

STONE PEAK SYSTEMS

Unmanned Warfare

From CIA shadows in Mexico to autonomous kill chains on land and sea — this week's brief.

STONE PEAK SYSTEMS · WEEKLY BRIEF

AUTHOR: RICCARDO GRANDI

CIA Agents Exposed in Mexico

In April, a covert raid on cartel drug labs in Chihuahua revealed that CIA agents were operating on Mexican territory disguised as local investigative police, embedded within Mexican forces. The mission — supported by ISR from a U.S. MQ-9 Reaper — targeted a network of methamphetamine and fentanyl labs in the Golden Triangle. It ended in an incident that killed two CIA agents and Mexican counterparts, blowing the cover of a program that Mexico's federal leadership says it was never informed about.

The Strategic Fallout

The president of Mexico publicly stated that the CIA agents were not authorized to operate on Mexican territory. For U.S. planners, this is a live test of how far covert Title 50-style operations against the cartels can go before colliding with Mexican sovereignty.

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Thematic Pillar — Autonomous Systems

Leonidas AGV: The Unmanned Drone Hunter



Epirus, General Dynamics Land Systems, and Kodiak AI have unveiled the **Leonidas Autonomous Ground Vehicle**: an AI "virtual driver" based on the Ford F-600, paired with a high-power microwave (HPM) system designed to neutralize drone electronics. The platform operates fully autonomously or via teleoperation, patrolling perimeters and moving to pre-planned interception points.

> The key question: if sensor, effector, and driver are all software-defined, where is human judgment inserted — in task definition, target validation, or not at all?

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Thematic Pillar — Autonomous Systems

RIPSAW M1: UGV as a Mobile Launch Node

Platform Capabilities

Tracked, ~1,950 kg, up to ~85 km/h. 2,000 lb payload bay, silent electric mode for 48 km stealth approaches. Flat-deck architecture with interchangeable modular payloads in the field.

The Strategic Shift

The UGV is no longer just a "transport robot" — it is a mobile launch node that performs reconnaissance, loiters, and engages targets autonomously, integrated into the Marines' ARV/ACV formations.

Kill Chain Compression

ISR, decision, and effects can emanate from a single advanced unmanned platform ahead of the manned force — compressing the kill chain at squad and platoon level.



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Comet USV: The Naval Drone That Fires

13.1 m

Certified US Navy hull length

40–45 kn

Maximum operating speed

10,000 lb

Modular payload capacity

The **Comet** from BlackSea Technologies, unveiled at Sea-Air-Space 2026, is equipped with a twin-rail missile launcher and an EO/IR turret for air defense against drones, helicopters, and low-flying aircraft. This marks the shift from USVs as “camera boats” to true distributed shooters capable of air defense, ASW, MCM, and HVU escort in contested coastal waters.



