

Stone Peak Systems: AI, Autonomy & Procurement Watch

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FEATURE PILLAR

Defense Technology: This Week's Focus Areas



Emerging Tech & AI

Pentagon AI vendor vetting, acoustic drone detection, and autonomous counter-UAS platforms entering the procurement pipeline.



R&D & Procurement

Mobile additive manufacturing, solar-persistent UAVs, and $270M+ in new contract awards reshaping defense logistics.



FY26 NDAA

$900.6B approved for national defense — multiyear hypersonics authority, AI supply chain investment, and missile defense procurement.



Capability Announcements

Leonidas AGV, SECTR acoustic sensing, and K1000ULE solar drone mark a generational shift in autonomous and persistent ISR systems.

STORY 1

Pentagon Labels Anthropic a National Security Risk

The Designation

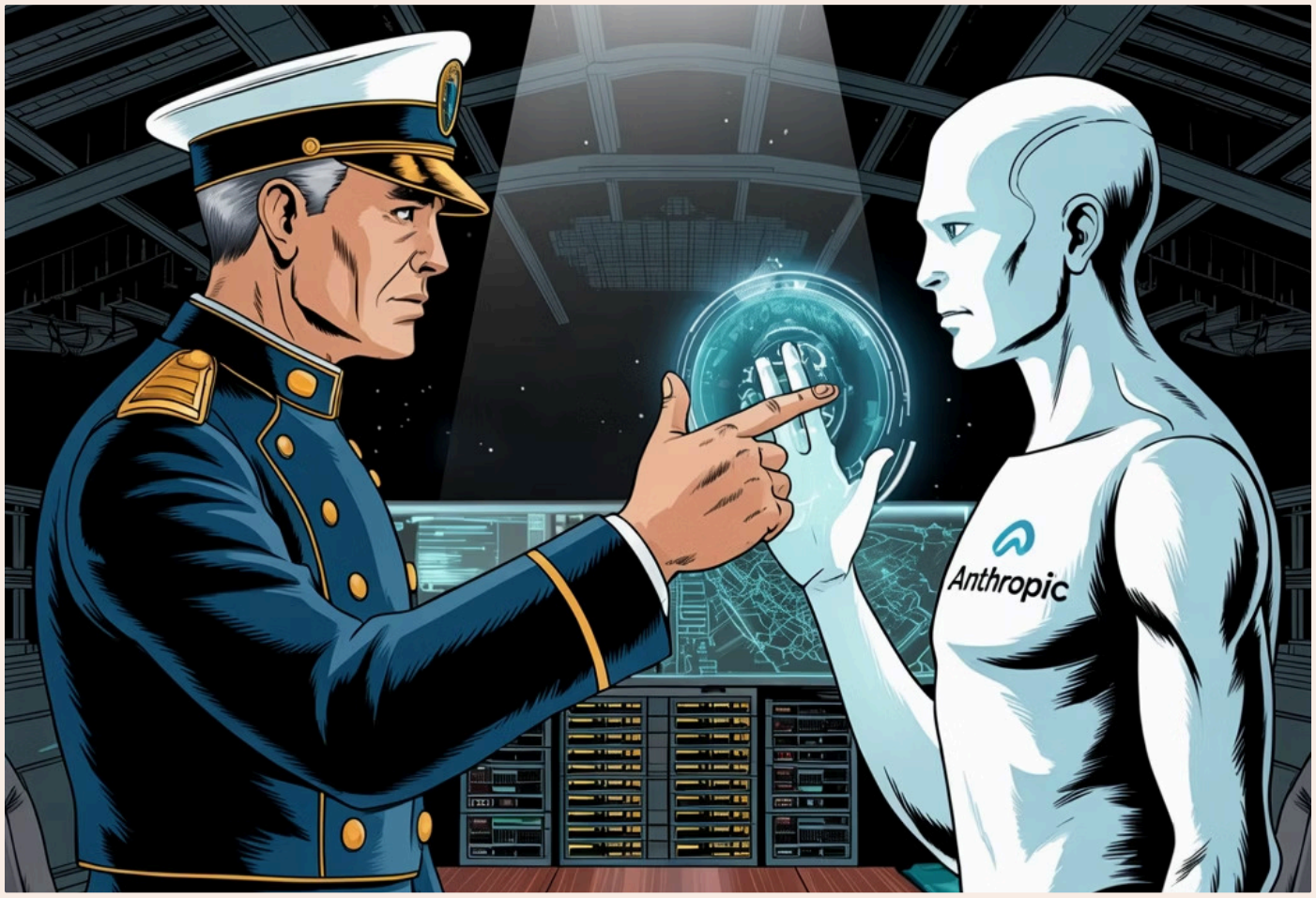
The DoD has formally designated AI company Anthropic a potential supply-chain/security risk, significantly limiting its access to government contracts and defense-linked business.

