



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## FCC SEEKS COMMENT ON UNLEASHING AMERICAN DRONE DOMINANCE

GN Docket No. 26-74  
WT Docket No. 22-323  
WT Docket No. 24-629

**Comment Date: May 1, 2026**  
**Reply Comment Date: May 18, 2026**

President Trump is unleashing American drone dominance. In furtherance of this Administration priority, President Trump has directed all relevant federal agencies to support this initiative by cutting red tape, modernizing obsolete regulations, and securing our supply chain from foreign adversaries. The production, deployment, and export of *American* unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drones) and anti-drone defense systems (Counter-UAS) have become core elements of our economic and military superiority. In addition, emerging technologies like electric Vertical Takeoff and Landing (eVTOL) aircraft are expected to enable new capabilities for transporting cargo and people, including in hard to reach areas and in emergencies. By this Public Notice, the FCC's Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) and Office of Engineering and Technology (OET) seek comment on a range of actions that the agency can take to further advance American drone dominance.

President Trump's coordinated national strategy to achieve U.S. supremacy in drone technology, manufacturing, and operations is anchored by two Executive Orders (EOs): *Unleashing American Drone Dominance* and *Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty*.<sup>1</sup> Together, these EOs reflect a sweeping policy shift: one that frames U.S. drone leadership not only as an economic imperative but as a cornerstone of our national security, technological sovereignty, and global competitiveness.

The FCC is taking aggressive action to implement President Trump's policy of American drone dominance. Late last year, following an Executive Branch national security determination, the FCC added foreign-produced UAS and UAS critical components to its Covered List.<sup>2</sup> Because such devices are now prohibited from receiving FCC equipment authorization for importation, marketing, or sale in the United States, the FCC will continue to advance consumer and business access to trusted drone technology. Then, following a further specific determination from the Department of War (DoW) that

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<sup>1</sup> *Unleashing American Drone Dominance*, Exec. Order 14307, 90 Fed. Reg. 24727 (June 6, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidentialactions/2025/06/unleashing-american-drone-dominance/>; *Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty*, Exec. Order 14305, 90 Fed. Reg. 24719 (June 6, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidentialactions/2025/06/restoring-american-airspace-sovereignty/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Announces Addition of Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) and UAS Critical Components Produced Abroad, and Equipment and Services Listed in Section 1709 of the FY2025 NDAA, to FCC Covered List*, WC Docket No. 18-89, et al., DA 25-1086 (Dec. 22, 2025), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-25-1086A1.pdf>, (December 2025 Covered List PN).

certain UAS and UAS critical components *did not* pose “unacceptable risks,” the FCC updated its Covered List to reflect that determination.

In this Public Notice, WTB and OET seek input on an array of reforms the Commission might take to unleash American drone dominance, including:

- Alleviating unnecessary regulatory burdens that frustrate drone deployment, including Commission rules or policies—such as siting or device certification—that may create friction for the growth of a competitive, secure, and innovative domestic drone ecosystem.
- Ensuring that American drone manufacturers and users have access to sufficient spectrum for drone testing and operations, including services to the public.
- Facilitating and encouraging American firms’ investment in drone capabilities, developing infrastructure, and offering innovative and advanced capabilities.
- Ensuring that U.S.-based manufacturers and trusted suppliers have the regulatory clarity and technical access needed to scale production and secure investment.
- Coordinating more effectively with other federal agencies to align spectrum policies with national security imperatives and reduce the risk posed by untrusted foreign-origin UAS operating in U.S. airspace.
- Streamlining the FCC’s experimental licensing rules to facilitate more agile testing of UAS communications systems—including beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) links, command and control (C2) systems, detect-and-avoid (DAA) technologies, and secure navigation tools—across a broader range of spectrum bands.
- Establishing additional dedicated drone innovation zones or testbeds, in partnership with federal, state, academic, or private entities, and streamlining authorizations to help spur early-stage experimentation and commercialization.<sup>3</sup>

## **BACKGROUND**

***U.S. Government Efforts on UAS Leadership.*** Two EOs underpin the Administration’s coordinated national strategy to achieve American dominance in drone technology, manufacturing, and operations. These EOs signal a profound policy transformation. UAS leadership now represents more than an economic priority; it has become a critical pillar of U.S. national security, technological independence, and global competitiveness.

