

Photo: F-22s over Joint Base Langley-Eustis · U.S. Air Force, Tech. Sgt. Natasha Stannard · Public domain · Wikimedia Commons

OSINT · SITUATION ASSESSMENT

WATCHING THE BASES

Between 2023 and 2026 unexplained drones became a routine problem for military installations on both sides of the Atlantic, from Langley in Virginia to Kleine-Brogel in Belgium. Russian decoy drones crossed into Poland and drew NATO fighters. This report looks at what the record shows, what the military's own exercises say about detection, tracking and defeat, and what bases need to see small drones in time.

REPORT DETAILS

PUBLISHED	SUBJECT	SOURCE BASE
October 2026	Drones over U.S. and NATO military installations	NORTHCOM statements, NATO and national government statements, defence press, incident records
METHOD	**VERDICT**	**CONFIDENCE**
Compare incidents by what was detected, identified and stopped	The record shows bases seeing more drones, identifying few and stopping fewer	Moderate
AUTHOR		
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BOTTOM LINE

Drones now fly over military bases routinely, and the hard part is knowing what they are and stopping them safely. U.S. Northern Command counted about 420 drone incursions over American installations in the year to September 2025, one to two a day. In Europe, drones circled Belgium's Kleine-Brogel air base, home to U.S. nuclear weapons, for several nights in late 2025; a jamming gun fired at one failed to stop it. Over Poland, NATO jets spent missiles on Russian decoys built of foam and plywood. The U.S. military's own trials rate detection as the strongest link and defeat as the weakest. Bases need dense, layered sensing that can identify a small drone well before it reaches the fence, including drones that transmit nothing.

≈ 420

DRONE INCURSIONS OVER U.S. INSTALLATIONS IN A YEAR

◆ SEP 2024 – SEP 2025, UP 82%

19–21

RUSSIAN DRONES THAT CROSSED INTO POLAND

◆ 9–10 SEPTEMBER 2025

≤ 4

OF THEM SHOT DOWN BY ALLIED AIRCRAFT

◆ PER POLAND'S PRIME MINISTER

End 2027

TARGET FOR THE EU'S FULL "DRONE WALL"

◆ EUROPEAN COMMISSION ROADMAP

KEY QUESTIONS

How often do drones fly over U.S. military bases?

About one to two times a day. NORTHCOM reported roughly 420 drone incursions over U.S. installations between September 2024 and September 2025, up 82% from 230 the year before, though its commander said better detection may explain part of the rise.

What happened with the Russian drones over Poland in September 2025?

On 9–10 September 2025, around 19 to 21 Russian drones, many of them unarmed Gerbera-type decoys, crossed into Polish airspace. Allied jets shot down up to four, one missile went astray and hit a house, Poland invoked NATO's Article 4, and NATO launched Operation Eastern Sentry.

