



Drone Dominance

Request For Solutions (RFS) Question & Answer | Date: October 7, 2026

Drone Dominance Phase III Q&A Batch #1, Posted 07 October 2026

CQB

1. Question: Is the ≤ 5 inches airframe preference for Mission B (CQB) a strict propeller size requirement, or will larger platforms be considered if they meet the same portability and deployment goals?

Answer: The ≤ 5 inches airframe is a preference, not a requirement. It reflects warfighter feedback on what works best when operating in confined, urban environments. Vendors may propose larger platforms, but the preference itself remains part of how Mission B solutions are assessed.

2. Question: What is the operational purpose of the removable propeller guard preference for Mission B (CQB)? Is the objective to mitigate incidental propeller contact with friendly personnel, improve aircraft survivability following contact with walls and obstacles in confined environments, or both? Will guards be scored on whether they're present or on how they affect performance?

Answer: The propeller guard preference is to help the aircraft survive contact with walls and obstacles in confined spaces. Evaluation is based on how the aircraft performs in the confined environment, not the presence of propeller guards. Vendors should choose whichever configuration best supports CQB mission performance.

Fiber

3. Question: For fiber optic configurations, can the payload weight be reduced to offset the weight of the fiber spool, or must it match the RF configuration?

Answer: Payload weight is set by lethal efficacy, not by platform configuration. Drone vendors should work with their lethality vendors to determine the payload weight needed to achieve the intended effect against each mission's target set.

The fiber spool requirements are intended to allow a drone vendor to complete the test lanes at Gauntlet III.

4. Question: For Gauntlet III, which fiber spool requirements applies: the minimum lengths in Section 6.2.1, or spools sized to the actual test lane distances?

Answer: The minimum spool size in Section 6.2.1 applies. Those lengths come from the mission requirements, not from the Gauntlet III test design. The test lanes are still being designed, so vendors should not plan on shorter spool sized to lane distances.



Interoperability

5. Question: Table 3-4 requires compliance with MAVLink-M for command, control, and payload data communication between the ground control station, airframe, and integrated payloads. Does the Government intend to specify a physical interface or transport layer for these communications, or is that left to the vendor's discretion?

Answer: The MAVLink-M preference is focused on the message protocol (e.g., message definitions including SAD state and target handover data). It does not prescribe a single physical transport. Compliance is measured by whether the correct MAVLink-M messages are exchanged between system components, regardless of the transport carrying them.

6. Question: For the desired ATAK interoperability requirement, will the Government provide or specify the tactical communications architecture used during Gauntlet III?

Answer: The Government will not provide a tactical communication architecture for Gauntlet III. The preference for ATAK interoperability is also transport agnostic.

7. Question: Beyond baseline ATAK compatibility and the exchange of position/target data, will additional integration capabilities receive evaluation credit under the Advanced Features & Interoperability category?

Answer: The Government does not intend to publish its scoring criteria under the Advanced Features & Interoperability category.

Lethality

8. Question: Will the Government ICDs for SHANK and LoCo be export-controlled? If so, may the offeror share them with an allied-nation OEM's engineers under an appropriate export authorization?

Answer: Yes, with proper coordination between the POCs in the RFS, Section 5, Page 5.

9. Question: Are we to assume the same weight thresholds for Mission A (2kg minimum) and Mission B (.5kg minimum) as were applied in Ph2?

Answer: No. Please see RFS Section 4.1. The payload for each system should be appropriately designed and sized to achieve the intended lethal effect against the representative target set for its mission. The weight thresholds from Ph2 do not apply.

10. Question: Would the program be willing to accept a conical shape charge armor-piercing munition in the lightweight category or is EFP mandatory?

Answer: Yes, if the warhead meets the target efficacy requirement in Table 4-1.

11. Question: Are vendors required to utilize both the sUPI and APEX interface?

Answer: All Drone Vendors will ultimately integrate with both sUPI and Apex since APEX is the interface for the NSWG-Crane Government payload solution and sUPI for the PMCCS Government payload solution.

Lethality providers can choose a single interface standard. sUPI or APEX are preferred but are not required.



12. Question: What is the pathway for a new lethality provider to enter the program?

Answer: We are not considering new lethality providers at this time.

13. Question: When is the Government payload solution (SHANK/sUPI, LoCO/APEX, MK118) required? Should it be shown at Pitch & Fly, during the 400 drone production sprint, or only at Gauntlet III?

Answer: The Government payload solutions are not required for the Pitch & Fly event. If a drone vendor is selected to move onto the next stage, drone vendors will be provided with Government solutions to use at Gauntlet III.

14. Question: Does a platform-side adapter (for example, Picatinny to sUPI) satisfy the requirement, or must the airframe carry a native sUPI platform-side interface?

Answer: It must have a native sUPI platform interface to satisfy the preference for sUPI.

15. Question: Do the government payloads count toward the "at least two commercial lethality providers" requirement, or are they in addition?

Answer: Government lethality payloads are in addition to the two required commercial lethality providers.

16. Question: Is there a required format or minimum set of ESAD states to show on the operator video and on externally shared feeds?

Answer: The video should show a drone with an integrated trainer payload (from an approved lethality provider). The video should show armed and safe cycle.

