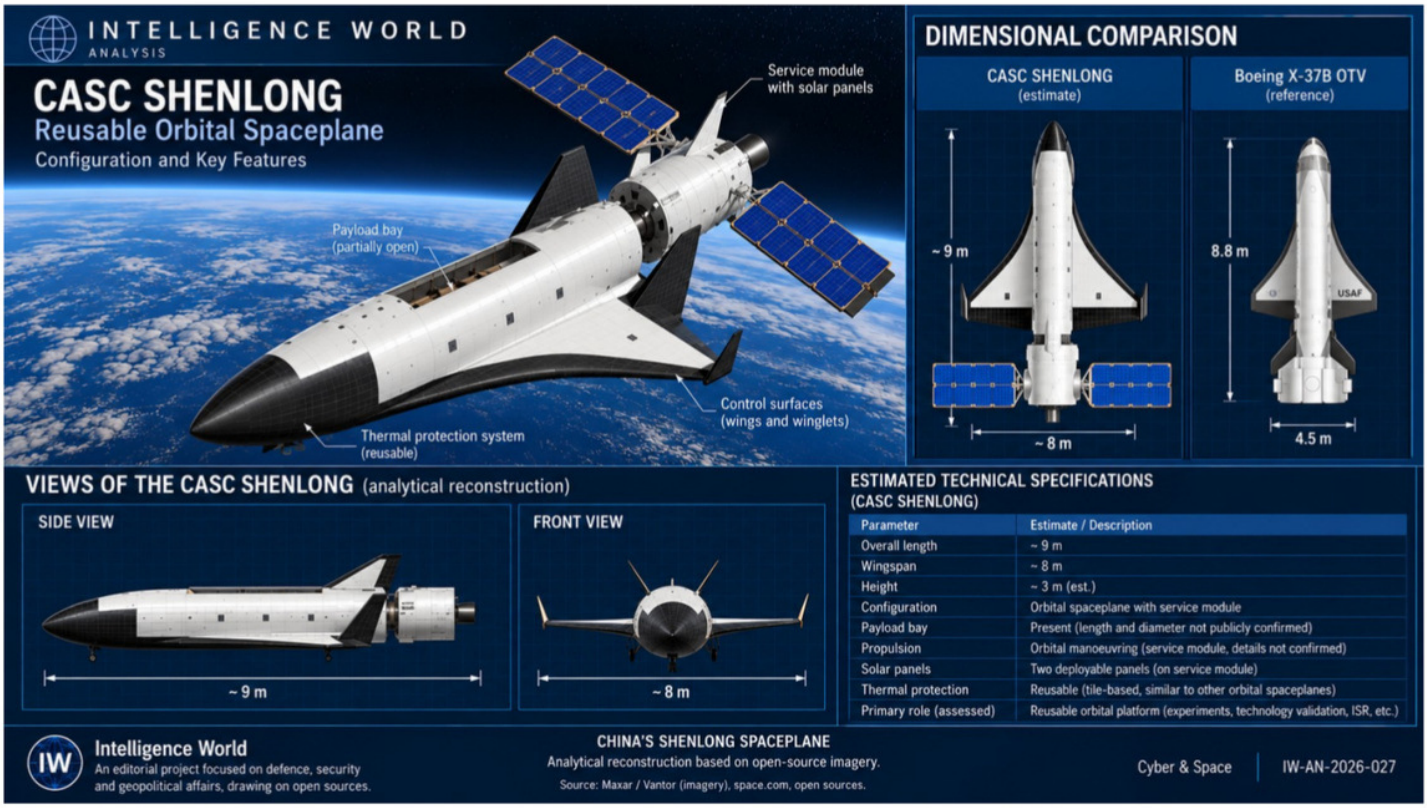
### INDICATORS TO MONITOR

- Repeated recoveries with matching airframe details or serial markings
- Changes to engine, fuel volume and warhead that clarify range–speed trade-offs
- Instrumented speed and flight-profile data, especially evidence near 900 km/h
- Deployment frequency and production evidence for each revised configuration
- Physical identification of optical-navigation sensors and processing hardware
- Interceptor engagement results, including altitude, closing speed and failure modes

FEATURE ANALYSIS / CYBER & SPACE

# CHINA'S SHENLONG SPACEPLANE

## REUSABLE ORBITAL OPERATIONS AND THE COUNTERSPACE QUESTION




Analytical reconstruction based on open-source imagery. Dimensions, configuration details and the X-37B comparison are estimates, not confirmed specifications.

China's reusable experimental spaceplane has moved beyond short-duration demonstration. Four missions are publicly known since 2020; later flights remained in orbit for many months. The vehicle has also manoeuvred, released objects and conducted close approaches. These activities show a flexible orbital platform, but do not by themselves establish an offensive mission.

### PERSISTENCE

The 2020 flight lasted about two days. The second and third missions remained in orbit for 276 and 268 days. The fourth launched in February 2026. Long duration creates more time for testing; it does not, by itself, prove military effectiveness.

