

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

Original Question

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? What specific policy mechanisms or technological solutions would you recommend that could distinguish between authorized commercial operations and potential security threats, allowing legitimate drone commerce to flourish while protecting public safety at these currently unprotected venues?

Dr. Cahill Response

Representative Nehls, thank you for the question. I think there are several ways that we can protect the safety of the people at smaller public venues and large non-sporting event gatherings without interfering with legitimate public and commercial drone operations.

1. As I stated in my testimony, I believe Detect, Track, and Identify (DTI) systems should be available for law enforcement officers (LEOs). I think local LEOs should be equipped with these systems for deployment at these venues or events. They can be used to track the drone and/or the operator and LEOs can be deployed to intercept the operator, determine intent, and educate or arrest the operator. Unfortunately, many of these only work for commercial off the shelf drones or command and control links, so more creative hostile entities will be able to defeat them.

2. Have all authorized drone operators provide LEOs with a list of their operations in the area at the time of the event. That way there is no confusion about who is operating and when.

3. For a first order determination if the drone could be authorized to be there, use Remote ID. If the drone is not broadcasting Remote ID, assume they are illegitimate/unauthorized. Illegitimate

drones can be watched by eye or followed using a DTI system to determine the location of the operator. Again, LEOs can intercept the operator.

4. Publicize in advance and with signs at the event that the event is a no-drone zone and that unauthorized operators are subject to law enforcement action (e.g., applicable laws against creating public hazards, violating operations over people FAA regulations, etc.). Make sure that the local LEOs have a list of applicable laws in their possession so they know what statutes they can charge the offender with violating (e.g., operating an aircraft while intoxicated, etc.).

5. If the event is located at a school/university, have the school's administration state that the operation of any drone over the event by a student or their family will result in academic discipline (e.g., suspension, expulsion, etc.).

6. If an event/location has routine unauthorized drone flights over it after the above steps have been taken, request C-UAS assistance from Federal agencies.

7. If all else fails, take a page from the Ukrainian anti-drone book and use netting, where feasible, to cover high-population areas of the arenas to prevent drones from falling on spectators.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.