



## 2021 Counter-Terrorism Week SIDE EVENT



UNITED NATIONS  
OFFICE OF COUNTER-TERRORISM



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UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT)

# PRESS RELEASE

## Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Counter-Terrorism Contexts

New York, 29 June 2021 – As part of United Nations Second Counter-Terrorism Week, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) Global Counter-Terrorism Programme on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), with the support of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNCCT), held a virtual side event entitled **Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems in Counter-Terrorism Contexts**.

The Programme, launched in January 2021 and funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar, aims to promote coordination, good practices and guidance with regards to UAS-related terrorist threats; enhance the capacity of Member States to counter UAS-related threats; enhance the capacity of Member States to use UAS for non-lethal/non-kinetic human rights compliant purposes; and enhance the preparedness of Member States to mitigate UAS-related threats.

During welcoming remarks at the virtual panel, Mr. Talal Rashid Al-Khalifa, Deputy Permanent Representative and First Secretary, Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, emphasized the increasing need for enhanced cooperation to effectively counter terrorism, stating, “[**The State of Qatar**] encourages partnerships will all stakeholders, including public-private sector partnerships, as the private sector plays an increasingly leading role in new and emerging technologies.” Mr. Raffi Gregorian, Deputy to the Under-Secretary-General and Director of UNOCT and moderator of the event underlined the importance of understanding UAS technology with the aims of countering terrorism and as tools for the protection of human life.

The UNOCT-moderated panel discussion featured interventions from the United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, the European Union, the City of Malaga, the United Nations Department of Peace Operations, the United Nations Department of Operational Support, Conflict Armament Research, and Tekever. Mr. James Bevan, Executive Director, Conflict Armament Research initiated the discussion by presenting cases of uses of UAS by ISIL/Da’esh in Iraq and Syria; and highlighted that “**an under-regulated and increasingly sophisticated civilian UAS market is a significant global risk-enhancing factor.**” The United States noted their support to legitimate private sector and government use of UAS for human rights compliant economic and narrower counter-terrorism purposes. Dr. Peter Dees, Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State highlighted the importance of to hold such panels and to have an open-minded, factual and honest discussion about the threat without being alarmist. Dr. Dees remarked that “**the United States supports the GCTF’s Berlin Memorandum and encourages all nations to make use of the 26 non-binding good practices outlined in that document.**” Representing the private sector, Mr. Ricardo Mendes, Chief Executive Officer, Tekever, noted the key role of private entities in support Member States and emphasized that “**it is important that we ensure that new capabilities are accessible to all Member States and to ensure that parts of the world are not left behind.**”



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Discussions highlighted the need for greater coordination and exchange of expertise and experiences regarding UAS-related threats, threats associated with the use of UAS for terrorism-related purposes, the non-lethal use of UAS to support counter-terrorism and terrorism prevention efforts, while representatives discussed the potential benefits of using UAS to support day-to-day counter-terrorism efforts and highlighted the role of the United Nations' UAS coordination team (UAS cell) within the context of peacekeeping efforts.. Mr. Mohammad Bastaki, Second Secretary, Permanent Mission of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, noted that **“the International Community should promote a culture that embraces innovative technologies like UAS as tools to promote conflict prevention and peacebuilding.”**

Relevant stakeholders used the side event to raise awareness and discuss key priorities, challenges and experiences related to the use of UAS vehicles for both terrorism and counter-terrorism-related purposes.

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For more information:

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