



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

### ***Surveillance, Sabotage, and Strikes: Industry Perspectives on How Drone Warfare Abroad Is Transforming Threats at Home***

**July 15, 2025**

I want to begin by offering my condolences to those impacted by the tragic floods in Texas. The loss of life is devastating, and my thoughts are with the victims, survivors, and their families and loved ones. Sadly, the damage wrought by the floods was exacerbated by the Trump Administration's mismanaged response. I have called on Chairman Green to immediately convene a hearing to examine the Administration's actions to undermine FEMA and our preparedness for the remainder of hurricane season. I hope he will answer that call soon.

In the meantime, today we are here to discuss a different threat to the homeland: the threat posed by unmanned aerial systems or drones. In 2018, Congress enacted the Preventing Emerging Threats Act of 2018, which provided the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice with targeted authorities to detect, track, and mitigate unauthorized drones that pose a threat to certain facilities, assets, and events. These authorities have allowed the Federal government to begin to develop the testing, policies, and processes to procure and deploy effective counter-UAS systems and technologies.

DHS and DOJ have had some significant successes in protecting high-profile National Special Security Events from unauthorized drone incursions. However, the use of drones has continued to proliferate rapidly, both domestically and abroad. Drones are used for a wide variety of purposes across many sectors, including in emergency response, agriculture, law enforcement, photography, and package delivery. Drones have also been used in warfare by the United States and our allies and adversaries alike, providing militaries and intelligence agencies with a novel tool for intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, interference, and kinetic attacks. Though the vast majority of drone use within the U.S. is harmless and law-abiding, the use of drones in warfare abroad makes clear the potential threats drones may pose to the homeland.

The potential for bad actors to use drones to carry out attacks on mass gatherings, critical infrastructure, and other targets necessitates the extension and expansion of authorities for the Federal government and law enforcement partners to detect, track, intercept, and seize unauthorized drones flying in restricted airspace. The government must have the ability to respond to developing threats and prevent attacks. At the same time, authorities must be expanded in a manner that protects individuals' privacy and due process rights, as well as the safety of the national airspace. Already, we have seen the potentially damaging effects counterdrone technologies can have when operated without appropriate coordination.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Secret Service allegedly operated a C-UAS system without clearance from the Federal Aviation Administration, resulting in inappropriate automated alerts to several pilots flying aircraft near Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, which could have undermined flight safety. Over the past several years, I have worked in a bipartisan manner with colleagues across the committees with shared jurisdiction to develop legislation to extend and expand counterdrone

authorities in a significant yet thoughtful manner. Last Congress, Chairman Green introduced H.R. 8610, the Counter-UAS Authority, Security, Safety, and Reauthorization Act, which I supported as a cosponsor.

The bill would have extended and expanded C-UAS authorities in several key ways, including by establishing a DHS pilot program for State and local law enforcement agencies to receive counterdrone mitigation authorities. The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reported the bill with bipartisan support last September, but House Republican leadership never called the bill up for floor consideration. I have continued to work with my colleagues to refine the legislation and expect we will reintroduce a version of it soon. I hope the Republican Majority will act swiftly to advance the bill to the floor, through the House, and ultimately into law.

The threats posed by drones are too critical for Congress to wait, especially given the need to protect upcoming events including the World Cup and the Olympics. Thank you again to our witnesses for joining us today to discuss these critical challenges.

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