

Question for the Record from Representative Troy Nehls for Mr. Feddersen
“Unmanned and Unchecked: Confronting the Rising Threat of Malicious Drone Use in America”
September 16, 2025

1. Thank you all for your testimony today. As we've heard, there are significant concerns about increasing drone activity at smaller public venues and large non-sporting event gatherings that fall below the FAA's 30,000-seat threshold and don't qualify for automatic sporting event flight restrictions. These venues face the same safety risks we've discussed—from both malicious actors and unintentional safety hazards from hobbyists.

Given your expertise in this field, how do you believe we can address these security gaps at smaller venues and non-sporting events while ensuring we don't create unnecessary barriers or restrictions that would harm legitimate commercial drone operations, including delivery services, infrastructure inspection, emergency response, and other beneficial uses of drone technology?

Response: We can address drone threats at smaller venues and non-sporting events today using safe and effective counter-drone systems tested by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). To ensure we don't create unnecessary barriers or restrictions that would harm legitimate commercial drone operations, critical infrastructure inspection, emergency response, and other beneficial uses of drone technology, we must treat drone threats and illegal drone operations as a viable tool for criminals, terrorists, and negligent pilots.

Temporary flight restrictions (TFR) are not the only legal criteria for determining criminal intent, and the FAA's metrics and thresholds for determining manned aircraft safety should not be the only tool used to trigger protection assets at events or “covered” sites.

Drones, similar to cars and planes, contribute to the safety, security, and economic growth of American society. However, much like these vehicles, drones can also be misused for harmful activities such as smuggling, spying, and even terrorist attacks. Given the diverse sizes, weights, and capabilities of drones, we should treat them as unique instruments rather than merely categorizing them as another type of aircraft.

The potential for a drone attack or illicit drone activity at venues with fewer than 30,000 people is the same proportionate risk as in larger venues. Drones have the potential to inflict death and serious physical injury similar to those inflicted by snipers and mass shootings. The widespread availability, size, and speed of drones make them a unique and worrisome tool for nefarious actors.

Drones should be regulated like aircraft, but guarded against as individual weapons. Guns, knives, and drones have an increased potential to be dangerous individual threats due to their stealth, psychological impact, and capacity for inflicting severe injury or death at close range. Each of these weapons can be used to overwhelm victims in mere seconds. Therefore, all levels of law enforcement and trained security professionals for critical infrastructure should possess the means to detect and disarm drones, just as they do with other small, fast, and agile weapons.

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Artificial or subjective boundaries, such as the FAA’s seating thresholds, should not apply to how federal, state, local, tribal, or territorial law enforcement approaches counter-drone planning or operations. The FAA’s seating threshold is a tool to help prioritize resources for designating and enforcing TFRs. It was a calculation meant to save resources, not lives.

Today, there are counter-drone systems with passive detection, tracking, and identification (DTI) capabilities that have been tested and deemed safe and effective by the FAA and TSA for use in and around airports and in the National Airspace System (NAS). FAA and TSA began testing these systems in 2020, but unfortunately have yet to publicly publish the systems or the technologies involved. Publishing this information would enable state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement or critical infrastructure owners and operators to see the options available to them to purchase, train on, or operate. Congress should direct the FAA, in coordination with TSA, to make this list public as soon as possible.