THE RULER — THE WHOLE ARGUMENT

The record, 2023–2026

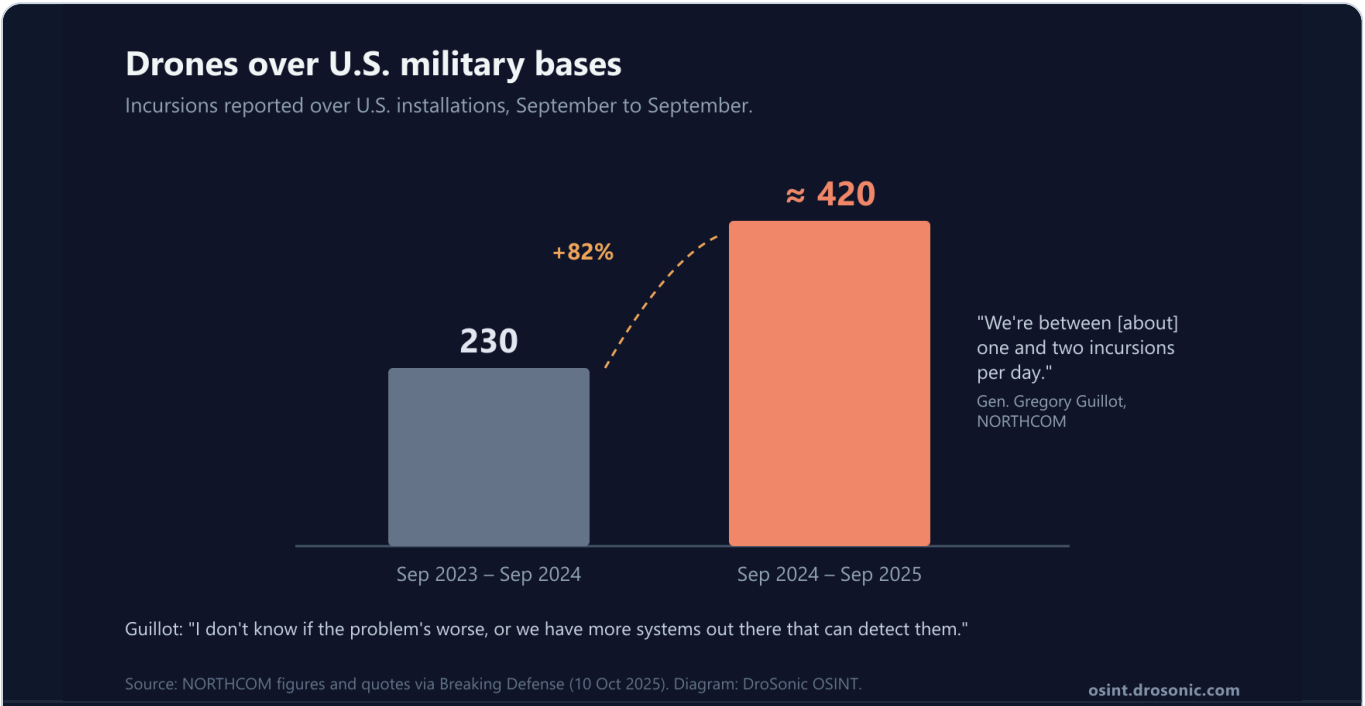
WHERE AND WHEN	WHAT HAPPENED	IDENTIFIED? STOPPED?
U.S. INSTALLATIONS 2023–2025	230, then about 420 incursions a year; Langley among sites that "mystified officials"	Mostly not identified; "known and unknown actors"
POLAND 9–10 SEP 2025 NEW	19–21 Russian drones, many unarmed decoys, some steered over Polish SIM cards	Up to 4 shot down; one missile hit a house
KLEINE-BROGEL, BELGIUM OCT–NOV 2025	Drones over a base storing U.S. nuclear weapons, several nights	Detected; jamming failed; operators not found
VOLKEL, NETHERLANDS 22 NOV 2025	Military fired at drones over the base	No wreckage recovered

● THE FIRST MASS INCURSION INTO A NATO MEMBER'S AIRSPACE IN THIS SAMPLE · SOURCES BELOW

FIELD 01 — AT HOME

One or two a day over U.S. bases

U.S. installations have seen drones for years. NORAD data put sightings at 250 in 2022 and 202 in 2023. Breaking Defense noted that incursions at sensitive sites such as Langley Air Force Base, home of the F-22, had "mystified officials". Breaking Defense↗ By the year to September 2025 the count had risen to about 420, from 230 the year before. NORTHCOM's commander, Gen. Gregory Guillot, put the rate at "between [about] one and two incursions per day," adding: "I don't know if the problem's worse, or we have more systems out there that can detect them." Breaking Defense↗



DRONES OVER U.S. BASES — UP 82% IN A YEAR

Better sensors may account for part of the rise, which is itself a sign of how much was previously missed.

