



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)  
*Assessing the Department of Homeland Security's Efforts to Counter Unmanned  
Aircraft Systems***

**March 31, 2022**

In 2018, Congress granted the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice limited authority to counter the threat posed by unmanned aircraft systems. That authority is set to expire this October, leaving this Committee responsible for assessing how DHS has conducted its C-UAS mission and what changes may be needed before Congress reauthorizes or reforms that authority.

Drones are more affordable and accessible than ever. From families capturing vacation memories to journalists covering major national news events, millions of Americans operate drones responsibly and safely each year. But, when used nefariously, drones can pose a great threat to public safety and national security.

Malicious actors have used drones to smuggle illicit materials across borders and into prisons and have disrupted air travel and law enforcement activities. Some drone operators just fail to understand the rules and may disrupt major public events, transportation systems, or other sensitive locations simply by accident. Whether the operator is flying innocently or maliciously, the Department must be able to respond quickly, assess the threat, and ensure any actions to mitigate a drone uphold Americans' constitutional rights to privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

It is essential that we continue to protect the freedom of the press, including when journalists use drones to capture images of major news stories, whether it be destruction following a natural disaster or large protest gatherings. We must also ensure that drone operators, many of whom are merely backyard hobbyists, do not have their private property seized and destroyed by the government for minor, accidental infractions. With that in mind, I am particularly interested in hearing from our witnesses on how, specifically, a drone threat is mitigated and what steps are taken to preserve the rights of Americans against unnecessary search and seizure.

The upcoming sunset of the Department's C-UAS authority provides Congress with an opportunity to conduct a stringent assessment of the current authority, its strengths, and its shortcomings, before choosing whether and how to reauthorize counter-drone activities.

I look forward to learning more from our witnesses, each with their own perspective on how the Department has used its C-UAS authority, about how they have grappled with responding efficiently to threats while protecting privacy and civil liberties.

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