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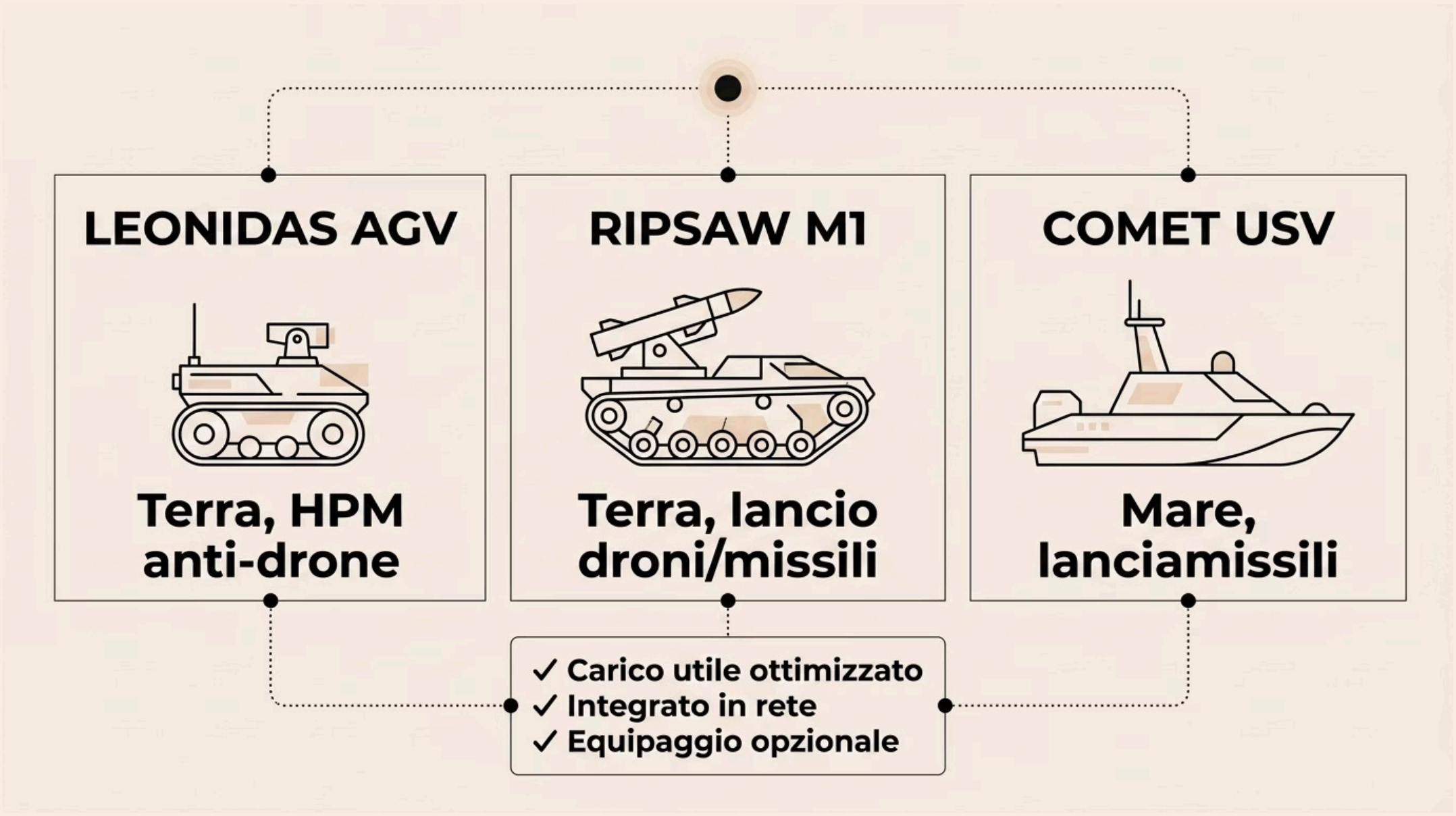
From Platform to Kill-Web Node

Leonidas AGV, RIPSAW M1, and Comet converge on the same design paradigm.



These systems were explicitly designed to integrate into broader sensor-to-shooter networks — not as isolated gadgets — extending range and lethality without exposing personnel.

⚠ The unresolved problem: technology is moving ahead, but formal rules on the "human in the loop" for target selection and engagement are still lagging behind.

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Rapid Scan

Geopolitical Conflicts



US–Mexico Covert War Lens

The exposure of CIA agents forces Washington and Mexico City to publicly deny what had quietly been true for years. Greater rhetorical pressure is expected from Mexican leadership for the domestic audience, but deep operational cooperation will continue, driven by cartel fragmentation.



The "Narco-Insurgency" Reframing

From Ecuador and Colombia to Bolivia, governments describe cartels as national security threats, not merely criminal organizations. This reframing legitimizes the use of special forces, ISR, and drones in the style of counterterrorism campaigns — opening the door to CIA deployments, SOF, and autonomous systems across Latin America.

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Rapid Scan

Defense Technology

Exported Surveillance Architecture

Chihuahua's new "intelligence bunker" — built on Palantir-style data fusion from cameras, license plate readers, drones, and public safety sensors — shows how U.S. surveillance concepts are exported for cartel targeting. A replicable model for tech vendors selling turnkey command centers to middle-income states.

C-UAS Stack Maturation

The Leonidas AGV is part of a broader counter-drone ecosystem — radar, RF sensors, kinetic interceptors, mobile HPM effects — that reflects the severity of the drone swarm problem in Ukraine and the Middle East. Countries without robust C-UAS layers will find both their airspace and internal security exposed, even with top-tier fighters and SAMs.

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Rapid Scan

Defense Investments

Drone Equity and Autonomy

AeroVironment and Kratos have delivered strong multi-year returns with established DoD relationships. Valuations remain elevated and volatile. The structural theme — autonomous systems, C-UAS, uncrewed teaming — is strong, but entry points and single-stock risk are critical.

Who Captures the Value

Epirus, GDLS, Kodiak AI, Textron, and BlackSea occupy distinct segments of the uncrewed stack — effectors, platforms, autonomy, niche naval designs. Watch for the shift from demonstrators to programs of record: that is where multi-year revenue visibility will emerge.

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Watch List

01

Mexican Political Reaction vs. Quiet Continuation

Monitor whether the Mexican federal government translates public outrage over the CIA presence into real constraints on vetted units and US intel centers — or whether operations simply become more deniable while the rhetoric hardens.

