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Pakistan's Drone Portfolio Takes a New Turn

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Pakistan's decision to acquire unmanned aerial systems from a US company marks an interesting new phase in the country's rapidly expanding drone program. For years, Pakistan's military drone inventory has been built around a combination of indigenous development and acquisitions from China and Türkiye, with smaller but significant contributions from the United States, Germany and Italy.

The latest development suggests that Islamabad is now looking beyond its traditional sources. On September 16, US-based Powerus signed a memorandum of understanding with the Pakistan Army that includes an initial, undisclosed order for unmanned aerial systems. The value, numbers and precise types of systems have not been revealed. The Pakistan military confirmed that a Powerus delegation met Chief of Defense Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at General Headquarters and discussed defense procurement, production and long-term capacity building, although its statement did not publicly mention the MoU.

The development is noteworthy because Powerus is not simply a conventional drone manufacturer. Its current portfolio includes small tactical systems, FPV platforms, autonomous systems, heavy-lift drones, and counter-UAS interceptors. Its Matrix family includes tactical platforms, including

fibre-optic variants designed to operate in electronically contested environments, while its Guardian system is designed to intercept hostile drones.

Powerus has also indicated that it sees Pakistan as a potential partner for joint technology development and possibly local production. The company has described its objective as combining US technology with Pakistani capabilities.

A Portfolio Rather Than a Single Source

Pakistan's interest in drones is hardly new. The experience of modern warfare has demonstrated that unmanned systems have become indispensable for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, artillery spotting, precision strike, maritime surveillance and, increasingly, electronic warfare and counter-drone operations.

Pakistan began developing UAV capabilities domestically decades ago. The Satuma Jasoos series, Uqab and later Shahpar represented successive stages of indigenous development. The Pakistan Air Force has also operated the Italian Falco, while Pakistan's armed forces have acquired systems from Germany and the United States.

China, however, has been particularly important. Pakistan obtained the Chinese CH-3A and subsequently developed the Burraq UCAV with Chinese assistance. Chinese CH-4

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and Wing Loong systems have also entered Pakistani service. Türkiye subsequently became an increasingly important source, with Pakistan acquiring Bayraktar TB2 and Akıncı systems and pursuing cooperation on the AnkaUCAV.

The result is an *unusually diverse* drone inventory.

What Does Pakistan Have?

Open-source information does not provide a complete or authoritative order of battle, and numbers

should therefore be treated as approximate. Nevertheless, the publicly reported inventory gives an indication of the breadth of Pakistan’s unmanned capabilities.

Pakistan Air Force: The PAF operates a mixture of indigenous, Chinese, Turkish and Italian systems. Indigenous systems include the Satuma Jasoos II, Uqab and Shahpar family, while the Burraq represents Pakistan’s indigenous armed-drone capability developed with Chinese assistance. Chinese-origin systems include the CH-4 and Wing Loong family. Turkish systems include the Bayraktar TB2 and the much larger and more capable Akıncı. The Italian Leonardo/Selex Falco provides another surveillance capability. Recent imagery and defense reporting have confirmed TB2, Akıncı, Shahpar-II and Wing Loong systems among platforms associated with the PAF.

Pakistan Army: The Army has historically relied heavily on tactical UAVs for battlefield reconnaissance and target acquisition. The Uqab family, developed in Pakistan, has been associated with Army operations, while the Army has also operated Chinese-origin systems. German Luna systems have figured in Pakistan’s UAV development, and open-source assessments have also identified Turkish systems in the wider military inventory. The exact current Army inventory is difficult to establish publicly because Pakistan does not disclose detailed numbers or deployment patterns.

The new Powerus agreement is particularly relevant here because the reported MoU and initial order involve the Army rather than

simply representing another PAF acquisition.

Pakistan Navy: The Navy has developed a significant maritime UAV capability. Its inventory includes the American Boeing Insitu ScanEagle, German Rheinmetall/EMT Luna NG, and indigenous Uqab systems. More recently, the Navy has also operated Chinese CASC CH-4 systems. Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf has publicly described the Navy’s use of CH-4, ScanEagle and Luna NG, primarily for surveillance and maritime-domain awareness.

The ScanEagle is particularly suited to maritime surveillance. The Navy has previously stated that its introduction enhanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance along the coastline and in the creeks.