DIAGRAM: DROSONIC OSINT · ORIGINAL · NORTHCOM FIGURES VIA BREAKING DEFENSE

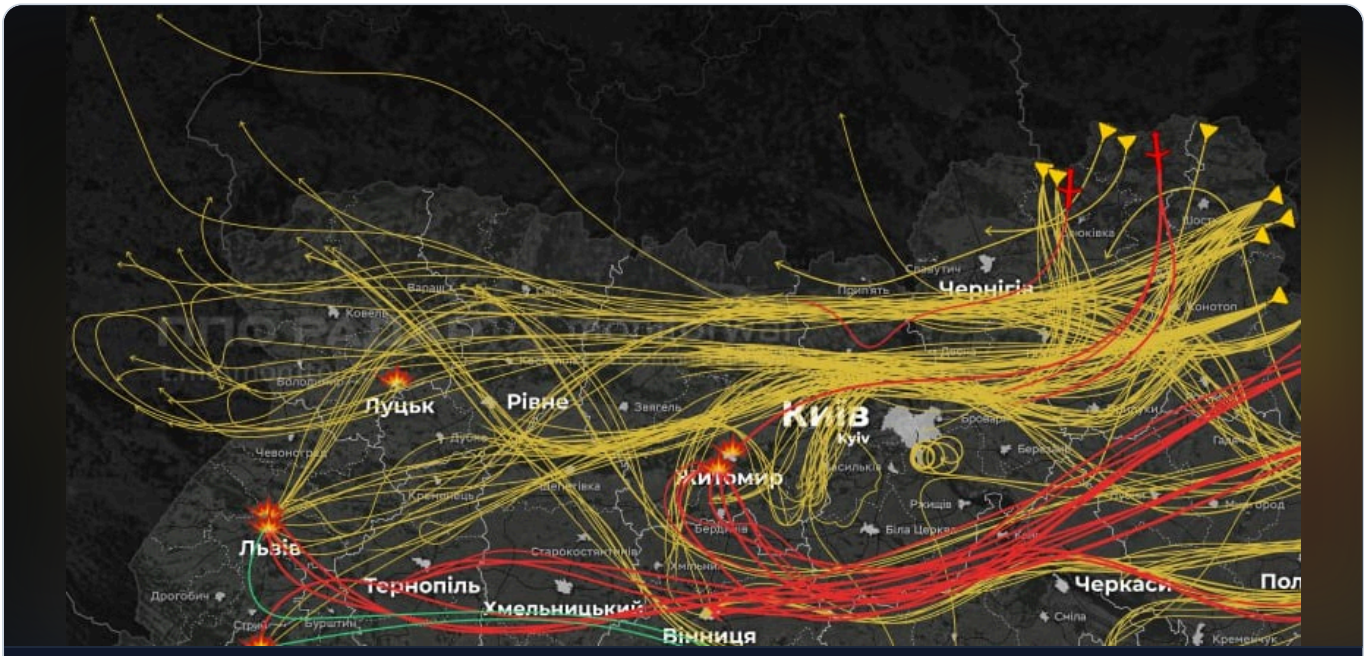
Who flies them is mostly unknown. Guillot told the Senate in February 2025 of "significant vulnerabilities that have been exploited by known and unknown actors," and called the main threat "detection and perhaps surveillance of sensitive capabilities on our installations." He also noted that only about half of U.S. installations are "covered" by the law that lets the military counter drones, 10 U.S.C. § 130i (explained in Allowed to Listen, Not to Shoot), and asked for it to cover all of them. DefenseScoop↗

Engaging a drone also requires coordination with the FAA. NORTHCOM can fly a counter-drone kit to a base within 24 hours, at up to $12 million a kit, which officials say is not fast enough. [Breaking Defense↗]

FIELD 02 — POLAND

Decoys that drew fighters

On the night of 9–10 September 2025, Russian drones crossed into Polish airspace during an attack on Ukraine. Counts differ: Poland told the UN Security Council 19; a presidential adviser said 21; prosecutors later reported more than 30 drones falling at 27 locations. Allied aircraft, most reportedly Dutch F-35s, shot down up to four. A missile fired by a Polish F-16 went astray and destroyed the roof of a house. Prosecutors said the drones were unarmed decoys, some Gerbera-type, some of polystyrene, and that some carried Polish SIM cards for control.[Wikipedia↗] Poland invoked NATO's Article 4, and on 12 September NATO launched **Operation Eastern Sentry** to strengthen its eastern flank.



9–10 SEPTEMBER 2025 — TRACKS THAT CROSSED THE LINE

Flight paths of the night's Russian drone attack as compiled by a Ukrainian monitoring channel, including tracks that entered Poland.