The first EO, *Unleashing American Drone Dominance*, sets a whole-of-government mandate to accelerate the commercialization of drone technologies, scale up domestic production, and expand the export of trusted, American-manufactured UAS. This EO directs federal agencies—including the FCC and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA)—to prioritize spectrum access and modernization efforts critical for the safe and scalable deployment of autonomous and remotely piloted drones, particularly those operating BVLOS. It also calls for the development of a national drone corridor network and establishes interagency coordination mechanisms to streamline certification, export approvals, and integration into the national airspace system. The EO directed “[a]ll

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<sup>3</sup> See *FCC Announces Two New Innovation Zones and Amends One Existing Innovation Zone for Program Experimental Licenses*, ET Docket No. 19-257, Public Notice, 36 FCC Rcd 12866 (OET 2021).

agencies,” including the Commission, to “prioritize the integration of UAS manufactured in the United States over those made abroad to the maximum extent permitted by law.”<sup>4</sup>

The second EO, *Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty*, tightens restrictions on foreign-manufactured drones operating in sensitive or regulated environments and mandates a phased transition to domestically produced or allied-nation UAS across federal and critical infrastructure sectors. It builds on earlier security-oriented directives, like EO 13981, but goes further by authorizing NTIA to update federal procurement guidelines to reflect new security benchmarks, and by directing several agencies, including the FCC, to take all appropriate steps to implement the recommendations of the March 2022 Feasibility Report to Congress regarding the creation of the National Training Center for Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems.

**Recent FCC Covered List Actions.** Late last year, the FCC received a specific determination from an interagency body with appropriate national security expertise that found, among other things, that UAS and UAS critical components produced in a foreign country pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States and to the safety and security of U.S. persons and should be included on the FCC’s Covered List, unless the DoW or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) makes a specific determination that certain such UAS and UAS critical components do not pose such risks.<sup>5</sup> The Determination found that:

UAS and UAS critical components must be produced in the United States. This will reduce the risk of direct UAS attacks and disruptions, unauthorized surveillance, sensitive data exfiltration, and other UAS threats to the homeland. Furthermore, it will ensure our domestic UAS and UAS critical component manufacturing is resilient and independent, a critical national security imperative. UAS are inherently dual-use: they are both commercial platforms and potentially military or paramilitary sensors and weapons. UAS and UAS critical components, including data transmission devices, communications systems, flight controllers, ground control stations, controllers, navigation systems, batteries, smart batteries, and motors produced in a foreign country could enable persistent surveillance, data exfiltration, and destructive operations over U.S. territory, including over World Cup and Olympic venues and other mass gathering events. U.S. cybersecurity and critical infrastructure guidance has repeatedly highlighted how foreign-manufactured UAS can be used to harvest sensitive data, used to enable remote unauthorized access, or disabled at will via software updates.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of this specific determination, the FCC updated its Covered List to include “UAS and UAS critical components produced in a foreign country.”<sup>7</sup> Going forward, foreign-produced UAS and UAS critical components may no longer receive authorization for importation, marketing, or sale in the United States, although already-authorized devices can continue to be used.

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<sup>4</sup> *Unleashing American Drone Dominance* EO at Section 7(a); *see also id.* at Section 2(a) (defining “agency” with a reference to a definition that includes “any independent regulatory agency”).

<sup>5</sup> *See December 2025 Covered List PN* at 2; *see also id.* at Appx. B (containing a copy of the National Security Determination). This National Security Determination additionally found “unacceptable risks” from “all communications and video surveillance equipment and services listed in Section 1709(a)(1) of the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (Pub. L. 118-159).”

<sup>6</sup> National Security Determination at 2.

<sup>7</sup> *December 2025 Covered List PN* at 2. The Commission’s full update referred to “UAS and UAS critical components produced in a foreign country and all communications and video surveillance equipment and services listed in Section 1709(a)(1) of the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (Pub. L. 118-159).”