Thus, Pakistan’s drone family now has several distinct origins:

Origin	Examples in Pakistani service or development
Pakistan	Jasoos, Uqab, Shahpar/Shahpar-II, Burraq and other indigenous tactical UAVs
China	CH-3/Burraq lineage, CH-4, Wing Loong I/II
Türkiye	Bayraktar TB2, Akıncı; cooperation on Anka
United States	ScanEagle; now Powerus systems
Germany	Luna/Luna NG
Italy	Falco

This diversity is *strategically* important.

Why Diversify?

There is a practical reason for avoiding excessive dependence on a single supplier. Drones are no longer isolated weapons; they are part of a larger technological ecosystem involving sensors, satellite communications, data links, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, navigation systems, ground-control stations and software.

Dependence on one source for the entire

ecosystem can create vulnerabilities in wartime. Export controls, political disagreements, sanctions, supply-chain disruptions or restrictions on software and spare parts can affect operational availability.

Pakistan has already benefited from having multiple suppliers. Chinese systems have provided scale and relatively deep defense-industrial cooperation. Türkiye has emerged as a major partner in advanced combat UAVs. Indigenous production gives Pakistan greater control over maintenance and modification. Western systems provide access to another technological ecosystem.

The Powerus agreement potentially adds another layer.

Powerus says its systems are built around a common autonomous architecture and include low-cost attritable drones, heavy-lift systems, counter-UAS interceptors and fibre-optic platforms intended for environments where radio-frequency communications may be disrupted.

This could be particularly relevant after recent conflicts demonstrated the vulnerability of conventional drones to electronic warfare. Fiber-optic-controlled drones, autonomous navigation and swarm technologies are increasingly being developed to overcome jamming and make drone operations more resilient.

From Buying Drones to Building an Ecosystem

Perhaps the most interesting element of the Powerus agreement is not the initial order. It is the possibility of cooperation in production and technology.

Reuters reported that Powerus was exploring the possibility of building technology in Pakistan and developing a joint US-Pakistan technology relationship.

That would fit Pakistan's longer-term approach to defense production. The country has repeatedly sought technology transfer and local manufacturing rather than remaining merely an end-user of foreign weapons.

A New Chapter in Pakistan-US Defense Relations?

The timing is also significant. Pakistan-US defense relations have experienced considerable fluctuations over the past two decades. The drone relationship itself has a complicated history: American drones were used extensively in the region during the war on terror, while Pakistan had unsuccessfully sought access to armed American UAV technology and subsequently turned increasingly towards China for armed systems.

The emergence of Powerus represents a different model. Rather than a government-to-government acquisition of a major conventional weapons system, it involves a relatively new American defense technology company whose portfolio is centered on autonomous systems.

The company is also preparing to merge with Aureus Greenway Holdings, an American publicly traded company in which an investment fund associated with Donald Trump Jr and Eric Trump holds a stake. Both Powerus and the investors have said that the Trump family members are passive investors and have no role in the company's operations or contract negotiations.

That aspect will inevitably attract attention, but the military significance of the agreement lies elsewhere: Pakistan is widening its technological options.

The Drone War Is Changing

The modern battlefield is moving away from the notion that a drone is simply an unmanned aircraft carrying a camera or missile. Drones are becoming networked sensors, precision weapons, communications nodes, decoys, logistics platforms and counter-drone systems.

Pakistan appears to understand this transformation.

Its present inventory already demonstrates a deliberate mixture of indigenous systems and foreign technology. The addition of an American supplier does not represent

a rejection of China or Türkiye. Rather, it suggests that Pakistan is building a diversified drone portfolio in which different systems can perform different functions.

The challenge will be integration. Having Chinese, Turkish, American, German, Italian and indigenous systems is useful only if they can communicate, share information and operate within a coherent command-and-control architecture.

The next stage of Pakistan's drone program may therefore be less about *which country supplies the drone* and more about *who controls the technology, software, data and production capability behind it*.

If the Powerus agreement eventually develops into local production and technology cooperation, it could mark an important transition—from Pakistan being primarily a purchaser and developer of individual UAV platforms to becoming an increasingly integrated producer and operator of a diverse unmanned ecosystem.

For a country facing increasingly drone-centric warfare on its borders and in its wider region, that diversification could prove as important as the acquisition of any single aircraft.

maritime chokepoint. And that may prove to be their greatest weapon of all.

