



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Full Committee Markup
H.R. 3559 and H.R. 3560

May 24, 2023

Good morning, and thank you all for being here today. Our plan for this markup was to consider two bipartisan bills – the National Drone and Advanced Air Mobility Act and a reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration’s research and development work.

Unfortunately, we will not be voting on the FAA bill today. Our committee staff – both majority and minority – put in long hours working to craft a bill that would support innovative, forward-looking research at FAA.

The legislation we developed incorporated the input we got at our legislative hearing on this topic nearly three months ago, as well as extensive industry and stakeholder feedback. It’s the product of diligent bipartisan negotiations to find a consensus that promotes innovation while prioritizing safety.

Regrettably, we received some last-minute special interest feedback last night that has scuttled that consensus legislation.

I appreciate that the Ranking Member and her staff have negotiated in good faith with us, and my hope is that when we do bring this bill before the Committee – likely next month – we will once again have a strong, bipartisan bill.

That said, this delay and the complications it has caused mean that we cannot guarantee what will be in the next draft.

Nevertheless, I hope that we can continue our good-faith negotiations and continue this Committee’s tradition of bipartisanship.

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Moving on to the bill that is still before us—today we will be considering the National Drone and Advanced Air Mobility Act.

This bill is very important to me, and I believe it’s critical for both our economic development and our national security.

Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) and Unmanned Aerial Systems – known as UAS and often called drones – are the future of transportation, delivery, and security.

The UAS market is growing exponentially and could expand to more than \$63 billion by 2025. And some predict the AAM market could be worth \$115 billion by 2035, creating more than 280 thousand new jobs.

But unless we act soon, America will miss out on this growth.

We're already dangerously behind when it comes to the production of UAS. To say China has cornered this market is an understatement. One single company with extensive ties to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and People's Liberation Army produces 80% of the drones used recreationally in the U.S.

If that doesn't scare you, this next statistic should. According to a nationwide survey, 90% of our local and regional public safety agencies are using drones made by this same company.

Police forces use drones to scan areas of operation and ensure the safety of their officers. Disaster response teams use them for search and rescue missions. Firefighters use drones to track and fight wildfires.

90% of these first responders are using drones produced by a company that can use its software to track user data and exploit cybersecurity vulnerabilities at our public safety agencies.

But we can't switch to American-made drones until we have the capability to manufacture them in the U.S. This bill helps us build that.

It coordinates R&D across federal agencies and authorizes a network of research institutes that can collaborate on cross-cutting research. Regulatory roadblocks drove most UAS research overseas. This bill brings it back to the U.S.

The bill also expands the workforce we'll need to build out our UAS industry, and it expands standards and best practices available to U.S. companies.

It strengthens our supply chains for UAS production and limits the use of foreign UAS.

Finally, it establishes a counter-UAS center of excellence to support the work necessary to improve our abilities to respond to threats from adversaries using UAS.

This bill has been in development for a long time, and incorporates feedback from industry, stakeholders, our federal research agencies, and my friends across the aisle.

I'd like to thank my staff and Ranking Member Lofgren's staff for putting in some long hours to get this bill ready for markup. I'm eager to move it forward so we can begin to implement these critical provisions.

With that, I yield to the Gentlewoman from California for her opening remarks.