



Leveraging Existing Expertise

Why the Army Doesn't Need a Specialized Counter-Drone MOS

By CPT Cynthia Noelle Forden

Modern warfare has demonstrated that drones pose an undeniable threat on the battlefield that will continue to rapidly evolve. These small Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) provide fighting forces with an inexpensive tool that is easily adaptable, providing a wide variety of capabilities ranging from reconnaissance to attack.

The clear threat posed by UASs has elicited a strong response from the military community, with some believing the best solution is the creation of an entirely new Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) that is solely dedicated to Counter-UAS (C-UAS) operations. However, immediately establishing a new MOS would fail to leverage the existing people, systems, and expertise already within our forces.

As a previous Cyber and Electromagnetic Warfare Activities (CEMA) Officer for a Combat Aviation Brigade, I have seen that the tools for successful C-UAS already exist within our formation. Rather than developing a

specialized C-UAS MOS, the Army must instead focus on enhancing awareness, integration, and utilization of existing Electromagnetic Warfare (EW) and multi-domain capabilities.

The Army currently fields a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic solutions for C-UAS. These assets include EW platforms like the Beast+ and Kraken, and attack equipment such as Dronebusters and SmartShooters. EW personnel are uniquely qualified to operate these systems as they are already trained to be experts in spectrum operations, signal detection, and electromagnetic attack.

The current force structure is also already suitable for C-UAS operations, as every Brigade Combat Team is assigned an EW Platoon that can provide exceptional C-UAS as well as many other capabilities. Operational environments demonstrate that the Army's existing personnel and equipment can conduct successful C-UAS operations, with the main challenge being consistent

A TRV-150 resupply drone undergoes flight testing at Fort Rucker, Ala., to evaluate flight control software and physical response while carrying a 70 mm rocket launcher. The industry-led initiative aims to provide expeditionary units with organic, precision-strike options using existing inventory like the Hydra family of rockets. (U.S. Army photo by Leslie Herlick)

training and the empowerment of personnel to maximize their assets.

Rather than address the Army's C-UAS problem, a specialty MOS would introduce inefficiencies and unnecessary complexity into training and operations. Building a new specialty requires significant resources, including new instructors, dedicated facilities, and career management. This would consume resources that could otherwise improve existing programs. Additionally, a C-UAS specialty would overlap heavily with EW and Air Defense Artillery (ADA) functions, creating operational redundancy.

There is also the risk that a separate MOS could isolate C-UAS expertise from the rest of the force rather than integrate it into Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). In a fight where seconds matter, units cannot afford to wait for specialized personnel to engage a UAS threat. Every soldier operating in a contested environment must understand the battle drills for responding to and reporting UAS activity.

Additionally, the argument that a new C-UAS MOS might attract technologically inclined recruits also fails to justify its creation. Existing technology-focused MOSs—like those in EW, cyber, artificial intelligence, and robotics—already appeal to tech-savvy individuals as these roles provide advanced training in computing, networking, and electromagnetic systems that are directly relevant to modern warfare.

Rather than establishing another technical specialty, the Army should instead put those resources toward improving how it markets its existing MOSs and modernizing its training approaches for these specialties. Updating training methods to include simulation, virtual reality, and current interfaces would modernize existing

MOSs and capture the same recruiting benefits without creating new bureaucratic structures.

A better solution to the C-UAS problem is to integrate counter-drone awareness and skills within the MOSs that already touch the electromagnetic spectrum (EMS). Enhanced training for EW specialists, signals soldiers, air defenders, and even infantry personnel will create a shared understanding of how to mitigate drone threats. Cross training among these branches can also ensure that every formation possesses the ability to detect and conduct C-UAS using the resources at hand.

Rather than build a new MOS, the Army could instead choose to strengthen its existing C-UAS training programs and make them more accessible. C-UAS training will allow the Army to properly develop and train tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) while concurrently allowing units to remain flexible and responsive to this new threat. Reinforcing classroom education with regular combined-arms exercises that emphasize C-UAS operations would work to ensure that C-UAS tactics become second nature to Soldiers across the force.

The proliferation of drones represents a defining challenge of modern warfare, but the creation of a dedicated C-UAS MOS is not the answer. Instead, the Army should prioritize enhancing drone awareness and integration across its current force. This includes emphasizing C-UAS education during initial and advanced individual training and continuing to incorporate realistic drone threats into combined-arms exercises. It is also crucial that the Army continues to invest in EW modernization to ensure that equipment remains effective against rapidly evolving UAS technology. A truly effective C-UAS strategy will not come from specialization but from a holistic, integrated approach that leverages the Army's existing expertise and capability.

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