

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Prohibiting the Importation and Marketing of	)	PS Docket 26-189
Certain Foreign-Produced Military-Grade	)	
UAS and UAS Critical Components	)	

COMMENTS OF THE COMMERCIAL DRONE ALLIANCE

I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Commercial Drone Alliance (“CDA”)¹ respectfully submits these comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“FCC’s” or “Commission’s”) Public Notice seeking input on prohibiting the importation and marketing of certain foreign-produced “military-grade” uncrewed aircraft systems (“UAS”) and UAS critical components.²

The future of aviation is unmanned. America, not China nor any adversary, must lead. The CDA therefore strongly supports the Administration’s and Chairman Carr’s commitment to protecting national security, strengthening U.S. leadership in UAS, and promoting a secure and resilient domestic drone ecosystem. Moreover, the CDA shares the Administration’s interest in fostering a robust, secure supply chain for the domestic drone industry. Our key objective is to ensure that the United States is the global leader in an industry that will be key to unleashing

¹ The CDA is the leading advocacy organization representing domestic and allied commercial UAS and counter-UAS systems manufacturers and operators in the United States. We focus on restoring U.S. leadership in commercial drones, buttressing the domestic drone industrial base, and enabling scaled operations of commercial drones nationwide. Learn more at www.commercialdronealliance.org.

² See *FCC Seeks Comment on Prohibiting the Importation and Marketing of Certain Foreign-Produced Military-Grade Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) and UAS Critical Components for Non-U.S. Government, Including Those With Swarming Capabilities*, PS Docket No. 26-189, Public Notice, DA 26-758 (PSHSB & OET rel. July 21, 2026).

economic potential for countless industries and that is essential to U.S. national security. To that end, we view bolstering domestic drone manufacturing capabilities and facilitating a robust domestic and allied drone supply chain as critical to achieving those goals. Accordingly, we must ensure the United States has access to such components and technologies that are necessary to ensure the growth of the American UAS industry while the United States builds adequate domestic supply of the same, with respect to both quantity and quality.

While American-made UAS are ascendant for many use cases, and while the domestic component marketplace is ramping up, the Commission's proposal as currently drafted to immediately restrict the importation and sale of certain UAS and UAS critical components will cause unintended negative consequences for the American drone industry. An investment announcement or financing commitment is not the same as immediate, substitutable component availability. Manufacturers and operators cannot safely replace an existing component until a domestic alternative is available in the required volumes and technical configuration and, where necessary, has completed the engineering, integration, testing, and safety validation required for its intended use. As one example, American manufacturers who are currently reliant on foreign parts may face equipment shortages or be unable to make necessary repairs to UAS performing important functions that benefit the public and improve safety.

To avoid these consequences, the CDA respectfully offers a few modifications to the Commission's proposals. A more surgical framework with phased and realistic transition periods will meaningfully address equipment presenting national security concerns while preserving the commercial demand, production volume, and operational continuity that domestic manufacturers need to scale, reduce costs, and compete internationally.

II. THE COMMISSION CAN AVOID UNINTENDED NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES FOR AMERICAN DRONE MANUFACTURERS AND OPERATORS BY UTILIZING A RISK-BASED FRAMEWORK TO MITIGATE INSECURE EQUIPMENT.

The Commission proposes to prohibit the continued importation and marketing of any previously authorized foreign-produced “military grade” UAS or UAS critical components.³ The CDA appreciates the Commission seeking to address the risks that network-connected UAS can pose, particularly when such equipment is manufactured by foreign adversaries.⁴ However, the Public Notice’s proposal stands to have unintended negative consequences for American manufacturers and drone operators in the short term.

To avoid these impacts, the Commission should instead employ a risk-based framework for the “military-grade” designation. The Commission should immediately prohibit the import and marketing of military-grade UAS and UAS critical components made by entities that have been found to pose unacceptable national security risk. An entity-based restriction, rather than a country-based restriction, based on prior Covered List activities and the entities listed in Section 1709(a)(1) of the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (Pub. L. 118-159) and their affiliates and subsidiaries (including third-party manufacturers white-labeling such equipment), would be more surgical, provide greater clarity for the drone industry as it transitions to American manufacturers, and address the highest risk equipment without jeopardizing the safety of drones in use today for important purposes.

³ See Public Notice at 4.

⁴ This concern is consistent with joint FBI and Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency public advisories. See, e.g., *Cybersecurity Guidance: Chinese-Manufactured UAS*, Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency & Federal Bureau of Investigation (Jan. 17, 2024), <https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/Cybersecurity%20Guidance%20Chinese-Manufactured%20UAS.pdf>.

Another option is to restrict military-grade UAS produced by foreign adversary countries, including China. This approach would properly reflect that not all foreign-produced UAS and UAS critical components present the same level of risk and that “friend-shoring” can be a safe intermediate step as manufacturing moves back to the United States. Such a framework would allow the Commission to account for differences in country-of-origin risk while avoiding the immediate restriction of beneficial UAS and UAS critical components that do not present the risks targeted by the Public Notice.

