Southcom Establishes Autonomous Warfare Command



U.S. Southern Command has set up the Southcom Autonomous Warfare Command, which will employ autonomous, semi-autonomous uncrewed platforms and systems. *Photo credit: U.S. Department of Defense*

Marine Corps Gen. Francis L. Donovan, commander of U.S. Southern Command, directed the establishment of the Southcom Autonomous Warfare Command.

The new command will support President Donald J. Trump's National Security Strategy priorities, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth's National Defense Strategy lines of effort, Southcom imperatives, regional security cooperation and operational dominance.

"From the seafloor to space and across the cyber domain, we fully intend to leverage the clear superiority of the American defense ecosystem by deploying cutting-edge innovation and working ever closer with our enduring partners in the region to outmatch those who threaten our collective peace and

security," Donovan said.

Once fully established, the new command will employ autonomous, semiautonomous and unmanned platforms and systems to counter threats and challenges across domains, linking tactical missions to long-term strategic effects. It will also collaborate closely with allies and partners in the region to advance shared goals, such as disrupting and degrading narco-terrorist and cartel networks and responding to life-threatening crises caused by large-scale natural disasters.

During the lead-up to establishing the autonomous warfare command, Southcom will work with the military services and the War Department's Defense Autonomous Warfare Group to identify the required expertise and capabilities for the new command to reach full operational capacity and integrate into Southcom's mission.

"Our geographic area of responsibility has a wide range of conditions, varied terrain and diverse operational environments that make it an ideal setting in which to innovate. It is also a region with very capable and committed security partners who lean forward, embrace technologies and are very eager to work collaboratively with us to support regional stability in new and effective ways," Donovan said.

Earlier this year, the Southcom commander signaled his interest in leveraging emerging technologies in his written posture statement to Congress, telling lawmakers he intended "to capitalize on next-generation capabilities like unmanned platforms, integration and commercial tools to better enable us and our partners to counter … threats together."

Outlining his imperatives while speaking to Senate Armed Services Committee members on Capitol Hill last month, Donovan said he aimed to develop and field cost-effective and modernized forces tailored for the Southcom mission, including autonomous systems and human-machine teaming "to greatly

increase lethality, all-domain awareness and data-sharing for U.S. and partner forces.”