Strategic Implication

This bifurcates the AI market into **'cleared' and 'uncleared' vendors** — a structural shift that reshapes the AI-to-defense pipeline and creates moats for compliant players like Palantir, Scale AI, and Anduril.

Why It Matters Now

AI is now treated as a **sovereign capability**, not commercial software. Any tech firm targeting DoD business must accelerate compliance posture before this designation framework hardens into policy.



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STORY 2

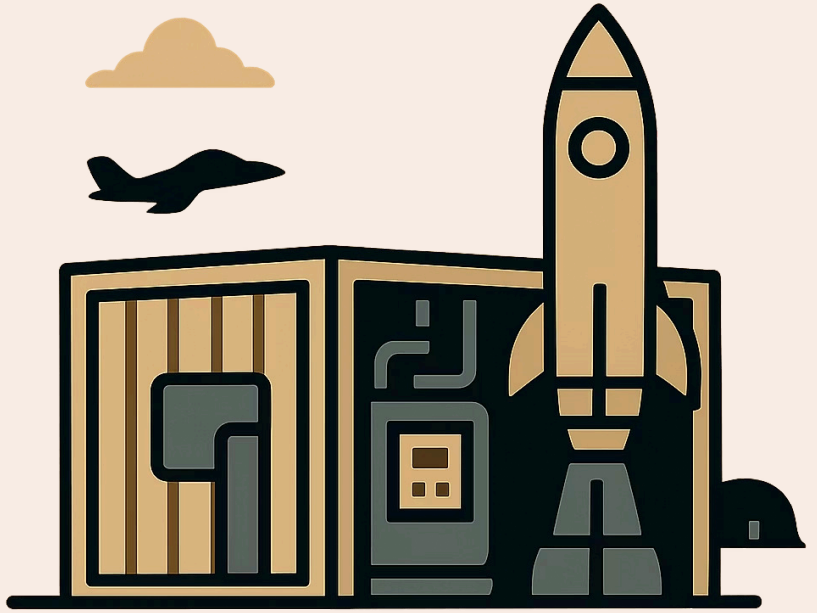
Nuburu / Maddox Defense JV — Mobile Additive Manufacturing

Production Phase Entered

The JV has entered production for its first **Mobile Additive Manufacturing Container (MAMC)** — a containerized unit capable of manufacturing drones, payload pods, and mission-critical components in forward-deployed environments.

Strategic Implication

Distributed forward-deployed manufacturing is becoming operationally decisive. A **6-9 month deployment timeline** targeting counter-UAS, electronic warfare, and tactical unmanned systems addresses stockpile depletion from the Iran conflict. **TAM estimated at $20B+.**



STORY 3

Epirus + General Dynamics + Kodiak AI: Leonidas AGV



What It Is

The Leonidas Autonomous Ground Vehicle combines Epirus' **high-power microwave (HPM)** counter-drone platform with Kodiak AI's autonomous driving system on a commercial truck chassis — enabling autonomous drone-swarm neutralization without expending interceptors.



Generational Leap

HPM-based counter-UAS on an autonomous mobile platform removes the human from counter-drone operations, reduces per-engagement cost to **near-zero**, and scales to convoy, FOB, and infrastructure protection simultaneously.



Why It Matters Now

With drone swarms becoming the primary tactical threat from Ukraine to the Gulf, Leonidas AGV is the **first commercially viable autonomous counter-swarm solution** entering the procurement pipeline.