Alternatively, the Commission could focus on whether a particular category of equipment has a demonstrated nexus to the national security risks the Commission seeks to address. As one possibility, the Commission could narrow the definition of “military-grade” to focus on UAS specifically designed, marketed, or optimized for military, defense, or intelligence, or law enforcement applications. The Commission could also consider factors such as the technology’s cybersecurity architecture, data-handling practices, remote-access protections, and other mitigations as part of its “military-grade” designation. Deploying restrictions premised on use-based, operator-based, or risk-mitigation criteria rather than solely equipment characteristics, in combination with broader prohibitions on certain entities or adversarial nations, can achieve the same objective and mitigate negative externalities.

If the proposals are adopted with the blanket approach as written, American platform manufacturers could face immediate shortages in replacement parts and delays in their ability to make necessary repairs to existing fleets—jeopardizing both public safety and public acceptance of this new technology, which is a key enabler of American drone dominance. Supply-chain bottlenecks and equipment scarcity could harm American farms, public safety agencies, energy suppliers, businesses, and the communities they serve, ultimately sacrificing long-term American

leadership in innovation, autonomous logistics, energy dominance, and food security over short-term component compliance issues. We cannot afford to undermine the long-term goal of establishing American drone technology as the global standard by shrinking the domestic customer base that manufacturers depend on to scale production, reduce costs, refine products, and compete internationally.

Further, in many cases, U.S. component and full-platform manufacturers are still in the process of increasing production capacity, meaning domestic alternatives are not currently available in sufficient quantities, configurations, or performance levels that would allow operators to replace foreign-produced equipment on the timelines in the proposal. We urge the Commission to adopt the proposed, more surgical approach to ensure that America will emerge dominant in this global technology race.

III. REALISTIC, PHASED IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINES WILL BE KEY TO ACHIEVING AMERICAN DRONE DOMINANCE.

The CDA appreciates the Commission's ongoing efforts to bolster national security by advancing American drone dominance. While domestic manufacturing initiatives are underway, much of the global UAS supply chain today remains heavily concentrated outside of the United States.⁵ Transitioning to U.S.-made UAS and UAS critical components will require time and investment, including capital, workforce development, testing, certification, procurement, and deployment.⁶ The CDA is supportive of these efforts and the growth of the U.S. component-

⁵ See Josh Chin et al., *The U.S. Wants to Break China's Drone Dominance. Here's Where It Will Struggle.*, Wall St. J. (May 2, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/the-u-s-wants-to-break-chinas-drone-dominance-heres-where-it-will-struggle-39e69e18>.

⁶ See Volodymyr Silchenko, *Why U.S. Drone Manufacturing Can't Scale Without Fixing the Supply Chain First*, Forbes (Jan. 9, 2026), <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2026/01/09/why-us-drone-manufacturing-cant-scale-without-fixing-the-supply-chain-first/>.

manufacturer marketplace, but cautions that immediate and wide-ranging restrictions could harm the same domestic component industrial base that the Commission seeks to support, as aggregate demand for drone technology may simply decline.

Defense funding alone cannot sustain a robust domestic industrial base over the long term. It is therefore vital to ensure that commercial demand for domestic dual-use drone technology in the United States remains high enough to support the investment and financial security of domestic component manufacturers in the years to come. Costs for domestic products will naturally be higher in the short term as manufacturing capacity grows, making it even more important to give domestic end users, including both operators and platform manufacturers, sufficient runway to plan for any necessary transitions. For example, the Department of War's ("DoW's") Office of Strategic Capital's recent efforts to expand access to financing for strategic manufacturing and supply chain investments can help accelerate the development of domestic production capacity and reduce reliance on foreign suppliers over time, which the CDA greatly appreciates.⁷ As these investments begin to strengthen the industrial base, a predictable transition period will remain essential to avoid disruptions to critical operations.

Accordingly, the Commission should adopt a phased implementation schedule that begins with the highest-risk equipment and provides longer transition periods for lower-risk categories. Many basic components in UAS do not present any security risk because they are not linked to the digital elements that handle processing, data management, or autonomous capabilities. In other cases, imported components are basic motors, batteries, or hardware which do not present a

⁷ Press Release, Off. Strategic Cap., U.S. Dep't War, The Office of Strategic Capital Signs \$820 Million Conditional Loan Commitment with Performance Drone Works to Expand Domestic Drone Component Manufacturing (July 31, 2026), <https://www.war.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/4561771/the-office-of-strategic-capital-signs-820-million-conditional-loan-commitment-w/>.

national security risk. Similarly, although we assume it is not the Commission's intention to do so, an overbroad reading of the definition of "UAS docking stations," as currently written, could inadvertently sweep in wholly commercial or recreational consumer components that would not be considered military-grade by any reasonable measure. For example, a basic charging pad with no ability to transfer data or connect to internal or external networks should not be considered a UAS docking station for purposes of this rulemaking. In the same manner, docking stations that are not designed to be used with the military-grade UAS that are the subject of this rulemaking should also not be considered military-grade UAS critical components. To dispel any potential confusion, the Commission should clarify that these commercial or consumer components are not considered military-grade UAS critical components and are not subject to the proposed restrictions.