### OBSERVED BEHAVIOUR

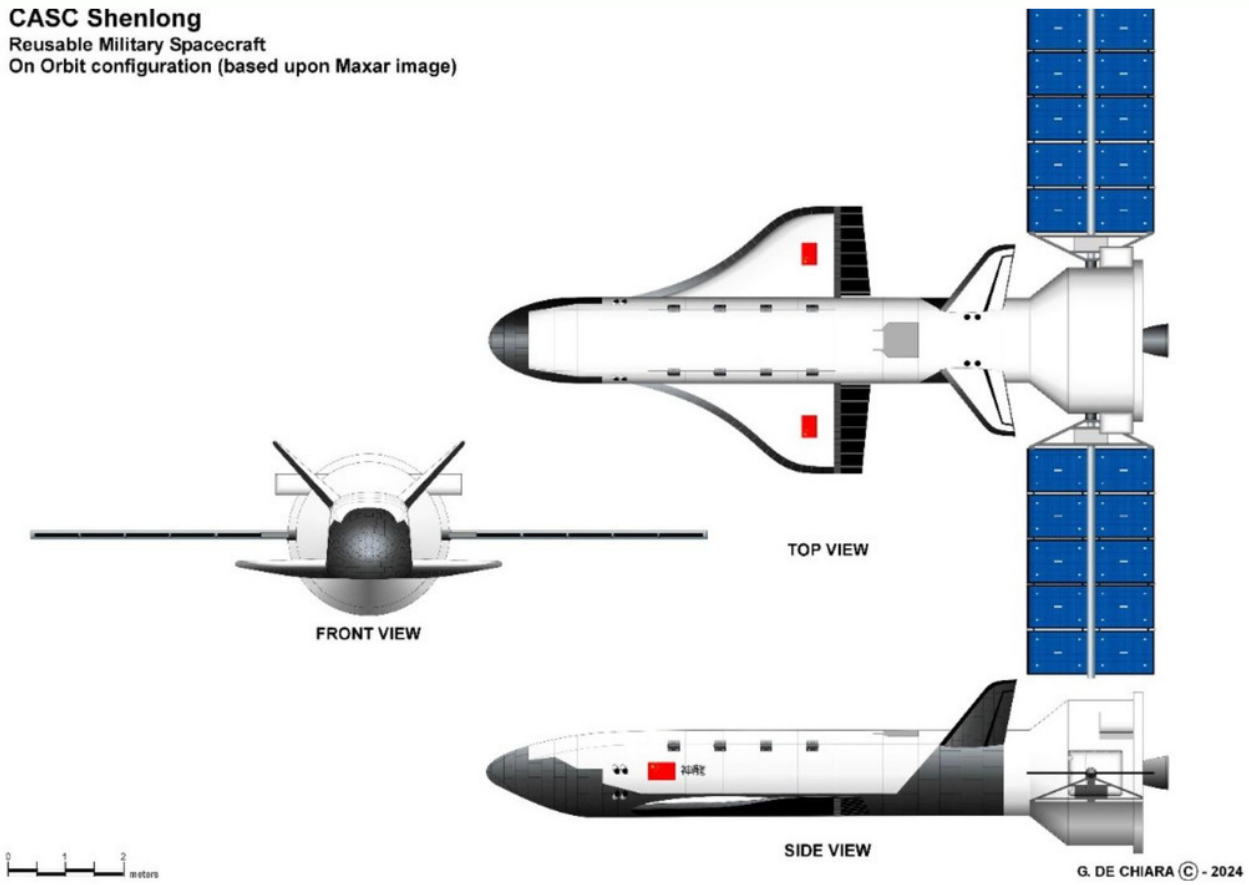
Tracking reports identify object releases and repeated proximity activity involving companion objects. Rendezvous and close approaches are compatible with inspection, servicing and technology trials. The same navigation and control skills could also support military applications.

### ASSESSMENT

The evidence supports a reusable, manoeuvrable dual-use platform. Public information does not establish weapons carriage, an attack on another spacecraft or offensive tasking. The question is what the system enables in orbit, not whether it is already a "space weapon."

**KEY JUDGEMENT** Shenlong's military significance rests on persistence and orbital interaction. The same demonstrated capabilities enable benign experimentation and create options relevant to counterspace; public evidence does not establish hostile use.

## FEATURE ANALYSIS / CHINA'S SHENLONG SPACEPLANE (CONTINUED)




G. De Chiara's 2024 technical reconstruction, based on a Maxar image. It is an interpretive drawing, not an official engineering document.

### WHAT THE IMAGERY SHOWS

A commercial image released by the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency in 2026 offers the clearest public view of the vehicle in orbit. It appears to show a winged craft with a rear service module and deployed solar arrays. The image does not reveal the payload-bay contents or confirm the dimensions shown in analytical drawings. No public image establishes a weapon, sensor suite or robotic arm.

### OBJECT RELEASE AND PROXIMITY

Earlier missions included releases of small objects and subsequent manoeuvres near them. During the 2026 mission, tracking organisations reported another object release and later close approaches. Public tracking does not establish the objects' purpose. Servicing, inspection and technology tests are plausible explanations; proximity operations also have counterspace relevance because they require relative navigation and manoeuvre control.

### WHY REUSABILITY MATTERS

A recoverable spacecraft can be launched, operated, returned, inspected, modified and flown again. This cycle supports iterative testing and can allow hardware to be examined after flight. A single platform can also change orbital profile after launch, complicating external assessment of its mission. Public evidence does not disclose Shenlong's payload capacity, turnaround time or operational deployment model.

### KEY JUDGEMENT

Shenlong is best assessed as a reusable orbital platform with demonstrated persistence, manoeuvrability and object interaction. These attributes support experimentation and other dual-use activity, while creating options relevant to future counterspace operations. Available evidence does not show that China has weaponised the vehicle or used it against another spacecraft.

### INDICATORS TO MONITOR

- Mission duration, orbital changes and recovery interval
- Object releases, recaptures, proximity distances and dwell time
- Interactions with spacecraft not operated by China
- Changes in configuration or disclosed mission purpose
- Launch cadence and evidence of routine operational tasking
- Landing-site activity and post-flight inspection

FEATURE ANALYSIS / BLACK SEA SECURITY

# THE BLACK SEA MARITIME SECURITY CHALLENGE

Surveillance gains, persistent exposure for commercial shipping



French Navy Atlantique 2 maritime patrol aircraft. DGA image, reproduced via Naval News.

## NATO ISR expands in the Black Sea, but merchant vessels remain exposed

Additional patrol aircraft and sensors can improve warning and incident reconstruction. They do not, by themselves, provide a force able to intercept an approaching unmanned craft.

### A WIDENING MARITIME RISK

The Black Sea's security problem now spans more than naval combat between Russia and Ukraine. Commercial vessels, ports, energy infrastructure and routes approaching the Danube delta have been exposed to attacks and hazardous activity. October incidents near Romania and Bulgaria sharpened the concern: threats at sea can affect crews and shipping beyond the immediate battle area, including within or close to NATO members' maritime zones. Public reporting has not established a single pattern of attribution for every incident, and assessments should distinguish confirmed damage from claims about the platform, launch point or intended target. The operational effect is already clear: uncertainty raises the cost of navigation and complicates decisions about whether to continue, divert or hold position.

