



2026 EUROPE TRI-SERVICES REGIONAL SUMMIT

MARCH 3-5 • 2026 • FRANKFURT, GERMANY

Hosted by SAME



#23 - Dispersed Airfield Criteria: It Started Here, What's Needed Next?

Summary

Dispersed airfield operations to protect and project air power evolved during the Cold War. We still rely on aging airfields under new and increasing threats. Criteria for airfields to project and sustain operations for manned and unmanned aircraft operations requires update to protect and employ our deterrent air forces.

Full Description

European, dispersed air base operations to protect and project air power evolved during the Cold War. Thousands of WWII airfields were unsuitable for jet aircraft and abandoned, while hundreds were upgraded to provide deterrence and retaliatory response. The end of the Cold War closed many more air bases and reduced sustainment until the 2014 European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) renewed attention and investment. United States investment has pivoted to the Pacific. US reductions have been somewhat offset by European increases, but funding is increasingly directed to more costly weapons.

Today, we still rely on deteriorating Cold War airfield infrastructure. Ukraine's Operation Spiderweb drone attack on Russian air bases in June 2025 was a wakeup call to the vulnerability of legacy bases. Masses of cheap drones can be launched literally by hand disabling our deterrent air forces often parked and unshielded.

Small drones are a threat, but deterrent force will rely on high performance unmanned weapons systems that will still require airfields. Military planners and engineers need to ask: How do unmanned aircraft requirements and threats impact main operating bases and dispersed airfields? How will we best protect and employ our manned and unmanned aircraft?

Airfields with footprints from tens to thousands of acres (hectares) of land will be required. Equipment, weapons, supplies, and personnel must be housed, protected, and transported at airfields under constant threat of precision weapons. Criteria for forward airfields to project and sustain military operations for higher performance manned and unmanned

aircraft requires update.

This presentation will present the background for the framework of today's European airfield infrastructure; describe the airfield operational requirements for manned and unmanned aircraft of various types; and provide guidance for the update and development of criteria to establish the footprint and infrastructure to support air forces of the future.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the current status of Europe dispersed air base infrastructure and operations
- Know the runway requirements for current and future manned and unmanned aircraft
- Provide steps to prepare expeditionary airfield plans
- Understand the requirements to protect and sustain an expeditionary airfield

Speakers

Matt Kundrot is a civil engineer and pilot and serves HDR's Military Aviation Market Leader with worldwide responsibilities for business development, project direction, quality control, oversight, and assigning subject matter expertise. Matt has over 40 years of worldwide airfield operational, planning, and engineering experience with 30 years of military and commercial pilot experience. He retired from the Air Force in 2006 after 21 years of active and reserve service. He is based in Richmond, Virginia with his wife of 40 years Kelly. They have two grown children and will be grandparents for a second time in 2026.