

Wittman: America Must Not Fall Behind in UAS and Counter-UAS Technologies

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Robert J. Wittman (R-VA), Chairman of the Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee, delivered the following opening remarks at a hearing on the state of [America's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle \(UAS\) and counter-UAS capabilities](#).

[Stream the hearing here.](#)

Read Rep. Wittman's remarks as prepared for delivery:

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Tactical Air and Land Forces Subcommittee hearing on Capability Gaps, Requirements, and Projected Capabilities for DOD's Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Counter-UAS systems.

I thank our witnesses for testifying today and look forward to our discussion.

As we have seen across the battlefield in Ukraine to the ongoing conflict in Israel, drones are redefining the character of warfare as we know it.

From small quadcopters conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, to larger unmanned systems delivering kinetic strikes, these systems are helping modern militaries project power and close kill chains at a lower cost than ever before.

The proliferation of this technology and the rapid pace of technological change provide great opportunities for our own military and industrial base. However, it also causes substantial challenges both at home and abroad.

The December 2023 drone incursion incidents at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in my home state of Virginia clearly exemplify the incredible homeland defense problem we face.

For 17 days, drones flew unencumbered over our sensitive military installations and the Pentagon was unable to respond at the speed and scale necessary to mitigate the threat.

Abroad, our servicemembers are at risk of attack every day from one-way attack drones, like the 2024 Tower 22 attack in Jordan that left 3 servicemembers dead and over 40 injured.

What is clear to me from these incidents is that the Joint Force does not have sufficient ability to find, fix, track, and ultimately engage these enemy drones at home and abroad, nor do we have the requisite interoperability between counter-UAS systems, and quite frankly, our own interagency.

Today's hearing will explore the many challenges we face as a nation in countering adversarial UAS systems.

We will also explore the Army, Marine Corps, and Defense Innovation Unit (DIU)'s own efforts to scale UAS across the Joint Force, enable servicemembers to have access to these critical platforms at all echelons, and ensure DOD doctrine and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) are aligned with these new technologies.

I also look forward to discussing the vitality of the U.S. drone industrial base and how we can better support domestic industry, drive down unit cost, scale manufacturing, and help U.S. companies remain competitive against China.

Just a few weeks ago, China sanctioned 11 U.S. drone manufacturers and announced export controls on the rare earth materials that underpin the United States' drone supply chain.

If we do not take firm action today to support our industrial base and supply chains, there is no doubt these actions by the PRC will undermine U.S. technology leadership in several sectors, including small UAS.