### A LAYERED RESPONSE TAKES SHAPE

NATO announced additional maritime-patrol aircraft, radar, uncrewed systems, intelligence personnel and explosive-analysis teams for the region. France also deployed an Atlantique 2 aircraft to Romania in October. These measures add collection and specialist capacity to national surveillance. Their value lies in building a more complete picture: detecting an object, maintaining a track, identifying its likely character and passing a timely warning to authorities and ships. Romania's existing air-policing response offers a separate example of a complete engagement chain. On 17 October, radar detected aerial targets east of Snake Island; Romanian F-16s subsequently engaged two drones after they entered national airspace over territorial waters. That episode demonstrates a national response for those targets and circumstances, not continuous protection across the basin.

### WARNING IS NOT INTERCEPTION

The distinction between awareness and protection is central. A patrol aircraft can search, classify, report and help authorities direct a response. It cannot guarantee that a vessel will be protected if no suitable unit is close enough, authorized to act and able to engage the threat. On 5 November, France said its Atlantique 2 would remain in Romania for several more weeks. Reuters reported that the aircraft detected three sea drones before the 28 October sinking of the Contship Jet in Bulgaria's exclusive economic zone and warned Bulgarian authorities and the vessel about an hour before impact. The crew escaped unharmed; the aircraft's commander said it could detect the drones but not intercept or neutralize them. The case shows both the practical benefit of surveillance and the remaining response gap.

BLACK SEA SECURITY / OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT

# From detection to response

The critical gap lies between an early warning and an effective means to protect traffic.



Uncrewed aircraft debris afloat. The image does not establish system type, location or connection to a specific Black Sea incident.

## THE SENSOR-TO-RESPONSE CHAIN

Maritime surveillance only creates protection when information moves through a usable chain: detection, classification, track continuity, decision, tasking and response. A sensor may identify a contact without resolving its intent. A warning may reach a coastal authority without placing a capable unit within reach. Commercial operators also need clear instructions that can be acted on quickly, including whether to alter course, increase speed, suspend movement or seek shelter. Each link has different authorities and communications requirements.

## LEGAL AND COMMAND LIMITS

The response depends on where a threat is detected and what it is doing. Territorial waters, exclusive economic zones and international waters do not confer identical enforcement powers. An EEZ gives the coastal state specific sovereign rights, but it is not equivalent to territorial sovereignty. Any military action must also fit national rules of engagement, the threat's immediacy and the risk to nearby shipping. Montreux Convention constraints on naval transits by non-littoral states further limit assumptions that outside surface forces can be rapidly added to the Black Sea. The public announcements reviewed do not establish a standing NATO escort or route-wide interception mission for merchant shipping.

## WHAT ADDITIONAL ISR CAN DELIVER

More aircraft, radar and uncrewed sensors can increase the probability that an event is detected, preserve evidence and improve warning time. Fusion with coastal surveillance, vessel reporting and national command systems can help authorities distinguish a drifting object, mine hazard, surface drone or other contact. Better information can support route advisories and post-incident investigation. Yet the available public reporting does not disclose patrol schedules, sensor coverage, persistent track rates or the number of response units assigned. It is therefore too early to quantify how much the reinforcement changes detection probability or warning time across the wider basin.

## THE PROTECTION BOTTLENECK

The response force must match the threat. A fighter can engage an aerial target under national command; it is not a substitute for a vessel or other asset able to address a low-profile surface drone. Helicopters, patrol craft, electronic measures and remotely operated systems may contribute, but suitability depends on detection range, sea state, identification confidence, communications and rules for engagement. Protecting every merchant ship individually would demand persistent coverage and substantial force. A more realistic near-term approach is likely to combine targeted monitoring of higher-risk approaches, rapid warning, coordinated national patrols and incident-specific response. No public evidence yet demonstrates a basin-wide protective envelope.

## INDICATORS TO MONITOR

- Published patrol schedules and area coverage
- Verified identification and attribution of maritime threats
- Time from detection to warning and tasking
- Evidence of a standing escort or response mission

## KEY JUDGEMENT

The Black Sea reinforcement is best understood as an improvement in surveillance, warning and incident assessment. The Contship Jet episode shows that timely detection and notification can reduce risk to a crew, while also exposing the limits of an aircraft-only response. The central measure of progress will be whether states can convert shared awareness into a coordinated, legally grounded response at the point and time required. Confidence: moderate; operational tasking and coverage remain undisclosed.

FEATURE ANALYSIS / BELARUS

# BELARUS'S ARMED FORCES

Force Structure, Readiness and Dependence on Russia



The President of Belarus takes part in a military exercise.

## A compact territorial force with limited strategic autonomy

Belarus can defend national territory, protect key approaches and contribute selected capabilities to a wider Russian-led posture. Its ability to sustain high-intensity combat at scale remains constrained by force size, readiness uncertainty and dependence on Russian systems and support.

### FORCE DESIGN

The armed forces are organized around territorial defence, airspace protection, mobilization and specialist support. Ground formations provide the main combat component; aviation, air defence and Special Operations Forces add reach and flexibility. Territorial and reserve structures support local reinforcement, while Internal Troops and Border Guards remain separate state formations. This continental posture is suited to homeland defence, not sustained expeditionary warfare.

### STRATEGIC VALUE

Belarus's geography, transport infrastructure and military integration with Russia give it operational importance beyond the size of its field force. The 2022 invasion demonstrated how territory can serve as a northern approach and support area. Roads, railways, airfields and military sites create access and depth for Russian forces, even when their standing presence inside Belarus is limited.

### THE CENTRAL LIMIT

Belarus retains national command institutions and a defence-industrial base. Yet planning, air defence, training, high-end equipment and deterrence are closely interwoven with Russia, limiting independent endurance in a major campaign. That dependence does not mean every Belarusian unit is under Russian command in peacetime; it does mean complex operations would be difficult to sustain without Russian logistics, munitions, intelligence and technical support.

# FORCE DESIGN AND READINESS



Photo: a column of Belarusian military equipment (t.me modmilby)




Photo: RIA Novosti / Evgeny Biyatov

## LAND FORCES AND RESERVES

The Army is organized around operational commands, mechanized and armoured formations, airborne-assault units and supporting troops. The inherited Soviet equipment base includes tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, artillery and air-defence systems. Inventory totals alone do not show how many platforms are serviceable, crewed, supplied and ready to form deployable combined-arms units.

Territorial-defence and mobilization structures extend local security and reserve functions. Internal Troops and Border Guard units are separate state formations; they should not be added to armed-forces totals or treated as interchangeable field units.