Then, following a further specific determination from DoW that certain UAS and UAS critical components *did not* pose “unacceptable risks,” the FCC again updated its Covered List to remove “until January 1, 2027, (a) [UAS](#) and [UAS critical components](#) included on the Defense Contract Management Agency’s (DCMA’s) Blue UAS list,<sup>8</sup> and (b) UAS and UAS critical components that qualify as ‘domestic end products’ under the Buy American Standard, [48 CFR 25.101\(a\)](#).”<sup>9</sup> DoW also established a process for individual entities to apply for DoW and DHS to make further determinations as exempting these entities’ otherwise-covered UAS and UAS critical components from the Covered List.<sup>9</sup> Such entities would have to provide information about their corporate structure, manufacturing and supply chain, and their U.S. manufacturing and onshoring plan.<sup>10</sup> Following a third National Security Determination that 4 UAS devices do not pose “unacceptable risks,” the FCC updated its Covered List once again on March 18, 2026, to exempt “[devices which have been granted a Conditional Approval by DoW or DHS](#).”<sup>11</sup>

***Non-Federal Spectrum for Drones.*** Most drones in the U.S. have relied on unlicensed spectrum, or the same frequencies used by Wi-Fi routers and other consumer devices, for their command-and-control communications, including the 2.4 GHz and 5.8 GHz ISM (Industrial, Scientific, and Medical) bands. These frequencies include: 900 MHz band (902-928 MHz); 2.4 GHz band (2400-2500 MHz); 5.2 GHz band (5000-5725 MHz); and 5.8 GHz band (5725-5875 MHz). Although these bands are popular due to their relatively high power output capability and wide bandwidth for high definition broadband transmission, these unlicensed bands may be susceptible to interference from other users. We seek comment on the ongoing viability of the unlicensed bands for UAS operations.

With respect to licensed spectrum, the 2012 World Radiocommunication Conference allocated the 5030-5091 MHz band for aeronautical mobile route service to support UAS control links. The FCC mirrored the international allocation of that band, and in August 2024, it adopted service rules under a new Part 88 to allow operators to obtain direct frequency assignments in a portion of the band for non-networked operations. The 2024 decision adopted an interim access mechanism providing temporary access to 20 megahertz (5040-5060 MHz) through Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) coordination and FCC registration. As a medium-term solution, the FCC specified use of a dynamic frequency management systems that would provide requesting operators with temporary frequency assignments to support UAS control link communications with a level of reliability suitable for operations in controlled airspace and other safety-critical circumstances. Longer term, the FCC anticipated a final band plan including both networked and non-networked services.

In addition, the Commission is participating in a multi-agency effort to accelerate the development and deployment of Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) technologies, including eVTOL aircraft in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Through that effort, in December, 2025, the Advanced Air Mobility Interagency

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<sup>8</sup> FCC Covered List, <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-26-22A1.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> *Guidance on Submissions for Conditional Approval for Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) and UAS Critical Components Produced in Foreign Countries Subject to the FCC’s Covered List* (Jan. 7, 2026), <https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/UAS-Guidance-Submissions-Conditional-Approvals.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Announces Conditional Approval of Certain Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS) and UAS Critical Components and Exemption From Covered List*, WC Docket No. 18-89, Public Notice, DA 26-253 (Mar. 18, 2026).

<sup>12</sup> The Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act required the establishment of an AAM interagency working group to include participation of several departments and agencies, including the Commission. That Act charged the interagency working group with developing an AAM National Strategy. Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act, Pub. L. No. 117-203, 136 Stat. 2227.

Working Group released the Advanced Air Mobility National Strategy,<sup>13</sup> which recommends a number of actions the Federal government can take to develop U.S. AAM technologies and facilitate their rapid integration into the national airspace system. Among other efforts, the strategy recognizes the need for modernization of communications, navigation and surveillance technology to enable future aviation operations, and recommends that the FCC, NTIA, FAA, and law enforcement and security agencies should collaborate with standards bodies and industry to evaluate the equipage and spectrum needs of the aviation industry.<sup>14</sup>

Relatedly, the Commission is currently considering proposals to update its rules to permit UAS, including AAM, in specific frequency ranges. One option under review is the 450 MHz band, pursuant to a rulemaking petition by AURA Networks to support long-range links and flexible use. The 24 GHz band is also under consideration for radar and detection operations, enhancing situational awareness and public safety, as are millimeter-wave bands for payload data and non-critical communications over short ranges.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Commission intends to give U.S. innovators the resources and regulatory clarity they need to develop a domestic UAS ecosystem for commercial and military applications. The FCC's recent update to the Covered List, prohibiting the authorization of almost all foreign-produced UAS and UAS critical components, reflects that national imperative. We now seek comment on additional means by which we can fulfill our public-interest mandate and achieve American drone dominance consistent with the directives set forth in President Trump's recent EOs.

