

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”

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Sergeant Robert Dooley

Question Response

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There are now new ways for local governments and public safety agencies to apply for airspace restrictions through the FAA. These Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR) requests help address many challenges. While existing processes already allow airspace permissions for localized events, it is important to remember that a published restriction is not a “force field” that automatically keeps unauthorized drones out. We will always face careless or uninformed UAS operators who fly where they shouldn’t.

The **biggest issue is education**—both on the public safety side and among commercial and hobbyist operators.

In Florida, I use my experience and knowledge to help others overcome these challenges. As a member of the FAA FAST Team (the FAA’s educational arm), I regularly travel across the state and country to provide training, workshops, and public speaking. Instead of keeping knowledge proprietary, I share it freely—walking agencies through *how* processes work and ensuring they understand the steps required.

For example, with FIFA coming to Miami, I am actively engaged in airspace security and UAS operations planning. My goal is to ensure all public safety agencies have the knowledge and tools they need to protect the event and coordinate seamlessly with partners.

Every airspace restriction affects flight operations in some way. For instance, when I respond to hurricanes in Florida, a restriction is often in place. Instead of immediately deploying a drone, I must apply for a Special Government Interest (SGI) Certificate of Authorization (COA). While this slows response, it keeps airspace safer and more controlled. The problem is that many operators don’t know these processes exist—again pointing to the need for better education.

In Florida, we address these challenges with strong **communication, coordination, and planning**. For high-profile events (such as FIFA), public safety agencies, emergency managers, and private sector entities (Amazon, Walmart, utilities, etc.) all participate. As the

event nears, production companies or other authorized drone operators are incorporated into the mission.

UAS detection equipment is key to keeping airspace safe. By “whitelisting” authorized UAS ahead of time, we can quickly distinguish friend from foe and respond appropriately. Detection also helps prevent conflicts with manned aviation and unintentional operators.

Mitigation, however, is a higher-level capability. Moving unauthorized UAS away from a secured location is critical, but it carries significant responsibility and liability. Not every agency will need mitigation authority, but I strongly believe every public safety agency should have detection capabilities.

Currently, my agency’s C-UAS sensors operate within the law and do not violate wiretapping restrictions—but our detection abilities are limited. To truly secure events, we need both advanced detection and carefully authorized mitigation tools.

Working with federal partners, I’ve seen how effective integrated detection and mitigation can be. When I fly in controlled airspace, they can instantly detect my UAS, confirm its identity, verify my authorization, and whitelist me. If an unauthorized drone enters, they can quickly identify and address it. This same process could be extended to trusted private-sector partners like Amazon or Walmart.

The bottom line is that **education, communication, and coordination** are essential. In Florida, we recognized this early and have built strong relationships across agencies and other stakeholders for high-profile events.

To strengthen this nationwide, I recommend creating a program similar to existing federal Temporary Federal Officer (TFO) programs. The FAA could certify public safety professionals through training at local FAA Flight Standards District Offices (FSDOs). These individuals would act as trusted FAA partners—knowledgeable about planning, coordination, and legal processes, and authorized to support the FAA in maintaining safe airspace.

I believe we *can* keep major events safe by expanding FAA educational opportunities for both Public Safety and Commercial Users, equipping public safety with higher level UAS detection capabilities, granting mitigation authority when justified, and building a network of trusted FAA public safety partners across the country.

With the right structure in place, we can secure airspace while supporting responsible public safety, government, and commercial drone operations. We **CAN** do this in a way that you, our decision makers can be proud to support and more importantly, do this in such away that the American people can be proud of and feel safe; without sacrificing our freedoms or privacy.