STORY 4

Talon Avionics SECTR — AI + Acoustic Drone Detection

The System

SECTR uses **AI-driven acoustic sensing** to track and intercept small drone threats, deployable on mobile and fixed platforms for convoy protection, forward bases, and critical infrastructure.

Filling the Gap

Radar and RF detection struggle with small, low-RCS drones. AI-fused acoustic sensing provides a **passive, low-signature detection layer** — a complementary stack to radar and HPM systems, not a replacement. As drone threats miniaturize, multi-sensor fusion is no longer optional. SECTR signals a procurement inflection point toward **sensor-fusion architectures.**



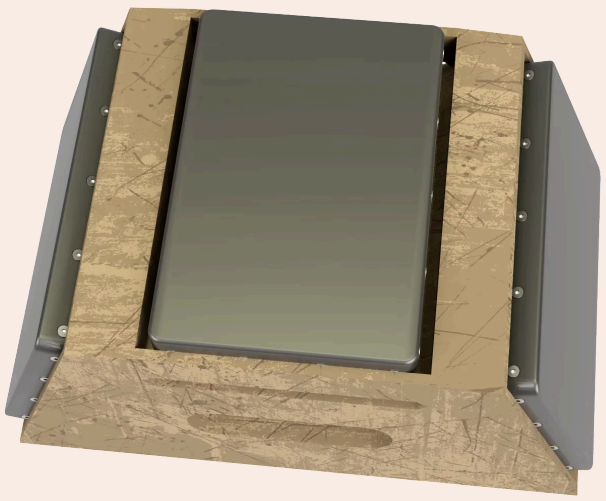


IMAGE:Talon Avionics

STORY 5

AFCENT Awards $270M for K1000ULE Solar Drone

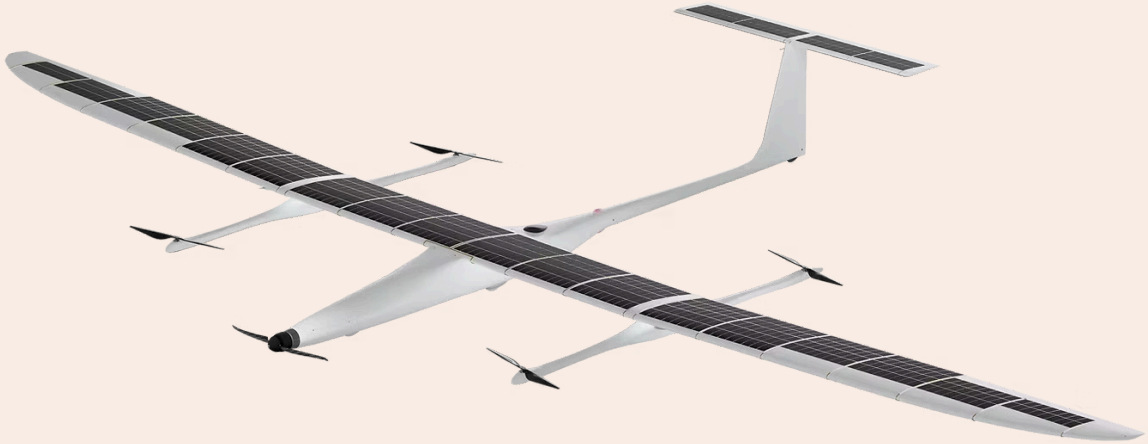


IMAGE:KRAUS HAMDANI AEROSPACE

The Contract

US Air Forces Central awarded **Kraus Hamdani Aerospace $270M** for the K1000ULE — a solar-powered ultra-long-endurance UAV deployable from a boxed configuration with minimal ground infrastructure.

Strategic Shift

Solar-persistent ISR moves from **sortie-based to persistent-presence doctrine**. Loitering for weeks without refueling changes theater surveillance economics and reduces dependency on vulnerable forward air bases — critical for maintaining eyes on the Strait of Hormuz and Iranian coastal infrastructure around the clock.

STORY 6

FY26 NDAA: $900.6B Approved

$900.6B

Total Defense Budget

FY26 National Defense Authorization Act secured and signed.