***Modernizing UAS Licensing.*** Today, the FCC's experimental licensing framework—while foundational to U.S. technological leadership—was not designed with the scale, pace, and complexity of modern UAS in mind. Experimental licenses are currently available through OET to facilitate research, development, and testing of new radio technologies. However, the current process can be time-consuming, geographically limited, and administratively burdensome for developers seeking to test emerging UAS capabilities, particularly those that rely on multiple frequency bands, mobile operations, or beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) communications. These constraints can slow innovation and disadvantage U.S. firms attempting to compete globally in the fast-evolving drone sector.

We seek comment on ways to modernize and streamline the experimental licensing process specifically for UAS-related testing. Should the Commission consider establishing a dedicated UAS experimental license category with flexible terms tailored to drone developers, including longer durations, broader geographic coverage, or expedited renewals? Would a tiered licensing structure—e.g., differentiating between academic, commercial prototype, and production-scale testing—improve regulatory predictability and reduce administrative burdens? We also seek comment on whether the Commission should implement pre-cleared test ranges or corridors (in coordination with FAA and NTIA) where licensees could conduct UAS experiments with reduced paperwork and faster approvals.

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<sup>13</sup> The Advanced Air Mobility National Strategy: A Bold Policy Vision for 2026–2036 (Dec. 17, 2025), available at [https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/AAM%20National%20Strategy%202025\\_508c\\_251201.pdf](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/AAM%20National%20Strategy%202025_508c_251201.pdf) (AAM National Strategy). *See also* The Advanced Air Mobility Comprehensive Plan: LIFTing AAM to Maturity in the United States (Dec. 17, 2025), available at [https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/AAM%20Comprehensive%20Plan%202025\\_508c\\_251202.pdf](https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2025-12/AAM%20Comprehensive%20Plan%202025_508c_251202.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> AAM National Strategy at 17, Recommendation 2.6. *See also id.* at 9, Recommendation 1.5 (recommending that agencies explore the roles of third parties in providing complementary air traffic management and surveillance operations, and noting that “accommodating increased capacity and third-party managers on shared Federal and non-Federal spectrum used for ATC communications and surveillance will require action by the FCC and NTIA.”)

We further seek comment on whether the Commission should explore a blanket experimental authorization for qualified drone developers operating within specified frequency bands and safety parameters. Would a modular “plug-and-play” approach—where applicants can select from a set of pre-approved use cases, frequency bands, and technical standards—streamline approvals while preserving necessary safeguards against harmful interference? Should the Commission also allow more flexible use of temporary and special temporary authority (STA) grants for UAS innovation, particularly in support of public-private testbeds and emerging drone corridors?

Finally, we seek comment on the utility of our Part 5 experimental licensing rules for the testing of certain Counter-UAS technologies under controlled conditions. Our current rules limit Counter-UAS to research and development purposes—not for operational mitigation or enforcement. Do these restrictions unduly inhibit commercial development of Counter-UAS? Commenters are invited to propose reforms that might address such limitations, to the extent they exist.

***Releasing More Spectrum for UAS.*** We seek comment on any and all non-Federal spectrum resources commenters believe are necessary to achieve American drone dominance.

As an initial matter, we seek comment on permitting more intensive UAS operations in flexible-use terrestrial bands typically relied upon for mobile broadband. Some commercial drones and advanced operators have used licensed commercial wireless networks (such as LTE/4G/5G) where permitted, especially for non-safety-critical payload data or in areas where FCC rules do not restrict airborne use of those bands. We seek comment on the scope and scale of UAS deployment over licensed flexible-use bands today and the extent to which these bands can support more intensive aerial operations.

At the same time, the operation of UAS remains prohibited in many flexible-use bands. For example, Parts 22 and 96 explicitly bar airborne use of Cellular Radiotelephone Service and CBRS spectrum, respectively, whereas the Table of Frequency Allocations prohibits aeronautical mobile use for several other spectrum bands, including all or portions of the 1670-1675 MHz, 1.4 GHz, 2.3 GHz, and 3.7 GHz bands. As one specific example, while CBRS can technically support private LTE/5G networks for drones, airborne use is currently prohibited under Part 96 rules. Despite this, some operators use CBRS for ground-based infrastructure supporting drone operations. We seek comment on the viability of these bands for UAS, including interference and coordination challenges to greater aerial flexibility.

