

## 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, Q&A with witnesses at a hearing on the state of America's Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAS) and counter-UAS capabilities.

Read Rep. Wittman's Q&A:

**Congressman Wittman:** *Thank you, Major General Stewart. I appreciate the testimony of our witnesses and we will now proceed to questions. Let me start by asking the entire panel this question. Where we see ourselves today is in the middle of a significant threat by unmanned aerial systems. Small and otherwise, most of what we've seen is small.*

*We've seen incursions at places like Joint Base Langley-Eustis at Picatinny Arsenal. Those things should concern us deeply. As I have gone and gotten the briefs on these threats, it's very clear to me that this is more than just a hobbyist that mistakenly flew a drone over a US military facility. This is purposeful.*

*It's meant to not just gain information, which much of it can be gained by other sources, but it's meant to probe. It's meant to determine what is the reaction in the United States? What capabilities do they have and how will they act? And then how can our adversaries counter that if they did show, choose to do something?*

*To me that's very problematic. Major General Stewart, I want to ask you if there was a major incursion tonight at United States military base. What would the response be? You talk about having kit, is there a kit at these bases? Is there a kit that's in a mobile unit that can go? What would we do?*

*How would we respond? How do we do things in a way too that not only eliminates the threat, but I think as importantly gives us the opportunity to gain intelligence on the source of that threat, the capability of that threat. It's one thing to completely kinetically destroy something, but it's another thing to be able to take it out, to take the threat away, but also to recover enough information to where we can take another step forward in our countermeasures. So how do we do that? And how do we take lessons learned at Langley? Especially where, in my mind there was a complete breakdown in decision making. I felt bad for the base commander there who said, I wanna be able to act.*

*This platform was there for over 45 days repeatedly. There were unfortunately responses we had to make in relation to that. As his base commander asked people above him, they said, oh, don't worry about it. You have the authorities. If you think it's an imminent threat, then you can use them.*

*And he said, that's not the question I'm asking. I'm asking if I use that authority, will you back me? Nobody above him would say that. They'd say, oh, you have the authorities. You can do it. So here you have an O-6 at a base that's 18 months away from retirement. And is trying to make sure he is doing the right thing, but is not quite confident that the folks above him have his back.*

*And then when we asked the folks from the Pentagon to come in and give us their assessment of that, we got a nice long assessment that was word salad. And then when I asked, what's the Pentagon's response gonna be? The Pentagon says, we're gonna impanel a work group. My head exploded.*

*I wanna know sans and paneling a work group, how are we going to address this? I understand the cross jurisdictional issues. I think the authorities are clear in what the United States Military has. I understand concerns by FAA, FCC, all of those different entities. But I would argue that the protection of our men and women in uniform and those facilities are job one, and that should be the priority.*

*So, Major General Stewart, I know I've given a lot of background there, but I wanna get your perspective on where would we be today? If the same thing happened today at Langley or Picatinny, what would our response be? And could we act immediately to counter that and to gather the necessary information to make sure we're learning about the nature of this threat?*

**Major General Stewart:** *Each service and each installation will have different circumstances based mostly on the threat. And what we're finding with the threat is there are multiple ways to navigate, whether that's using radio frequency uplink, downlink, using waypoints through satellites or loading optics into use the terrain to fly.*

*We're now even seeing tethered. Back to the point that there is no one silver bullet, there's no one single way to detect these different threats. So you need a system of a systems approach for sure. Each service will look at the individual installations and the requirements that are required for capability, but beyond material you point out some very good observations.*

*That training is essential. Rehearsed, regularly rehearsed, battle drills, and just really understanding policy, which the JCO has produced videos to help installation commanders understand their authorities. And then lastly, I would just say I believe and assess that the capability is there. We have a bit of a capacity problem across each one of the services at installations, but each service is prioritizing installations based on maybe critical infrastructure as well. And lastly, I know the NORTHCOM Commander is looking for flyaway kits.*

**Congressman Wittman:** *I think that's critical. It'd be great if you could provide for the subcommittee an inventory of kit that's in place on these bases.*

*I understand each service branch is responsible for their base. And then I think mobile kit is critical too for maybe bases that don't have quite as high level of threat, but if something's there, we can mobilize kit within 12 hours and have it on site to do both sensing and efforts to be able to neutralize these efforts.*