## READINESS IS MORE THAN ALERTING

Belarusian readiness inspections test alert procedures, movement, command and reserve generation. The 2026 reporting cited in the base assessment described equipment being drawn from storage and some items failing standards, alongside brigade inspections, conscript call-ups and movement to training areas. This points to an ability to generate and test formations, but also to maintenance and personnel constraints.

A mobilization pool is not equivalent to a trained, equipped force. Manning, qualified crews, spare parts, recovery assets, ammunition and unit cohesion determine whether a formation can deploy and remain effective. Public evidence remains incomplete on these measures.

## ADAPTATION TO THE UKRAINE WAR

Training has increasingly addressed unmanned aircraft, counter-UAV measures, concealment, small-unit activity and coordination between artillery and drone crews. These changes reflect lessons from a battlefield where persistent observation and rapid targeting expose concentrations and logistics.

The evidence shows institutional adaptation, not that Belarus has solved the harder problems: resilient communications under electronic attack, sensor-to-shooter speed, protection of supply routes and sustained operations under attrition. Exercises and inspections provide partial indicators; performance in prolonged combat remains untested publicly.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

National command remains in Minsk, while the military is linked to Russian structures through bilateral planning, shared air-defence arrangements, training and communications. Public sources do not show how wartime command authority would be divided, how quickly a common air picture is shared or how Belarusian units would operate if Russian networks were disrupted. Interoperability should therefore be treated as a capability enabler, not proof of automatic operational control.

## GENERATING DEPLOYABLE UNITS

A readiness inspection may verify alert procedures, movement to training areas and the ability to assemble personnel and equipment. It does not answer whether units have enough trained crews, functioning vehicles, ammunition, recovery assets and maintenance support for repeated operations. Reserve formations are especially sensitive to the condition of stored equipment and the time needed to retrain personnel.

## THE ENDURANCE PROBLEM

Belarus can likely reinforce selected sectors and protect installations, but simultaneous high-intensity operations would draw on a limited pool of skilled personnel and technicians. Attrition would increase demand for replacement vehicles, engines, optics, communications equipment and ammunition. Open-source inventories cannot establish these stocks or domestic replenishment rates; sustained combat power remains the key unresolved variable.

## READINESS JUDGEMENT

Belarus can likely conduct local defence, protect installations and reinforce selected sectors. The principal uncertainty is whether it can sustain several manoeuvre formations under attrition. Personnel depth, maintenance capacity, ammunition stocks and replacement systems are difficult to quantify from open sources.

# POLITICAL CONTROL, RUSSIAN ACCESS AND SIGNALLING



Russian and Belarusian personnel during a military exercise.



A Belarusian serviceman stands holding a rifle.



Illustrative photo from Defense Express

## LOYALTY AND REGIME SECURITY

The Atlantic Council's 2020 article examined whether the army might remain loyal during mass protests. It reported that the coercive apparatus remained with the regime at that stage, while highlighting uncertainty about the choices individual officers and units might make under acute political pressure. This is historical context, not a current assessment of military cohesion.

The armed forces and domestic-security bodies have different institutional roles. The police and Internal Troops are central to internal security; the military's primary mission is defence. Political pressure could affect military behaviour in a crisis, but the 2020 analysis does not demonstrate routine army deployment for domestic repression.

## TERRITORY AS FORCE MULTIPLIER

Belarus's contribution to Russian military power is not measured only by Belarusian formations. In February 2022, Russian forces used Belarusian territory as a northern approach, staging area and support zone for operations against Ukraine. Transport corridors, airfields and other infrastructure increase access and depth.

A 2022 Russian article described Belarusian deployments on western and southern axes as covering Russian interests and suggested that this could free Russian forces for operations in Ukraine. Those operational explanations are commentator assessments in a Russian publication, not independently verified evidence of a specific bilateral tasking. The use of Belarusian territory in the invasion is a separate, documented fact.

## EXERCISES, SIGNALS AND INTENT

In December 2022, Belarus announced a sudden combat-readiness check. Ukrainska Pravda, citing the monitoring group Belaruski Hajun, reported at least 20 T-72B tanks moving toward a training area near Grodno. Ukraine's State Border Guard Service said it had not identified combat units capable of an invasion at that time. The episode shows why a movement or inspection is not, by itself, proof of an attack decision.

Zapad 2025 was smaller than earlier iterations. Lithuania's State Security Department assessed that the Russian-Belarusian exercise incorporated lessons from Ukraine, including UAV use, counter-UAV measures and dispersed logistics. The event demonstrated joint training and strategic signalling; its scale and scenario do not establish readiness for a specific offensive operation.

## COSTS OF DIRECT ENTRY

A Belarusian ground intervention would carry military and domestic costs. It would expose a relatively small force to combat losses, require mobilisation and sustainment beyond national territory, and increase pressure on equipment stocks. Casualties or coercive call-ups could also carry political risk for the regime. These factors help explain the utility of allowing access and providing strategic cover while avoiding a commitment of national combat formations. This is an assessment of incentives, not evidence of private decision-making.

## WHAT AN EXERCISE CAN ESTABLISH

Zapad 2025 was smaller than previous iterations, with Lithuania's State Security Department reporting up to 30,000 participants and describing a focus on lessons from Ukraine, including UAV employment, counter-UAV measures and dispersed logistics. This supports an assessment of continuing joint training and adaptation. It does not show the force size, readiness or political decision required for a specific attack. Exercise size, scenario, locations and follow-on deployments should be assessed together.

## INDICATORS THAT MATTER

A shift in posture would be more credible if multiple indicators converged: sustained movement of combat formations, unusual call-ups, ammunition and fuel distribution, field medical capacity, command-site activation, air-defence repositioning and logistics preparation. Such activity should be compared with exercise baselines and verified over time. Rhetoric or isolated vehicle movements are weak indicators when not accompanied by support and command preparations.

## OPERATIONAL IMPLICATION

Geography, access and force coverage allow Minsk to support Russian posture without committing Belarusian ground formations to combat in Ukraine. The arrangement can impose planning costs on Kyiv and complicate regional defence while preserving a degree of deniability and limiting immediate battlefield exposure. A change in this balance would be more consequential than another readiness inspection: indicators would include sustained combat deployments, logistics buildup, mobilisation and command integration. These are indicators to monitor, not a prediction that Belarus will enter the war.