We note that the Commission has previously considered some of these bands for UAS. In 2023, the Commission sought comment on a range of issues related to UAS operations in flexible-use bands.<sup>15</sup> Its subsequent 2024 decision in that proceeding did not resolve those issues. We therefore seek comment and refresh the record on issues that were raised initially in 2023 but were not subsequently resolved. Should we remove or relax remaining airborne restrictions in bands like 800 MHz Cellular? To that end, should we make a finding about the need for rules or best practices to avoid in-band interference? Are existing rules appropriate to protect terrestrial operations from a large number of potentially high-speed airborne transmitters? If not, what protections might we consider? Alternatively, would it be advisable for the Commission to provide more certainty about the limits (or lack thereof) of carriers’ spectrum rights in vertical space? Finally, should the Commission permit UAS pilots on the ground to obtain licenses in the aeronautical VHF band (117.975-137 MHz) for communications with Air Traffic Control?<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See *Spectrum Rules and Policies for the Operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems*, WT Docket No. 22-323, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 38 FCC Rcd 474 (2023).

<sup>16</sup> See *UAS NPRM* at 535-39, paras. 151-63.

Next, we seek comment on all options to accelerate further UAS deployment in the 5030-5091 MHz band. Although the FCC adopted initial rules for the band in 2024, implementation work remains ongoing. We seek comment on ways to expedite implementation so as to permit more robust UAS operations in the band. For example, should the FCC establish a multi-stakeholder group, setting the stage for proposals in a future Further Notice proposing rules for accessing the entire band? We note and seek comment on the relevance of RTCA's ongoing work on these issues. Alternatively, should the FCC convene a Federal Advisory Committee or other similar group to develop consensus on key policy, technical, and operational issues in the band? Finally, are there steps that the FCC could take beyond the adoption of the Interim Access Mechanism to facilitate more imminent access to a portion of the band?

We also refresh the record on the possibility of allowing UAS in the 960-1164 MHz band. Section 374 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 directed the FAA, NTIA, and the Commission, after consultation with relevant stakeholders, to submit a report on, among other things, whether UAS operations should be permitted in 960-1164 MHz and 5030-5091 MHz. In a subsequent 2020 report, the Commission declined to recommend moving forward with a proceeding to make the 960-1164 MHz band available for UAS operations.<sup>17</sup> The report instead recommended that the Commission continue to study the use of this band for UAS purposes, and to work with the FAA, NTIA, and other stakeholders regarding appropriate UAS rules and policies in the event that circumstances warrant initiating a rulemaking for this band. We seek comment on whether new facts or circumstances exist to revisit the Commission's 2020 determination regarding the 960-1164 MHz band.

We also seek comment on steps the FCC can take to facilitate UAS or Counter-UAS spectrum access in the context of any pending inter-agency proceedings or efforts in which the FCC is involved. For example, as mentioned above, Section 9 of the *Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty* EO directs the Attorney General in coordination with several agencies, including the FCC, to take all appropriate steps to implement the recommendations of the March 2022 Feasibility Report to Congress regarding the creation of the National Training Center for Counter-Unmanned Aircraft Systems.<sup>18</sup> We seek comment on steps the FCC can take to help support the operations of this facility. In addition, the AAM National Strategy recommended that the FCC and other agencies, including NTIA and the FAA, should collaborate with standards bodies and industry to evaluate the equipment and spectrum needs of the aviation industry, to transition and enable communications, navigation, and surveillance efficiency for future aviation operations, including AAM.<sup>19</sup> We seek comment on steps the FCC should take to engage with Federal partners, standards bodies, and industry to assess the spectrum needs of drones and AAM, to help enable their integration into the national airspace system.

We also note that the recently-passed National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY2026 NDAA) includes provisions related to spectrum access for UAS and Counter-UAS operations.<sup>20</sup> In particular, Section 227 of the FY2026 NDAA directs the Secretary of Defense to establish, as a demonstration project, a Western Regional Range Complex capable of facilitating testing and training in electromagnetic spectrum operations and electromagnetic warfare, among other purposes.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Section 1048 authorizes the Secretary of Defense to develop an Eastern Regional Range Complex to serve as a joint training, testing, and experimentation hub for various operations including both UAS and

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<sup>17</sup> *Report on Section 374 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* (WTB 2020), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-366460A1.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> See *Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty* EO at Section 9(b).

<sup>19</sup> AAM National Strategy at 17, Recommendation 2.6.