Before a category becomes subject to a new prohibition, the Commission should also confirm that secure domestic or non-adversarial alternatives are commercially available in the necessary quantities and technical configurations, and that an operator can adopt them without compromising safety or the continued support of existing fleets. Longer transition timelines are particularly appropriate where domestic production capacity remains limited or where equivalent alternatives are not yet readily available. Exempting such equipment for an interim period while domestic alternatives are being brought to market with sufficient quality and in sufficient quantities, or while manufacturing is on-shored, would enable innovation to continue and give affected qualifying manufacturers time to receive conditional approvals from the DoW or the Department of Homeland Security, thereby accelerating the onshoring of U.S. production.⁸

⁸ See *Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Announces Addition of Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) and UAS Critical Components Produced Abroad, and Equipment and Services*

Finally, it would be useful for the Commission to provide clear guidance concerning the grandfathering, maintenance, repair, and replacement-part changes applicable to equipment authorized before the effective date of any new restrictions. It is important that new restrictions avoid stranding existing investments or forcing the premature retirement of equipment in cases where continued use does not present public safety threats.

The CDA encourages the Commission to continue engaging with industry during implementation to ensure that the agency's goals are advanced without causing unintended setbacks to the growth and success of the American commercial drone industry.

IV. THE COMMISSION SHOULD ADOPT NECESSARY EXEMPTIONS WHERE EQUIPMENT DOES NOT PRESENT RISK.

As another element of a risk-based framework, the Commission should establish exemptions for categories of UAS that do not present the risks targeted by the Public Notice.

The Commission should align the approach in this proceeding with that used in the Covered List and exclude from any new restrictions UAS and UAS critical components that have been granted a Conditional Approval, are included on the Blue UAS Cleared List, or qualify as “domestic end products” under the Buy American standard.⁹ These categories of equipment have already been found by DoW to not present unacceptable threats to national security.¹⁰ The Commission should also exempt equipment used by Part 135/108 FAA-certificated manufacturer-

Listed in Section 1709 of the FY2025 NDAA, to FCC Covered List, Public Notice, 40 FCC Rcd 10215 at 3 (2025).

⁹ See *List of Equipment and Services Covered by Section 2 of The Secure Networks Act*, FCC (Aug. 28, 2026), <https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist>.

¹⁰ See *FCC's Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Announces Extension of Conditional Approvals and Exemption of Certain Uncrewed Aircraft Systems and UAS Critical Components from FCC Covered List*, WC Docket No. 18-89, ET Docket No. 21-232, EA Docket No. 21-233, Public Notice, DA 26-761 (PSHSB rel. July 21, 2026).

operators¹¹ and vertically integrated domestic manufacturer-operators who do not sell UAS to third parties. Much of this equipment has undergone extensive testing and safety review by the FAA for civilian use, with strict cybersecurity requirements applied, and has been proven to present no national security vulnerabilities. Additionally, Part 135 operators are required to have economic authority to operate in the U.S. from the Department of Transportation, proving their domestic financial qualifications. As a matter of principle, U.S.-based companies that source critical components from suppliers in the U.S. or non-adversarial countries should not be subject to the same restrictions and limitations as foreign adversary manufacturers.

Finally, any exemptions granted should extend to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as contractors supporting those functions (and not only the federal government, as the Public Notice proposes).¹² This would ensure national consistency for government officials and manufacturers alike, alleviate bureaucratic burdens for both entities in navigating varying policies at multiple levels of government, and ultimately increase compliance.

V. THE COMMISSION SHOULD ENGAGE WITH THE COMMERCIAL DRONE INDUSTRY AS ITS PROCESSES EVOLVE.

The CDA appreciates the opportunity to comment on this proposal. We strongly encourage the Commission to engage with the UAS commercial operator community, in addition to commercial platform and component manufacturers, to ensure it has a complete picture of the domestic drone ecosystem and capability landscape as it continues to take steps in pursuit of American drone dominance. Well-informed policy is essential to ensuring we are truly building manufacturing capacity and industrial base muscle for long-term resilience and global competitiveness.

¹¹ See 14 C.F.R. Part 135.

¹² See Public Notice at 6.

VI. CONCLUSION

As we have stated previously, the CDA strongly supports the Administration's and Chairman Carr's commitment to protecting national security, strengthening U.S. leadership in UAS, and promoting a secure and resilient domestic drone ecosystem. The Commission can best advance its important goals in this proceeding by adopting the aforementioned recommendations, particularly proceeding with a targeted, risk-based framework coupled with appropriate transition timelines, and, where appropriate, phased, time-limited exemptions for low-risk civilian operations. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Commission to adopt the refinements suggested in these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

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