



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

### ***Safeguarding the Homeland from Unmanned Aerial Systems***

**December 10, 2024**

In June, Democrats and Republicans in the House came together to introduce legislation to extend and expand the federal government's counter-drone authorities, which were first authorized in 2018.

H.R. 8610, *the Counter-UAS Authority Security, Safety, and Reauthorization Act of 2024*, as amended, would extend these critical national security authorities for until October 2029 and, importantly, increase privacy and civil liberty protections.

I was proud to have worked with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on the legislation and pleased to see it advanced through the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Although it looks like the bill won't get across the finish line this year, I hope that the relevant committees will prioritize moving it early next congress.

Due to the increasingly common usage of drones, it is critical that federal agencies can protect certain facilities and assets from nefarious unmanned aircraft systems.

Just last month, in Tennessee, a white supremacist extremist planned to attack a power grid with an explosive drone.

If the attack had been successful, it could have left thousands of Americans without power and disrupted critical services, including financial, transportation, and emergency services.

And this is just one example of malicious uses of drones.

At the same time, ensuring that federal agencies' counterdrone activities uphold Americans' constitutional rights to privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties is just as important.

Backyard hobbyists use drones for recreational purposes, journalists use them to capture images of major news stories, and in my home state of Mississippi, we have found drones useful for surveying the damage wrought by disasters, including the 2023 tornadoes in my district.

So, we must ensure that those uses and liberties are not infringed upon.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about the threats posed by drones and strategies to protect U.S. critical infrastructure and the public.

# # #

Committee Media Contact: 202-225-9978