<sup>20</sup> See National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2026, S.1071 (2025) (FY2026 NDAA).

<sup>21</sup> See FY2026 NDAA, § 227(a), (c).

Counter UAS operations.<sup>22</sup> For both of these ranges, Section 1048 further provides that the Secretary of Defense may consult with the FCC and NTIA to recommend spectrum access requirements in support of joint and service training, testing, and experimentation.<sup>23</sup> We seek comment on how the FCC can help facilitate spectrum access in support of these purposes consistent with our jurisdiction over non-federal spectrum access, and what actions or requirements in connection with spectrum access the FCC should recommend, if any, in this context.

Finally, we invite commenters to discuss proposals currently before the Commission to open specific frequencies for UAS-related activities, including Aura’s petition to modify technical rules in the 450 MHz band and Echodyne’s petition to use the 24.45–24.65 GHz band for federal and non-federal radiolocation operations that would better facilitate the detection of UAS.<sup>24</sup> To what extent would adopting these proposals ease the spectrum crunch, if any, that currently faces UAS operators?

***Creating New Testbeds and Innovation Zones.*** The FCC has established Innovation Zones to provide opportunities for qualified licensees to test new and advanced technologies and prototype networks outside a traditional small campus or laboratory setting. Emerging technologies ideal for Innovation Zones may include UAS, Open RAN, and other experiments that maximize the still-untapped potential of 5G networks.

In 2021, the FCC announced the expansion of its Innovation Zone program when it established a new testbed at North Carolina State University, known as the Aerial Experimentation and Research Platform for Advanced Wireless (AERPAW).<sup>25</sup> The AERPAW testbed was “the first platform to allow testing at scale of open 5G-and-beyond solutions in unmanned aerial system verticals.”<sup>26</sup> As the Commission noted, “AERPAW will focus on how cellular networks and advanced wireless technologies can enable beyond visual line-of-sight unmanned aerial systems to accelerate development, verification, and testing of transformative advances and breakthroughs in telecommunications, transportation, infrastructure monitoring, agriculture, and public safety.”<sup>27</sup>

We seek comment on the success of AERPAW to date with respect to UAS deployment and testing. Does this site provide sufficient flexibility or capacity to develop UAS technologies at meaningful scale? We invite commenters to describe whether interagency coordination has proven manageable given the urban location of this Innovation Zone and the nature of the relevant federal equities. In addition, we solicit feedback on the value of AERPAW for the defense industry given that current Innovation Zones applicants are universities that tend to be more focused on academic research.

To the extent commenters find gaps in the utility of AERPAW, we seek comment on the value of creating another type of Innovation Zone license that is exclusively designed for defense companies or non-academics who work on commercial or military UAS development. As one example, would it be advisable to create an Innovation Zone over waterways, in part to facilitate the interaction of UAS and ships and submarines per Section 20002 of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act? Should we consider creating new testbeds in sparsely populated regions with uninhabitable terrain, such as deserts or mountains, where

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<sup>22</sup> See *id.*, § 1048(a)

<sup>23</sup> See *id.*, § 1048(e).

<sup>24</sup> See *Facilitating Opportunities for Advanced Air Mobility*, WT Docket No. 24-629, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 40 FCC Rcd 745 (2025).

<sup>25</sup> *FCC Announces Two New Innovation Zones and Amends One Existing Innovation Zone for Program Experimental Licenses*, ET Docket No. 19-257, Public Notice, 36 FCC Rcd 12866 (OET 2021).

<sup>26</sup> *Id.* at 12867.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

the risk of harmful interference is expected to be minimal? What eligibility restrictions, if any, should govern use of any a Innovation Zone for aerial operations? To what extent would new Innovation Zones ease or replicate challenges with respect to federal coordination at existing testbeds, such as AERPAW?

***Clarifying the Permissible Use of Counter-UAS.*** Counter-UAS refers to technologies, systems, or operations designed to detect, track, identify, and, where authorized, mitigate or disable UAS that pose a threat to safety, security, or regulatory compliance. Although the Commission’s rules do not specifically regulate Counter-UAS as a discrete category, the Communications Act and FCC regulations may nonetheless pose barriers to Counter-UAS deployment. We seek comment on any such barriers and reforms to address them, including Section 333 of the Communications Act of 1934, which provides: “No person shall willfully or maliciously interfere with or cause interference to any radio communications of any station licensed or authorized by or under this chapter.”