MARITIME SECURITY / FEATURE ANALYSIS

# IRAN'S MARITIME INTERDICTION STRATEGY

How selective pressure can influence passage through Hormuz — and why coercive leverage does not equal durable control.



USS Lassen escorts the merchant vessel Tomahawk through the Strait of Hormuz, 18 November 2019. U.S. Navy / DVIDS

## LEVERAGE THROUGH UNCERTAINTY

Hormuz is a high-value international route where a credible threat can affect far more traffic than a force can inspect or strike. Iran can raise the expected cost of transit through warnings, selective diversion and claims that passage is conditional. The commercial response—delay, rerouting, crew concerns or a higher risk premium—can produce strategic effects without a continuous physical blockade. A limited number of encounters may therefore influence decisions well beyond the vessels directly involved. The effect depends on whether threats remain credible, whether operators comply, and whether outside actors can restore confidence in routine passage.

## SELECTIVE SCREENING

The EU Council stated in June 2026 that the IRGC Navy had introduced documentation, cargo and destination checks, screening and, in some cases, tolls. That is an official EU assessment and sanctions rationale; it is not independent proof of uniform Iranian control over the Strait. On 5 October, UKMTO reported that a tanker inbound to Hormuz was hailed by the IRGC and told to turn back or face targeting. The master complied; authorities were investigating. The report documents one voyage-level outcome, not how often the procedure is applied or how consistently it is enforced. Additional documented transits, diversions and compliance decisions are needed to judge its scope.

## REGIONAL RISK, SPECIFIC ATTRIBUTION

As of 6 November, the IMO listed 129 confirmed incidents across the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman and 25 confirmed seafarer fatalities. The IMO validates incident data with flag states, coastal states and verified third parties. The regional total measures the scale of disruption; it does not assign every incident to Iran. Individual entries may identify damage or casualties without establishing the weapon, launch point or perpetrator. The count is evidence of a severe operating environment, while responsibility must be assessed case by case and kept separate from aggregate risk.



FASTCENT Marines approach the Arc Liberty to provide embarked security during a Strait of Hormuz transit, 24 October 2019. U.S. Navy / DVIDS

## ASSESSMENT

Iran can make selected voyages costly or uncertain. Public evidence does not establish that Tehran can close Hormuz to determined naval forces or enforce one screening regime across the Strait.

### OUTLOOK

Calibrated pressure is more plausible than permanent closure. A major casualty event or failed interception could still trigger escalation.

### TWO NAVIES, DIFFERENT EMPHASES

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy (IRGCN) is oriented toward close-in operations in the Persian Gulf and around Hormuz. The regular Islamic Republic of Iran Navy (IRIN) operates larger surface combatants and submarines, with a broader remit into the Gulf of Oman and beyond. Their missions and chains of command differ; open sources do not establish a single, transparent command arrangement for every encounter. The division of roles supports different forms of presence, but complicates outside assessment of who directs a specific operation.

### THE OPERATIONAL TEST

Platform totals alone reveal little about effectiveness. Detection, identification, communications, coordination between shore authorities and units at sea, and credible enforcement determine whether a screening demand changes a vessel's decisions. A warning has value only if operators believe it can be enforced; a diversion matters most if it shapes subsequent voyage choices. Public evidence does not establish current readiness, serviceability, remaining stocks or command resilience after the 2026 conflict, limiting estimates of how long higher-tempo operations could be sustained.

### A GRADUATED TOOLKIT

Coercion can begin with radio hailing, warnings or requests for vessel, cargo and destination details. Boarding or seizure can impose a more direct cost by delaying a ship and removing it from commercial service. Missiles, armed unmanned aircraft, unmanned surface vessels and naval mines are identified in U.S. maritime advisories as threat categories. An advisory does not establish use in a specific incident; IMO entries frequently record damage without naming a weapon or perpetrator. Each attribution therefore requires incident-level evidence.

### INFORMATION AND NAVIGATION

U.S. maritime guidance also reports GNSS interference in the operating area. Spoofing or jamming can complicate navigation and incident reconstruction, but signal anomalies require technical corroboration before attribution. Public claims and warnings can amplify uncertainty even when the underlying event remains unresolved. Electronic effects may increase navigational risk and reduce confidence in open-source tracking, yet they do not by themselves prove that a specific Iranian unit caused the interference.

### CONSTRAINTS ON IRAN

The Strait is an international route that includes Omani waters; Iran cannot convert proximity into uncontested jurisdiction. Comprehensive enforcement would require persistent presence and expose Iranian forces to counteraction. An indiscriminate closure would also disrupt Iran's own maritime commerce and energy exports, strengthen regional opposition and risk a wider military response. Selective pressure is less costly, but harder to apply consistently and vulnerable to non-compliance. Operators and states can adapt through escorts, guarantees and revised routing.

### LEGAL AND DIPLOMATIC RESPONSE

UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026) condemns actions or threats by Iran aimed at closing, obstructing or interfering with navigation through Hormuz. It reinforces the international position on freedom of navigation; it is not an operational mechanism for protecting a vessel during a confrontation. Naval presence, incident reporting, sanctions and diplomatic pressure can constrain coercive activity, but legal positions do not themselves guarantee safe passage at sea. The practical test is whether operators can transit without accepting unilateral screening or facing credible threats.