17. Question: Will the Government provide sUPI/APEX interface hardware or specifications, and when?

Answer: The Government will not supply sUPI/APEX hardware but does provide information for ICDs in the RFS.

18. Question: The RFS states the SADs, training payloads and lethality payloads will be directly purchased through the CM or directly from the lethality provider but later states no allowance for shipping costs will be provided – is the drone provider responsible for the costs associated with the SADs, training payloads and warheads?

Answer: Drone vendors are responsible for the shipment of drones, durable system components, and other accessories. Lethality providers are responsible for shipment of warheads.

19. Question: What payload weight should drone vendors design their air vehicles to carry for each mission?

Answer: The RFS does not set a minimum warhead or SAD weight. Under Section 4.1, the payload should be designed and sized to achieve the intended lethal effect against each mission's representative target set. Drone vendors should work with their lethality partners to size the payload for each target set, then design their platform's lift, range, and endurance around it.



20. Question: Would DDP be able to share the total system weights of the Government-provided lethality solutions that vendors are asked to integrate?

NSWC Crane LoCo (SAD and warhead)
PM CCS SHANK
Repurposed MK118 warhead (Mission A)

Answer: Yes. Please reach out to the POCs in Section 5, Page 5.

21. Question: What are the requirements for a "pitch and fly" training munition, and is procurement from a single vendor sufficient to meet these needs?

Answer: At the Pitch & Fly event, a vendor must demonstrate integration with one training payload from an approved lethality vendor.

Misc

22. Question: Section 7.2 references the "Vendor's Guide to Data Requirements for Software Safety" and the "Weaponized UAS Software Safety Program." Neither is posted on the NSTXL page. Please post both.

Answer: These are available on the opportunity page

23. Question: What is the best pathway for component manufacturers to engage with the Drone Dominance Program?

Answer: The best way for component manufacturers to engage with the DDP is by engaging directly with drone companies.

24. Question: The RFS specifies the application must just be for a "single drone platform." In addition to the OWA drones, is it acceptable to utilize an ISR drone as part of the DSC, or would that be classified as more than 1 drone platform?

Answer: Source selection decisions are based on the proposed OWA drone. Companies may choose to use an ISR or comms relay drone as part of their durable systems components.

25. Question: Would it be possible to have an extension on some of the payload submission requirements, similar to the arrangement for Gauntlet 2 submissions?

Answer: The program cannot grant any extensions at this time.

26. Question: Does the Drone Dominance effort include counter-UAS test and evaluation (T&E), or is the scope limited to the UAS platforms themselves?

Answer: DDP focuses on UAS platforms, not counter UAS.



Production Capabilities

27. Question: Can a US offeror meet the production evidence requirement (work orders and facility photos) using production records from its allied-nation airframe OEM, if final assembly will be performed in the US?

Answer: Yes, a US offeror may meet production evidence requirements using production records from allied nations. Production capabilities must focus on providing evidence that the company can scale and manufacture in the US.

28. Question: Does final integration, firmware flashing, and test/acceptance at a U.S. facility satisfy the Phase 3's "Final Assembly" minimum if major components are made in a non-covered allied country?

Answer: Yes, it does.

29. Question: Can vendors count planned or projected production capacity towards the Stage 1 production scale requirement, or only capacity they've already demonstrated?

Answer: Vendors may describe both current and projected capacity, providing evidence like production history, existing facilities, manufacturing partners, committed capital, planned lines, and supplier agreements. The pitch deck should clearly separate capacity that's demonstrated today from capacity that's projected. For the projected portion, state the assumptions and timeline for reaching the required rate.

30. Question: Does the Government place an evaluation preference on vertically integrated manufacturing, or will partnership-based models (contract manufacturers, component suppliers, distributed production networks) be evaluated equally?

Answer: Neither model is preferred. Both are evaluated equally based on demonstrated and projected production outcomes: scale, quality, cost, delivery, supply chain accountability. Each model still needs to show that it can deliver. For example, vertically integrated vendors should show how they will scale beyond their in-house capacity and how their proprietary components will be interoperable. Partnership-based vendors should show effective production oversight, quality assurance, and accountability across their partner network.

Supply Chain

31. Question: RFS Section 7.2 requires submission of the DCMA BOM Template (Att. C, V6), with instructions that call for PCB part item and sub-component part rows for all logic-bearing assemblies. For COTS assemblies already listed on the DCMA Blue List, may the Stage 1 BOM reference the Blue List listing in place of those rows for that assembly?

Answer: For the initial BOM submittal, it is fine to identify the COTS assemblies as a whole without the subcomponents. In section 5.5 of the RFS it calls out an additional BOM submittal into the Blue List Website. At this time, you will be able to identify the Component Manufacturer and an email for them to go in and fill in the information into the system for the component. This will be a requirement for them to upload their BOM data at that time NLT Jan 8, 2027 as described in the RFS.



32. Question: For each part in the BOM, you are asking for: Country of Domicile (HQ Location), Country of Manufacture (Where Produced/Wafer Fabrication), and Country of Manufacturer (ATP Locations). Can you provide clarification on what "Country of Manufacturer (ATP Locations)" is asking for?

Answer: The Country of Manufacturer (ATP Locations) is for information as to where Microelectronics undergo Assembly, Test, and Packaging. This is to aid in the assessment against Component Area 2 "Active Components" in the Supply Chain Framework.