***Modernizing Coordination.*** Existing coordination or notification procedures, which were designed to protect non-Federal or Federal spectrum users from harmful interference, may nonetheless restrict the use of UAS or Counter-UAS operations more than necessary today. We seek comment on whether, and the extent to which, the Commission’s rules are overprotective in that regard. Would it be feasible for the FCC streamline its coordination or notification requirements to enable more intensive use of aerial technologies while avoiding disruption to spectrum-based operations that have greater priority? Commenters should provide specific comment as to the nature of any existing burdens created by coordination requirements and offer concrete proposals to reduce those burdens without creating a significant risk of harmful interference to protected services.

***Creating Market-Based Incentives.*** The Commission has long recognized that secondary markets can offer a win-win mechanism to bring underused spectrum to more productive use. In special situations, the Commission has affirmatively incentivized such private transactions. For example, the Enhanced Competition Incentive Program (ECIP) was designed to boost wireless competition and rural broadband by incentivizing license holders to share spectrum with small carriers and Tribal Nations, offering benefits like longer licenses and flexible build-out rules for beneficial transactions like partitioning, disaggregation, or leasing underutilized airwaves. Could we consider similar inducements to promote UAS operations or other kinds of aerial testing? Commenters are encouraged to provide specific proposals about how to structure such market-based incentives.

***Law Enforcement Use of UAS.*** While the Commission does not directly procure UAS, the Commission does often coordinate with State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial (SLTT) law enforcement agencies that frequently procure UAS. SLTT law enforcement agencies often procure UAS produced by foreign adversary entities.<sup>28</sup> This seems especially problematic, given the sensitivity of the law enforcement missions. We seek comment on whether this correct. If so, how can the Commission work with SLTT law enforcement to encourage the use of U.S.-made UAS? For example, should the Commission publish a trusted UAS list or issue public safety guidance recommending our SLTT partners prioritize U.S.-made drones? Should the Commission leverage its private sector relationships to promote the use of U.S.-made drones?

We also broadly seek comment on any other way that the Commission could—through rule-makings, enforcement, and public statements—promote and accelerate the deployment of UAS and UAS critical components.

***Central UAS/C-UAS Information Resource.*** To foster investment and expedite the deployment of UAS and Counter-UAS technology, we seek comment on whether to establish a centralized “one-stop-

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<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., <https://dronelife.com/2021/08/09/dji-still-dominates-public-safety-sector-survey-finds/#:~:text=DJI%20Still%20Dominates%20Public%20Safety,Products>

shopping” Commission web-page for UAS and Counter-UAS operators. As the UAS and Counter-UAS environment develops, providing a centralized information resource to assist UAS and Counter-UAS operators with equipment authorizations, spectrum licensing, and waiver processes could expedite innovation. This resource could assist both commercial operators and public safety entities by consolidating relevant information, links, precedents, and Commission contacts related to the Commission’s national security, supply chain, equipment, and spectrum regulations. We seek comment on whether, and if so how, the formation of a centralized information resource can facilitate the rapid deployment of UAS and Counter-UAS?

***Supporting a Skilled U.S. Drone Workforce.*** We seek comment on actions the Commission could take to support workforce development needed for American drone dominance. Strengthening the American drone industrial base will require a highly-skilled workforce to support development, manufacturing, and operation of drones, including in the fields of telecommunications and electrical engineering.<sup>29</sup> How can the Commission partner with industry and other Federal agencies to foster a robust U.S. drone workforce?

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We set deadlines for filing comments and reply comments at 30 and 45 days, respectively, from the date of this Public Notice’s release. Accordingly, comments must be filed on or before May 1, 2026, and reply comments must be filed on or before May 18, 2026.

For further information, contact Thomas Struble, (202) 418-7581, [Thomas.Struble@fcc.gov](mailto:Thomas.Struble@fcc.gov) or John Lockwood, (202) 418-0558, [John.Lockwood@fcc.gov](mailto:John.Lockwood@fcc.gov).

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<sup>29</sup> We note that the Telecommunications Interagency Working Group Report to Congress includes as an example the “Warriors 4 Wireless” charitable organization, which, in partnership with WIA, helps Veterans find careers in the growing 5G wireless workforce, including as drone pilots. See Telecommunications Interagency Working Group Recommendations to Address Workforce Needs (Jan. 13, 2023), available at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-390665A1.pdf>.