### INDICATORS TO WATCH

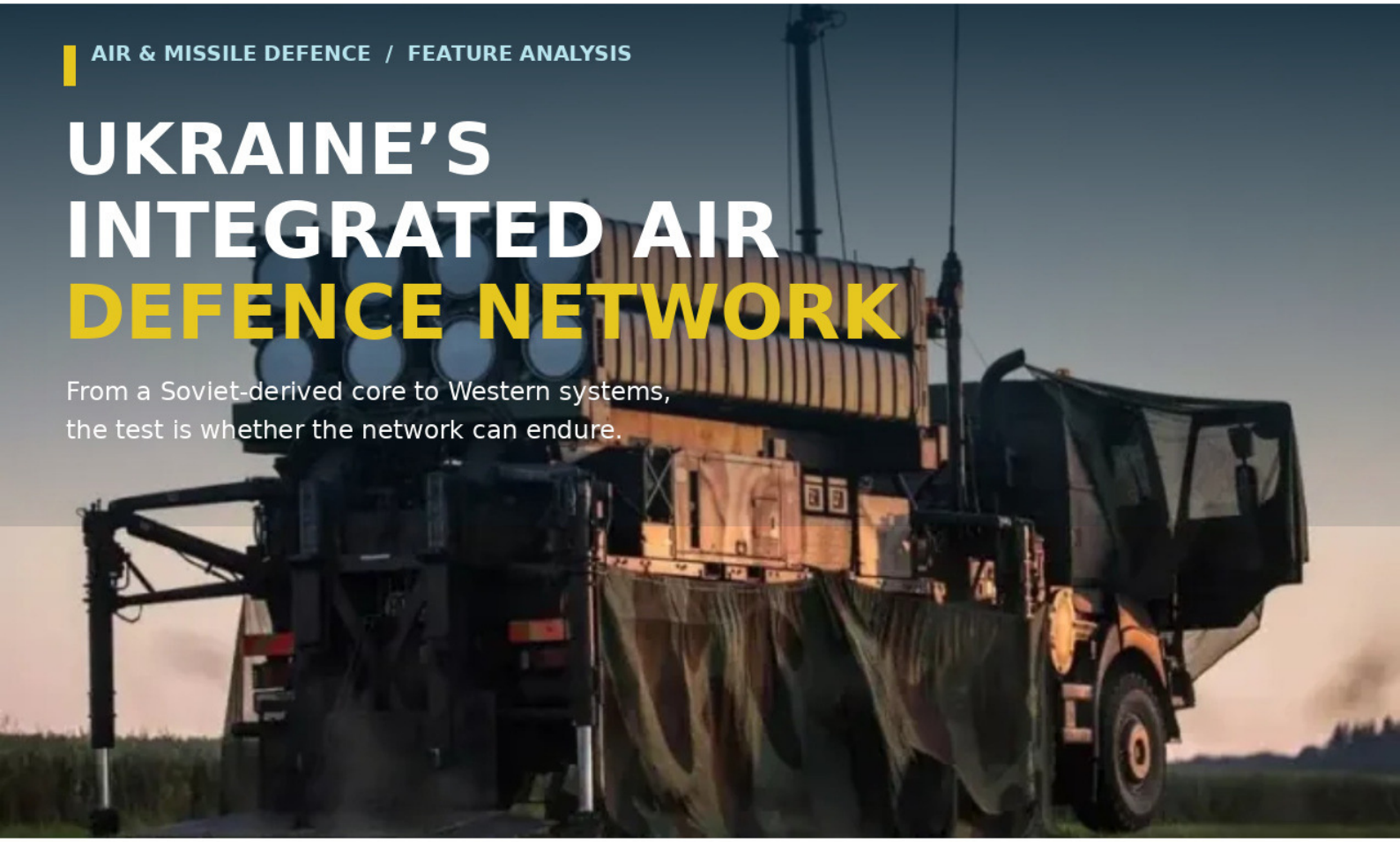
Monitor new Iranian passage instructions, permits or payment demands and whether an identifiable enforcement process follows. Track documented diversions, boardings or seizures separately from unverified claims, preserving incident-level attribution. Compare changes in the frequency and geography of IMO-confirmed incidents with revised UKMTO, IMO and flag-state guidance. Watch for new escort arrangements, commercial routing or insurance changes, and verified monitoring or negotiated passage rules. Independently corroborated changes in naval activity would help assess whether pressure is being sustained, constrained or replaced by a political mechanism.

Related IW dossier: Iran's Maritime Interdiction Strategy (IW-DS-2026-013, 2 Nov 2026). Updated source basis: IMO confirmed incidents (6 Nov 2026); UKMTO Advisory 152-26; EU Council (8 Jun 2026); UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026). Images: U.S. Navy / DVIDS.

AIR & MISSILE DEFENCE / FEATURE ANALYSIS

# UKRAINE'S INTEGRATED AIR DEFENCE NETWORK

From a Soviet-derived core to Western systems, the test is whether the network can endure.



SAMP/T surface-to-air missile system.

## A NETWORK UNDER REPEATED PRESSURE

Coverage is selective; resilience depends on keeping the chain connected.



Patriot missile system.

### THE NETWORK

Ukraine's air defence combines legacy Soviet systems, Western-supplied interceptors, sensors, command nodes and mobile firing units. Its value lies in coordinated detection, allocation and engagement, not in the number of launchers alone.

### THE SUSTAINMENT TEST

Interceptors, maintenance capacity, trained crews and communications determine how long priority areas can remain protected during repeated attacks.

### SELECTIVE PROTECTION

The system cannot provide an impermeable shield across the country. Commanders must prioritise cities, military sites and critical infrastructure, shifting assets as the threat and available stocks change. This allocation creates unavoidable gaps: moving a battery to reinforce one area can reduce coverage elsewhere, while a fixed defence can become predictable. The value of a deployment is therefore measured against the defended function and the threat assessed, not by the apparent density of launchers on a map.

### A MIXED ARCHITECTURE

S-300 and Buk units remain part of the legacy foundation. Patriot, SAMP/T, NASAMS and IRIS-T add capabilities, but each brings distinct missiles, maintenance chains, training demands and software interfaces. The resulting force is heterogeneous by design and circumstance. It can combine systems with different engagement envelopes, yet requires coordination to prevent duplicated engagements, preserve scarce missiles and maintain a shared air picture across command levels.

### THE MEASURE OF EFFECT

Interception totals describe activity, not the condition of the network. Operational availability, track quality, remaining ammunition and the ability to restore damaged nodes are more useful measures of sustained defence. A successful engagement may still consume an interceptor that cannot be quickly replaced; a failed or delayed engagement may reflect a sensor, communication or allocation problem rather than the missile itself. Public aggregate figures cannot identify these causes without system-level data. System-level data are needed to compare the target set, interceptors expended and protection achieved across successive attack waves.

## AIR DEFENCE / UKRAINE'S INTEGRATED NETWORK (CONTINUED)




S-300PS missile system.



Buk-M1 missile system.

### LEGACY SYSTEMS

S-300 and Buk formations provide a Soviet-derived foundation for medium- and long-range coverage. Their continued utility depends on serviceable radars and launchers, compatible missiles, trained crews and access to repair. Combat use also exposes a finite-stock problem: ageing components and missile variants cannot be replaced uniformly, and a launcher without functioning sensors or command links contributes little to the network.