02

"Human-in-the-Loop" Policy for Autonomous Weapons

With armed Leonidas AGVs and USVs like Comet moving toward operational deployment, monitor DoD and allied doctrine for explicit language on human authorization in targeting and engagement.

03

USV and UGV Procurement Signals

Track Navy and Marine Corps budget documents for references to Comet-class USVs and RIPSAW-type UGVs in formal operations concepts — the turning point from "interesting demo" to sustained demand.

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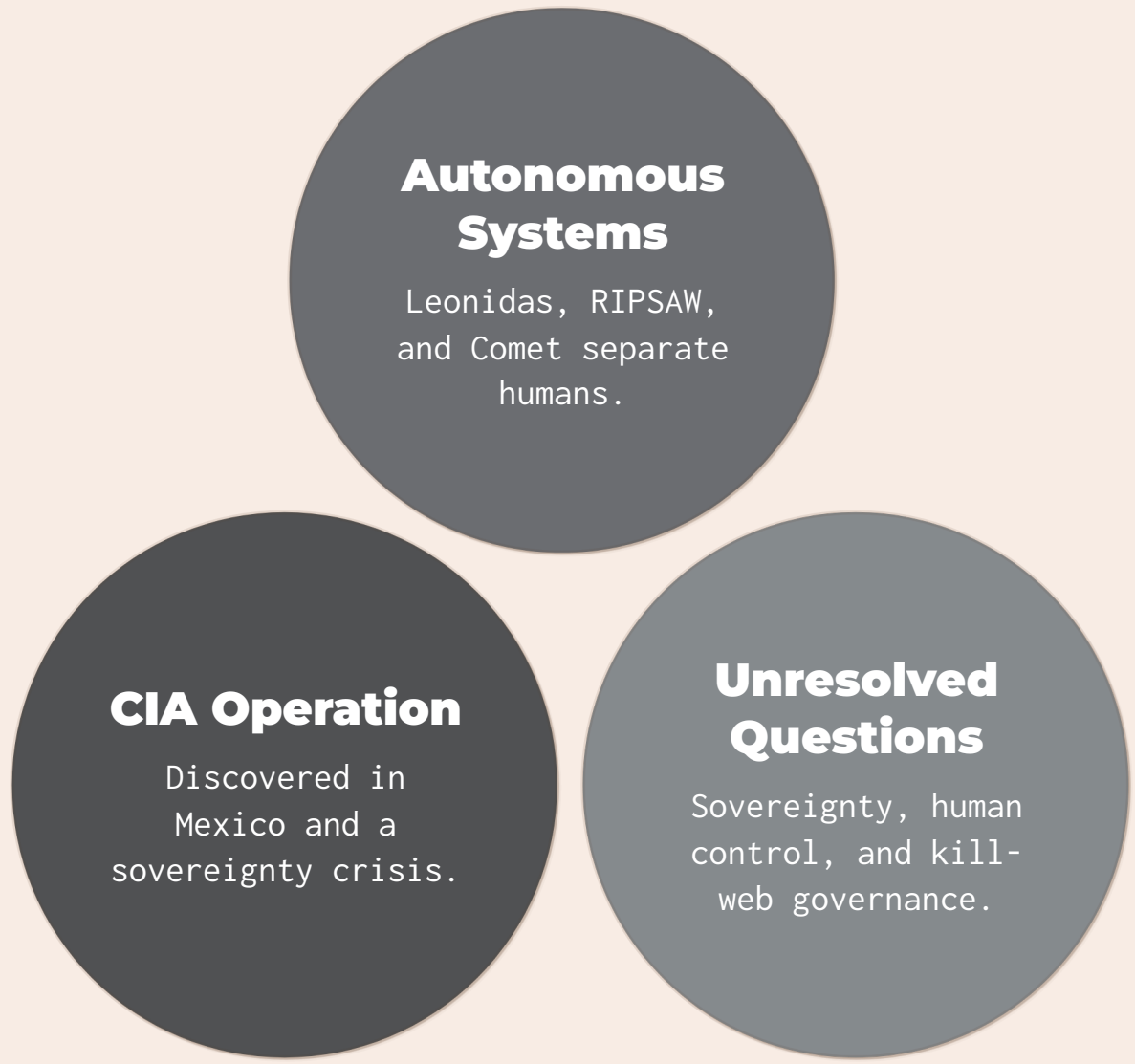
Weekly Summary



This week links a CIA operation uncovered in Mexico to a triad of autonomous systems that move human operators away from the point of contact while tightening the kill chain. The central questions are no longer technological, but political: where sovereignty begins, where the human stays in the loop, and who controls the kill-web now rapidly forming.

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