



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Hearing Statement of Transportation & Maritime Security Subcommittee Ranking Member LaMonica McIver (D-NJ)**

### ***Surveillance, Sabotage, and Strikes: Industry Perspectives on How Drone Warfare Abroad Is Transforming Threats at Home*** **July 15, 2025**

Before turning to the topic of today's hearing, I want to offer my condolences to the families, friends, and loved ones of the children and other victims lost in the devastating floods in Texas last week. My thoughts and prayers are with all those impacted.

As the affected communities begin to recover from this tragedy, I hope our Committee will soon have the opportunity to examine what went wrong and ensure our government can better respond to future disasters.

I also want to thank the brave first responders who helped prevent further loss of life, including Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Scott Ruskan and the other Coast Guard members onboard helicopter 6553, who helped save many lives from the flood waters.

The emergency response in Texas is actually relevant to today's hearing, as one helicopter involved in rescue and recovery operations had to be grounded after a collision with a private drone flying in restricted airspace. The incident goes to show the threats drones can pose even when operators have no ill intent—and the need for more robust government capabilities to address such threats.

In recent years, drone usage has become commonplace across a wide range of applications, from emergency response to farming to photography and news coverage. Drone operations provide benefits to businesses and hobbyists alike. As drone activity increases, we must ensure the government has the authorities and resources necessary to take action against drone operators who do not follow the rules—including both “careless and clueless” operators, as well as those who may seek to use drones to carry out attacks.

Recent drone attacks by Russia, Ukraine, and Israel have displayed how drones can be used in warfare to deadly effect. Though such large-scale attacks have yet to occur within the United States, our critical infrastructure, mass gatherings, and government facilities are vulnerable to being targeted, especially by lone wolf actors.

With the World Cup coming to the U.S. next year—including to MetLife Stadium in my home state of New Jersey—as well as the Olympics coming in 2028, the need for Congress to extend and expand the government's counterdrone authorities has never been more pressing. In October 2018, Congress passed legislation providing the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice with limited authorities to detect, track, intercept, and seize drones.

However, just a few months later, incidents at Gatwick Airport in England and my home airport of Newark Liberty International Airport displayed the inadequacy of C-UAS capabilities, as errant drones shut down airport operations, disrupting travel for thousands of passengers.

Given this Subcommittee's jurisdiction over transportation security, I am hopeful that any expansion of authorities provides a path forward for protecting airports from drones. Last year, New Jersey was again the focus of media attention as the public reported spotting large numbers of drones and unknown aircraft flying over our State. Further investigation revealed that the aircraft were mostly authorized flights, but nevertheless, the incident revealed the government's lack of domain awareness and capabilities for protecting the national airspace.

Moving forward, Congress must act to extend and expand authorities in a manner that provides the capabilities needed to counter the threats we face. At the same time, we must ensure counterdrone systems are operated in a safe and responsible manner that does not impact the safety of commercial flights or violate individual privacy rights and civil liberties. I hope the Republican Majority will prioritize moving legislation to address counterdrone authorities soon.

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