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Russia to Start Making Combat Drones

By The Moscow Times

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Russia will begin developing advanced unmanned aerial drones capable of long duration flights and performing combat duties this year, Deputy Defense Minister Yury Borisov said last week.

Reconnaissance drones are already prevalent throughout the world's militaries, including Russia's, but combat drones are another beast entirely, as they must be capable of carrying payloads such as missiles, and be relatively robust.

In 2011, the Defense Ministry signed contracts with the Sokol and Tranzas design bureaus to build combat drones capable of carrying 5-ton and 1-ton payloads respectively. Borisov hopes that they will begin testing them by 2017, RIA Novosti reported.

Russia is interested in building advanced combat drones, as they are uniquely adapted to solving strategic problems because of their superior stealth and combat stability in comparison to traditional manned aircraft, Russian Air Force Commander Viktor Bondarev told RIA Novosti.

The U.S. military has shown that unmanned aerial drones are an integral part of the modern battlefield in recent years, as drones have been used to provide its forces with real-time intelligence and, when needed, the ability to conduct precision strikes on enemy targets with minimal risk to U.S. personnel.

However, the Obama administration's trigger happy use of unmanned vehicles to kill suspected terrorists has drawn severe international criticism, since the difficulty of verifying the identities of the targets remotely has resulted in repeated incidents where civilians were killed.

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