Ukraine has adapted legacy equipment to changing conditions, including through FrankenSAM integrations that pair selected Western missiles with Soviet-era launchers. This expands options, but it does not remove differences in radar, software, engagement procedures or sustainment.

### WESTERN LAYERS

Patriot and SAMP/T provide the most consequential publicly identified anti-ballistic capability. NASAMS and IRIS-T contribute to defence against aircraft, cruise missiles and other targets; shorter-range systems and mobile teams can address lower-altitude threats. The architecture is therefore layered by target type and defended priority, rather than arranged as a uniform national umbrella.

Each system has its own interceptor family, launcher and radar requirements, maintenance pipeline and training cycle. The mixture increases tactical flexibility but complicates logistics and force allocation. Interoperability is a continuing operational task, not an automatic result of receiving Western equipment. Crews must apply compatible identification and engagement procedures while command elements manage different ranges and missile stocks. The available public record confirms a broad mix of systems and partner support, but it does not reveal a complete real-time picture of how every national, regional and local node exchanges tracks or authority during combat.

### SENSORS, C2 & ENGAGEMENT

An effective engagement begins with detection and a sufficiently accurate track. Radar coverage, passive sensors and external warning feed command elements that classify the target, set priority and assign an appropriate firing unit. The process must be fast enough for low-flying cruise missiles and drones while preserving scarce high-end interceptors for threats that justify their use.

Distribution and mobility can reduce vulnerability to a single strike, but relocation increases the burden on communications, coordination and maintenance. Under degraded conditions, local procedures and redundant links help preserve decisions; they cannot fully replace a damaged radar picture or a depleted missile stock. The practical value of redundancy depends on whether alternate sensors can be connected quickly, whether neighbouring units can assume part of a coverage task and whether command authorities can safely delegate engagement decisions. These are procedural and communications requirements as much as technical ones.

### OPERATIONAL AVAILABILITY

Inventory totals are an incomplete proxy for defensive capacity. A battery may be unavailable because a radar is damaged, crews are resting or retraining, maintenance is overdue, communications are disrupted or missiles are exhausted. The network's effective strength is the number of engagements it can detect, decide and execute while preserving enough capacity for the next wave. Readiness is cumulative: repair delays or crew shortages can reduce the number of units available even when launchers and missiles remain in inventory. Sustained performance depends on restoring the whole engagement chain between attack waves.

### WHAT PUBLIC DATA CAN ESTABLISH

Official interception totals and announced deliveries show the scale of activity and support. They do not disclose the complete threat denominator, system-by-system availability, missile expenditure, failure rates or geographic coverage. Those limits constrain any precise estimate of national interception effectiveness. In particular, public announcements do not show how many targets were not detected, how many were allowed to continue because they were judged low priority, or how many interceptors were expended for each engagement. Any single percentage derived without that context would overstate what open reporting can support.

## AIR DEFENCE / UKRAINE'S INTEGRATED NETWORK (CONTINUED)



Missile in flight above a ground-based launcher.


SPYDER air-defence launcher vehicles.

### INTERCEPTOR SUPPLY

Ukraine's air-defence capacity is directly affected by the timing and composition of interceptor deliveries. On 30 October 2026, Washington approved a proposed sale of 500 Patriot PAC-3 missiles valued at about $2.1 billion. Approval is not delivery: reporting indicates the missiles are not yet manufactured and could arrive only in the early 2030s unless existing stocks are transferred sooner.

The EU's September approval of €6.1 billion in defence procurement enables purchases that include PAC-3 missiles. On 26 October, Ukraine's defence minister asked E5 partners to consider transferring 10% of relevant Patriot and IRIS-T stocks now, with future orders replenishing those inventories. The request reflects the difference between a funded contract and an interceptor available to a firing unit.

### SUSTAINMENT

Repeated attack makes repair throughput as important as initial delivery. Radars, launch vehicles and command nodes must be restored, crews rotated, software maintained and spare components moved to the right locations. The dispersed layout can complicate Russian targeting, but it also increases transport, communications and coordination demands.

Ukraine's adaptation includes mobile deployments, revised engagement procedures and selected integrations of Western missiles with legacy launchers. These measures add resilience, but do not eliminate dependence on foreign production for advanced interceptors. Domestic short-range and counter-drone solutions can reduce demand on high-cost missiles when the target and engagement conditions permit. Their contribution should be assessed by the missions they can reliably perform, their readiness and the rate at which they can be replenished. They complement specialised systems; they do not replace the ballistic-missile role assigned to advanced interceptors.

### OUTLOOK THROUGH 2030

The system is likely to remain a selective defence of priority areas, with the balance among long-range, medium-range and low-cost interceptors shaped by attack patterns and replenishment. The European Commission's 2026 support loan and new procurement channels improve funding visibility; they cannot by themselves remove production lead times or competition for scarce missiles.

Ukraine's Ministry of Defence reported that Ukrainian forces destroyed more than 8,000 drones and missiles during October 2026; it reported more than 43,000 tactical-level UAVs neutralised separately. These official totals indicate intense engagement activity, but they do not provide a common denominator or a complete system-by-system breakdown from which to calculate a national success rate. The decisive question is whether the network can repeatedly protect critical functions while retaining enough sensors, crews and ammunition for subsequent attacks.

### KEY JUDGEMENT

Ukraine's IADS has prevented Russian air power from achieving uncontested control of the skies and continues to protect selected population centres and critical sites. Its performance rests on the interaction of detection, command, suitable interceptors and the ability to restore damaged equipment. The 2026 funding commitments are significant, but delivery schedules and stock transfers determine near-term effect. Through 2030, sustainable defensive depth will depend on reliable replenishment, maintenance capacity, interoperable command links and the disciplined allocation of scarce interceptors.

### INDICATORS TO WATCH

- PAC-3 and IRIS-T deliveries from current stocks; timing of new production
- Operational availability and repair of radars, launchers and C2 nodes
- Changes in attack composition and the share of ballistic threats
- Use and scale of Ukrainian low-cost counter-drone interceptors
- Evidence of improved links among legacy and Western systems
- Protection outcomes for energy, transport and command infrastructure

Source basis: Intelligence World dossier, 27 October 2026; Ukraine MoD, 26 October and 4 November 2026; European Commission, 11 September 2026; Reuters, 30 October 2026.