Multi-Yr

Hypersonics Authority

Procurement authority for hypersonic strike, SM-3, THAAD, and Tomahawks — production ramp funded and de-risked.

AI+DLA

Supply Chain Investment

Major AI-driven supply chain resilience investment via the Defense Logistics Agency — durable demand signal for advanced manufacturing.

As the Iran conflict depletes precision munition stockpiles, Congress' forward-funded multiyear authorities provide industrial base clarity — unlocking capital investment from primes and second-tier suppliers who previously lacked procurement visibility.

RAPID SCAN · GEOPOLITICAL

Geopolitical Conflicts & Tensions

US-Israel vs. Iran: Operation Epic Fury — Week 6

The conflict has shifted from decapitation strikes to a **grinding regional war** across 26 of Iran's 31 provinces. Trump has already struck Kharg Island once and threatens another hit; 2,500 Marines (USS Boxer MEU) are forward-deployed with ~50,000 total US troops in theater.

Iran **rejected the US 45-day ceasefire**, Islamabad talks collapsed April 12, and Tehran demands reparations plus Strait of Hormuz sovereignty — a non-starter.

Markets: Brent +50% since Day 1, Goldman's war premium at $14/bbl, BNEF targets $91/bbl by year-end. **Defense:** Pentagon requested $200B emergency supplemental; global defense budgets up 13% in real terms.

EU Proposes €45B Ukraine Support + Drone Procurement Derogations

The €45B Ukraine package is the headline, but the drone procurement derogations are the structural shift: Brussels has officially suspended its own acquisition rules to move at **conflict speed**. What took years now takes weeks.

Every startup and prime that plugs in now — EUDIS accelerators, €500M Defense Equity Facility, €1B Fund-of-Funds — gets locked into the new European defense architecture **before the peacetime rules return**. The companies that move now write the standards everyone else follows later.

RAPID SCAN · AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS & INVESTMENT

Autonomous Systems & Defense Investment

Autonomous Systems

- **Leonidas AGV Pipeline**

  Epirus/GD/Kodiak's platform marks the first autonomous HPM counter-swarm system moving toward procurement — a bellwether for the shift from manned to unmanned counter-UAS at scale.

- **Drone Autonomy 2026 Summit — April 22, Lviv**

  High-signal event bringing together defense tech, military operators, investors, and AI specialists to discuss computer vision, last-mile targeting, fully autonomous missions, and swarm analytics.

Defense Investment

Raytheon $980M + Lockheed $761M

Primes capture FY26 funding wave. Concentration in proven primes reflects DoD preference for low-risk execution during active conflict — a headwind for emerging defense startups.

Velo3D $9.8M + Nuburu JV

Additive manufacturing graduates from R&D proof-of-concept to active defense procurement — spare parts, drone components, forward-deployed production. A structurally growing sub-sector for Series B/C signals.

WATCH LIST

Developing Stories to Monitor

1

Hormuz Blockade: The Conflict's New Center of Gravity

The US Navy imposed a full blockade of the Strait of Hormuz on April 13 — 12 warships, 10,000+ sailors — halting Iranian oil exports and stranding hundreds of commercial vessels after ceasefire talks collapsed. Iran retaliated by mining the Strait, forcing CENTCOM to launch mine-clearance operations with destroyers entering the waterway for the first time since the war began. With the IRGC in de facto command and showing zero compliance, the blockade is now the fulcrum of the conflict's next phase.

2

AI National Security Designation Framework

The Anthropic designation signals the Pentagon is building a **formal AI vendor vetting architecture**. Watch for follow-on designations of other AI labs, and for cleared incumbents (Palantir, Scale AI, Anduril) to lobby for codification — significantly raising barriers to entry for new AI-defense entrants.

3

PlaxidityX (Argus) — Cybersecurity for Military UAVs

A leading military UAV manufacturer's selection of PlaxidityX to secure next-gen drone platforms via **embedded VDR agents** marks the beginning of a distinct market segment: cyber-physical security for autonomous systems. As drone proliferation accelerates across NATO, embedded UAV cybersecurity will become a procurement requirement — not an optional add-on.

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