



## Chapter 736 Newsletter for April 2019

### Awesome!

French military using winged warriors to hunt down rogue drones. This is amazing.



A golden eagle grabs a flying drone during a military training exercise at Mont-de-Marsan French Air Force base, Southwestern France.

Following incidents of drones flying over the presidential palace and restricted military sites – along with the deadly 2015 Paris terror attacks – the French Air Force has trained four golden eagles to intercept and destroy the rogue aircraft.

Aptly named d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis – an homage to Alexandre Dumas' "The Three Musketeers" – the four birds of prey have been honing their attack skills at the Mont-de-Marsan in southwestern France since mid-2016.

“A drone means food for these birds,” Gerald Machoukow, the military base's falconer, told FRANCE 24. “[Now they](#) automatically go after them.”

The use of hunting birds – normally falcons and northern goshawks – by militaries around the globe is common practice in the fight to scare other critters away from runways and so cut the risk of accidents during takeoff or landing. But it wasn't until 2015 when the Dutch started using bald eagles to intercept drones that other militaries started to see the benefit of these winged warriors.

The French bred the four golden eagles – three males and one female -- using artificial insemination since eagles are a protected species and harvesting wild eggs is strictly forbidden. They chose the golden eagle because of the birds hooked beak and sharp eyesight.

Also weighing in around 11 pounds, the birds are in a similar weight class as the drones they're sent to destroy and clocking in at a top air speed of 50 miles per hour, with the capability of spotting its target from over a mile away, the eagles are deft hunters. To protect the eagles from drone blades and any explosive device that might be attached to them, the French military designed mittens of leather and Kevlar (an anti blast material), to protect the bird's talons.

A golden eagle carries a flying drone (2017). "I love these birds," Machoukow told [Agence France-Presse](#). "I don't want to send them to their death." The birds are first taught to attack in a straight line before graduating to diving from heights. Soon they'll be patrolling the skies over the Pyrenees Mountains in southern France and could possibly be deployed at airports and special events, such as political summits and soccer tournaments. The French air force already expects four more eagles to join the fleet.

### **Aviation Groups Object to FAA's Pilot Drug Study**

Nine groups representing general aviation and airline pilots have expressed their “strong opposition” to a proposed FAA study aimed at assessing the use of medications and other drugs among pilots by anonymously collecting and testing their urine during physical exams. The study replies to NTSB recommendation A-14-95, initially published in 2014 but for which the FAA submitted its final response last year.

That NTSB recommendation asked the agency to conduct a study to assess the prevalence of drug use among pilots not involved in accidents and compare those results with findings from pilots who have died from aviation accidents to assess the safety risks of using those drugs while flying. The FAA told the NTSB it was currently finalizing the details for aviation medical examiners (AME) and briefing pilot groups.

In a [recent letter](#) to the FAA, the groups call on the NTSB to rescind that recommendation, which was put forward after post-accident autopsy reports suggested an increase in traces of medications and other drugs found in pilots, even though the causes of the accidents were not medically related. Further, the groups contend the study “is

fundamentally flawed; will not accomplish its stated goals; does not comply with applicable legal requirements; represents a waste of valuable time, money, and limited resources; and will further erode trust between the pilot community and the [FAA] Office of Aerospace Medicine.”

In addition, the letter pointed out that a pilot who is being examined for his or her medical certificate often has no intention that day of operating an aircraft. Test results of a pilot who has no intention of flying on the day of examination will be erroneously reported as those of an “actively flying pilot,” resulting in inaccurate conclusions.

The aviation groups also raised privacy issues about the study: “Even though the FAA removed the geographic location from the initial urine cup label, the CAMI lab and personnel will be able to identify the AME from which the cup came, eroding the privacy protections of the study.”

Besides AOPA, signers of the letter included the EAA, HAI, NATA, NBAA, three airline pilot associations, and the NetJets Association of Shared Aircraft Pilots.

### **Real-time tracking trial begins over the North Atlantic**

For the first time, air traffic controllers now have real-time data on the position of planes anywhere in the world, including previously unmonitored airspace.

Effective of the 2 April 2019, Aireon, the first ever real-time, global air traffic surveillance system, is fully operational and in trial over the North Atlantic. This announcement marks a historic milestone for the aviation industry — ushering in a new era of safety and efficiency that will revolutionise the way people fly.

Aireon’s space-based automatic dependent surveillance broadcast (ADS-B) system provides real-time air traffic surveillance and tracking to 100 per cent of ADS-B equipped aircraft on the planet. Prior to Aireon’s system coming online, traditional ground-based surveillance covered just 30 per cent of the globe, meaning civil aviation authorities, commercial carriers and related industry stakeholders relied upon position updates from aircraft every 10-14 minutes to track aircraft outside of radar coverage, not the real-time updates that the Aireon service provides.

The Aireon system is expected to reduce overall flight safety risks by approximately 76 per cent in the North Atlantic according to a joint analysis by [NAV CANADA](#) and [NATS](#) – the first air navigation service providers (ANSPs) to use the system. Improved visibility and control over previously unmonitored airspace — especially across oceanic regions — will allow airlines to fly routes at optimal speeds and levels, delivering expected cost savings of up to US\$300 per transatlantic flight, plus reducing carbon dioxide emissions by two tonnes per flight, based on an analysis conducted by [NATS](#) and [ICAO](#).

## **Next Meeting**

We will be starting our meetings again in May. A notice will be sent once the date and place have been established.