MAP: MONITORWAR / MON1TOR_UA · CC BY 4.0 · WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The episode showed the cost and detection problems from our earlier reports at alliance scale. Fifth-generation fighters and air-to-air missiles were spent on foam decoys built to be cheap. Separately, the Polish daily *Rzeczpospolita* reported that modernisation of a national anti-drone system had been delayed 18 months for lack of funds.[Wikipedia↗] Our report The Price of a Kill sets out the economics.

FIELD 03 — THE NUCLEAR SITE

Kleine-Brogel

Over several nights from 31 October 2025, drones flew over **Kleine-Brogel Air Base** in Belgium, which stores U.S. nuclear weapons and is due to host Belgium's F-35s. Defence Minister Theo Francken said the overnight drones were a larger type with a "clear mission" targeting the base. The base's detection systems did pick them up. But when soldiers fired a drone-jamming gun at one, it failed to disable it; Francken suggested a radio-frequency mismatch or range as possible causes (When Jamming Stops Working looks at why jammers fail). A police helicopter pursued drones that flew off towards the Netherlands. Nobody was caught.[Euromaidan Press↗]

Similar episodes followed. At Volkel air base in the Netherlands on 22 November, the military fired at drones but recovered no wreckage. At France's Île Longue submarine base on 4 December, soldiers used a jammer, but no drone was brought down and no pilots were identified.[Wikipedia↗]



KLEINE-BROGEL AIR BASE — DETECTED, JAMMED, NOT STOPPED

U.S. F-22s visiting the Belgian base in 2018. In 2025 drones circled it for several nights; a jamming gun failed against one.

PHOTO: U.S. AIR FORCE, STAFF SGT. JOSHUA DEWBERRY · PUBLIC DOMAIN · WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

> **At Kleine-Brogel the sensors worked and the jammer did not. Detecting a drone is only the start; identifying and stopping it safely is the hard part.**

FIELD 04 — THE RESPONSE

Exercises, kits and a "drone wall"

The U.S. military's own trials describe the gap plainly. Reviewing NORTHCOM's 2024 Falcon Peak counter-drone exercise, Gen. Guillot said detection was strong, tracking was "okay, not great," and defeat was "poor," especially with non-kinetic means. He reported significant improvement in 2025. Among the sensors shown at Falcon Peak 2025 was an acoustic system that listens for drones, because many drones no longer emit electronic signals. Breaking Defense↗



VIDEO: PLAY IT IN THE ONLINE REPORT

PROJECT FLYTRAP — TESTING COUNTER-DRONE KIT IN THE FIELD

A U.S. Army air-defence platoon leader explains why the Army tests new, lower-cost counter-drone systems against realistic drone threats at Hohenfels, Germany.

VIDEO: U.S. ARMY, SPC. ELIJAH MAGANA · PUBLIC DOMAIN · WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

In Europe, the European Commission's October 2025 defence roadmap set out a "drone wall" to be fully functional by the end of 2027, drawing on Ukraine's "drone and counter-drone ecosystems". RFE/RL↗ NATO allies are training against small drones in the field, as in the Romanian exercise below.

The threat to bases is not only from states. A 2024 study in *Perspectives on Terrorism* identified 1,122 attacks in which violent non-state groups used armed drones, 91.3% of them in the Middle East and North Africa, where U.S. and allied bases have absorbed many of them. Perspectives on Terrorism↗ A 2024 ETH Zurich study of the war in Ukraine notes that U.S. military leadership is responding with a layered approach to protecting its overseas bases rather than any single counter-drone system. CSS, ETH Zurich↗

At home, that approach now has a price. In July 2026 the Congressional Budget Office estimated that equipping one representative 5 by 5 mile installation with radars, radio detect-and-jam systems, interceptors and handheld jammers would cost about $74

million, plus $5 million a year, and counted 824 installations in the federal database it used. It also noted that drones flown by fibre-optic cable or pre-set route evade radio detection, and that "continued research and development is needed." CBO↗



VIDEO: PLAY IT IN THE ONLINE REPORT

ROMANIA — ALLIED TROOPS PRACTISE COUNTER-DRONE TECHNIQUES

NATO footage of allied soldiers in Romania testing, integrating and using counter-drone technology in realistic conditions. About four minutes.