# Fincantieri and Leonardo deepen naval partnership

Fincantieri and Leonardo have signed a letter of intent to strengthen Orizzonte Sistemi Navali, their joint venture for naval programmes. The agreement is intended to expand OSN's role in the design and integration of combat systems, and to coordinate the industrial contribution of both groups. The companies link the initiative to current and future Italian surface-ship programmes and export opportunities. The announcement establishes a framework for closer cooperation; it does not itself constitute a new shipbuilding contract.



*Italian Navy frigate ITS Margottini underway in the North Atlantic.*

# Naval Group presents SCX-26 drone-ship concept



*French, U.S. and Italian navy ships sail in formation.*

Naval Group has presented the SCX-26, a research concept for a large warship organised around unmanned systems. The proposed design includes a mission bay intended to support the deployment, recovery and maintenance of aerial, surface and underwater drones. The company frames the concept as a response to the growing role of autonomous platforms and changing naval requirements. SCX-26 remains a development study: no procurement decision, construction schedule or operational entry date has been announced.

# U.S. Navy begins low-rate production of WSN-12

Northrop Grumman has received a U.S. Navy award to begin low-rate initial production of the AN/WSN-12 navigation processor. The programme moves the equipment beyond development and into an initial manufacturing phase, supporting the Navy's effort to modernise shipboard navigation. The processor is intended to provide reliable position and timing information in demanding maritime conditions, including when satellite navigation is degraded. The award is an early production step; it does not yet demonstrate fleet-wide delivery or operational performance.



*USS Mason underway at sea.*

# Shield AI completes full-scale X-BAT prototype

Shield AI says it has completed a full-scale prototype of X-BAT, an autonomous, jet-powered aircraft designed for vertical take-off and landing. The company presents the platform as a way to operate from locations with limited runway infrastructure and to combine autonomous mission software with a reusable aircraft. Flight testing is planned as the next major milestone. The prototype's completion is a development update, not evidence of an operational capability; performance, payload and suitability for service remain to be established through testing.



*An X-47B unmanned aircraft on a carrier flight deck.*

# Pakistan conducts first flight test of Fa'az missile



*A Pakistan Air Force JF-17 Thunder displayed at an air show.*

Pakistan has announced the first flight test of its Fa'az air-to-air missile. Public reporting and released footage indicate a test involving a Pakistan Air Force aircraft, but authorities have not published a detailed account of the launch sequence or results. Key data—including range, seeker type, guidance performance and intended aircraft integration—remain undisclosed. The event confirms progress in the programme, while the available information is insufficient to assess the missile's maturity or its likely effect on the air force's operational inventory.

# Thales unveils containerised naval mission system

Thales has introduced Maritime Modular Capability, a containerised mission system designed to be embarked on ships or deployed ashore. The demonstrator packages surveillance sensors, command-and-control functions, fire control, navigation and communications in a 20-foot container. The approach is intended to let navies add or reconfigure capabilities without major changes to a vessel's structure. Thales says the system is ready for field testing. No operational deployment or customer selection has been announced, and the configuration remains subject to validation.



*A U.S. Navy littoral combat ship underway at sea.*

# Trump signals end to annual U.S. aid for Israel

President Donald Trump has said that annual U.S. military assistance to Israel will end by the close of this year, citing political considerations. The statement marks a potential shift in Washington's approach, but no implementation timetable or formal policy instrument has been detailed. The existing ten-year U.S.–Israel memorandum of understanding covers fiscal years 2019–2028 and provides $3.8 billion annually. Until that framework is formally revised or replaced, the practical implications of Trump's remarks remain uncertain.



*U.S. President Donald Trump at a White House event.*

# Greenland parliament ratifies U.S.–Denmark security deal



*The Inatsisartut building in Nuuk, Greenland.*

Greenland's parliament has ratified a security agreement with the United States and Denmark by 16 votes to none, with seven abstentions. The agreement expands the basis for U.S. military activity on the island and provides for two additional bases and support for the proposed Golden Dome missile-defence system. It also reaffirms Danish sovereignty and Greenlanders' right to self-determination. The arrangement will enter into force after the required Danish approval; a vote in Copenhagen is scheduled later this month.

# Czech strategy exposes persistent NATO capability gaps

A new Czech Army strategy says the country is not meeting 70 per cent of NATO capability targets and is five to ten years behind in areas requiring the greatest investment. It identifies shortages in personnel and materiel, with recruitment, air defence and counter-drone capacity among stated priorities. The spending plan continues to fund major approved programmes, including F-35 fighters and Leopard tanks, while delaying other force-development goals. The assessment highlights a gap between alliance commitments and the pace of funded readiness improvements.



*Czech soldiers take part in a multinational field exercise.*

*Closing Note*

# A More Complex Security Landscape

We hope you have appreciated this first edition of Intelligence World Magazine. Our aim is to provide independent, evidence-led analysis of defence, security and geopolitical affairs, linking reported developments to operational capability and constraint.

Looking ahead, we will track changes in air defence, long-range strike and unmanned operations; whether procurement plans translate into fielded capability; and developments in maritime and European security. Assessments will focus on verifiable indicators—stocks, personnel, maintenance, command links and deployments—and distinguish confirmed facts from claims and uncertainty.

**ANALYSE**
Key developments and strategic trends

**ASSESS**
Military, security and geopolitical implications

**UNDERSTAND**
The broader context and possible outlooks

IW

**INTELLIGENCE WORLD MAGAZINE**

*Independent Intelligence Analysis*

An editorial project focused on defence, security and geopolitical affairs, drawing on open sources.

**IMAGE SOURCES & CREDITS**

Pages 26–28: Italian Navy / DVIDS (7797356); U.S. Navy / DVIDS (7789821, 8254939, 931856, 2905808); U.S. Army / DVIDS (8446706); White House / Molly Riley; Anna Zvereva / Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 2.0); Kenny McFly / Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0).

Radar photo: Godwin Borg, "Dingli Radar at sunset," Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0 (cropped and darkened). Other images are credited where identifiable or drawn from public-domain / openly licensed sources; applicable licence conditions apply.