

Morocco and Algeria Strengthen UAV Capabilities With Imports From China, Turkey, and Israel

By Lucas Winter
OE Watch Commentary

Over the past year, both Algeria and Morocco have bolstered their unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) capabilities by importing technology from China, Turkey and—in the case of Morocco—Israel.²⁴ As detailed in the first excerpted article, in October 2022, the Spanish news website *OkDiario* reported on a video showing a Chinese Wing Loong II UAV flying over Morocco, seemingly confirming that Morocco had acquired several of these platforms after expressing interest in them earlier this year. Also in October, as detailed in the second excerpted article, the independent Algeria-focused military news website *Menadefense* reported that Algeria, which has a Wing Loong II fleet of its own, had become the first export client for the Turkish TAI Aksungur long-range UAV, after signing a deal to acquire six units.

While China and Turkey appear willing to sell technology and deepen security cooperation with both Morocco and Algeria, Israeli-Moroccan cooperation has likely geopolitical implications given fears of Iranian and Russian meddling in the region.²⁵ As shown in the third excerpted article, in September the Moroccan English-language news website *Morocco World News* reported that Morocco had acquired at least 150 small vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) unmanned aircraft from the Israeli firm BlueBird Aero Systems. The deal includes both the small WanderB

model and a larger ThunderB model, as well as an agreement to build two UAV manufacturing plants in Morocco, the first of their kind.

In the fourth excerpted article, in early October, as reported by the Moroccan news website *Le360*, an official from the Polisario Front, the Western Sahara independence movement that is supported by Algeria and opposed by Morocco, claimed that Sahrawi fighters would soon begin employing armed UAVs against Moroccan forces. These remarks prompted Morocco's Foreign Minister to equate Polisario with Yemen's Houthi Movement, accusing Iran of arming Polisario with Algerian complicity. Indeed, Moroccan accusations of Iranian support for Polisario are not new, as explained in the fifth article from the Qatari-aligned *al-Araby al-Jadeed*. While the accusations may have seemed fanciful four years ago, they seem less so now, given Israel's quickly growing security footprint in Morocco and the fact that Algeria's key security partner—Russia—is itself relying on Iranian military support in Ukraine.

Morocco issued a warning to Iran, which is accused of militarily supporting separatist and terrorist groups



TAI Aksungur at Teknofest 2019.

Source: CeeGee (own work), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAI_Aksungur_Teknofest2019_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:TAI_Aksungur_Teknofest2019_(1).jpg) Attribution: CC 4.0

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Source: Pelayo Barro. "Marruecos compra los drones militares chinos más modernos mientras España le regala 4x4 (Morocco buys the most advanced Chinese drones while Spain gifts it 4x4s)," *OkDiario* (Spanish news website), 2 October 2022. <https://okdiario.com/espana/marruecos-compra-drones-militares-chinos-mas-modernos-mientras-espana-regala-4x4-9739842>

The latest [Moroccan] acquisition has not been ignored by Spain's military intelligence: new-generation strategic Chinese drones with air-ground attack capabilities and endurance of over 7,000 kilometers... Mohammed VI's armed forces had previously eyed these drones – called Wing Loong II – and had even proposed acquiring them to replace a previous Chinese drone they had already employed in their war against the Polisario Front.

Source: "L'Algérie achète des drones d'attaque Aksungur (Algeria purchases Aksungur attack drones)," *Menadefense* (independent Algeria-focused military news website), 7 October 2022. <https://www.menadefense.net/algerie/lalgerie-achete-des-drones-dattaque-aksungur/>

The Algerian Air Force has ordered six Turkish MALE drones from TAI. They are the Aksungur, a larger, more modern, and better performing version than its Anka-S counterpart.

Source: Aya Benazizi. "Morocco Purchases 150 Israeli Military Drones," *Morocco World News* (Moroccan English-language news website), 22 September 2022. <https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2022/09/351475/morocco-purchases-150-israeli-military-drones>

Morocco has purchased 150 military drones of the WanderB and ThunderB types, manufactured by Israel's BlueBird Aero Systems, a company specialized in designing and developing Tactical Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) equipment...

The agreement concerned the construction of industrial units in Morocco for the manufacture of Israeli drones.

Source: البوليساريو تعلن أن الجزائر ستتمدها بطائرات "درون" إيرانية لمهاجمة المغرب
Mohammed Ould Boah. "Polisario announces that Algiera will provide it with Iranian drones to attack Morocco," *Le360* (Moroccan news website), 4 October 2022. <https://ar.le360.ma/politique/197102>

According to the so-called "interior minister" of the Polisario, the separatists have obtained military drones, which they will use in their attacks against Moroccan territory. In the face of this dangerous escalation, Morocco issued a warning to Iran, which is accused of militarily supporting separatist and terrorist groups.

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Continued: Morocco and Algeria Strengthen UAV Capabilities With Imports From China, Turkey, and Israel

Source:

إيران والمغرب: تشييع وصواريخ ودررونز

Abdelhamid Ajmahiri. "Iran and Morocco: Shiization, missiles and drones," *al-Araby al-Jadeed* (Qatari-aligned daily), 11 October 2022. <https://tinyurl.com/2p83v8hm>

Almost four years after accusing Tehran of handing the separatist Polisario Front advanced weapons – especially Strela surface-to-air missiles – last week Rabat accused Tehran of providing Polisario with drones... It is clear that relations between Rabat and Tehran have entered a bleak zone, now that the [Western Sahara] conflict has been resolved in favor of Moroccan national unity.

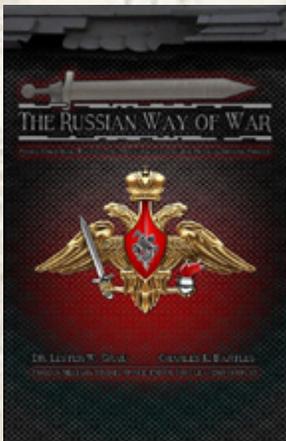
Notes:

[24] See: Lucas Winter, "Morocco and Algeria Bolstering Their Drone Fleets as Bilateral Tensions Rise," *OE Watch*, Issue 11, 2021; Lucas Winter, "Morocco Denys Conducting Drone Strike Against Algerian Targets in Western Sahara," *OE Watch*, Issue 12, 2021; Lucas Winter, "China Arming Algeria To Fight Its 'New Generation Wars'," *OE Watch*, Issue 8, 2022.

[25] See: Lucas Winter, "Algeria Sees Threat from Morocco as Western Sahara Conflict Threatens To Reignite," *OE Watch*, Issue 6, 2022; Lucas Winter, "Algeria Likely To Deepen Military Ties with Russia as Morocco–Israel Security Cooperation Expands," *OE Watch*, Issue 9, 2022.

THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR

by Lester W. Grau and Charles K. Bartles



At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.