VIDEO: NATO · PUBLIC DOMAIN · WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

CONFIDENCE

How sure we are, and what would change it

High confidence in the incident record and official statistics cited, from government statements and multiple press reports.

Moderate confidence in the specifics of individual incidents: drone counts over Poland differ by source, and details of the Belgian jamming failure come from the minister's own account.

Our assessment is that identification and safe defeat, not first detection, are now the main gaps at bases, and that passive sensing for non-emitting drones is under-represented in current kits.

DROSONIC — OUR APPROACH

A listening perimeter

The gap this report finds at bases is identification and safe response, especially for drones that emit nothing. DroSonic's networked passive acoustic sensors classify drone sound on low-cost edge hardware and transmit nothing for an intruder to detect, which suits a perimeter that should not advertise itself. DroSonic↗

Its U.S. provisional patent application covers detection, classification, localisation and tiered defeat cueing, so a confirmed track can go to whoever is authorised to act. DroSonic↗ The prototype tested at DIRT Days 26.04 in September 2026 was set up in an environment built to resemble a contested electronic battlefield. DroSonic↗ In October 2026 DroSonic joined the SOF RACER consortium, which connects U.S. Special Operations Command with commercial technology firms. DroSonic↗

CLOSE — WHAT IT MEANS

A perimeter that listens

The record shows three things. More drones are being detected over bases, partly because more sensors are looking. Few are identified. And the standard first response, jamming, can fail even when the drone is in sight. The drones that matter most, decoys built to waste missiles, drones steered over mobile networks and drones that transmit nothing, are the ones that radio-based kits handle worst.

That is the gap passive acoustic sensing fills at a base perimeter: a dense ring of cheap nodes that hears any propeller, whatever its control link, and gives the tracking and identification layers a second, independent signature. Military bases and forward operating base perimeters are a primary use for DroSonic. In September 2026 a DroSonic prototype was tested against live drones at DIRT Days 26.04, a field exercise supported by CMI2 with U.S. Central Command and U.S. Army DEVCOM. DroSonic↗



DIRT DAYS 26.04 — TESTING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO DEFEND BASES

Service members observe DroSonic's test position at the field exercise. Trials like this, and Falcon Peak and Project Flytrap above, are where base-defence sensors earn or lose trust.

PHOTO: DROSONIC · FIELD-TEST WRITE-UP

Our explainer What a Microphone Can Hear covers what the technology can and cannot do.

ABOUT DROSONIC

DroSonic builds passive acoustic drone detection: networked sensors that listen for drones instead of their radio signals, using acoustic AI and edge computing. DroSonic OSINT is our open-source research into the threat that technology is built to meet.

THE RECORD SO FAR

OCT 2026	Joined the SOF RACER consortium, which connects USSOCOM with commercial technology companies
SEPT 2026	Prototype tested against live drones at DIRT Days 26.04, a field exercise supported by CMI2 with U.S. Central Command and U.S. Army DEVCOM
SEPT 2026	Technical presentation at NDIA's Emerging Technologies for Defense conference on detecting fibre-optic and radio-silent drones
SEPT 2026	Filed U.S. provisional patent 64/148,522 on passive acoustic detection, classification, localisation and defeat cueing
JUL 2026	Pitched to the U.S. Space Force at Space Systems Command's Reverse Industry Engagement Day, Colorado Springs

How DroSonic detection works → · Where it is used → · Talk to the team →

THIS REPORT ONLINE

https://osint.drosonic.com/assessments/drones-over-military-bases.html

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DroSonic OSINT: open-source assessments on drones and counter-UAS from DroSonic, passive acoustic drone detection. drosonic.com · sudo@drosonic.com



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Ghulam Mujtaba, Ph.D., is the founder and CEO of DroSonic and leads its work on passive acoustic drone detection. A computer engineer with 13 years of experience building machine-learning systems for edge hardware, he holds a Ph.D. in computer engineering from Gachon University in South Korea, was an NSF postdoctoral fellow at West Virginia University in the United States, and is an Assistant Professor of AI and Data Science at Regis University in Denver, Colorado. An IEEE Senior Member, he has published more than 20 papers on deep learning, computer vision and multimedia for edge devices.

PROFILE ↗ LINKEDIN ↗ ORCID ↗

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