

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Ranking Member Suhas Subramanyam
Subcommittee on Military and Foreign Affairs
“Securing the Skies: Addressing Unauthorized Drone Activity Over U.S. Military Installations”
April 29, 2025

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today and for your service in keeping our country and our airspace safe.

It is clear that drones are the future of warfare. From the war in Ukraine to our own military bases in the continental United States, we are seeing in real time that drones are redefining how battles are fought and how intelligence is gathered.

350 drones have been reported in the last year over 100 different military installations — that’s 350 different potential national security breaches — that we know of. These include highly sensitive sites such as nuclear facilities and major military bases.

This is a huge threat to national security and the lives of our servicemembers, and our lack of a coordinated, effective response must be addressed immediately.

We are very familiar with this issue in Virginia. In December 2023, servicemembers at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia saw drones hovering over their airspace for seventeen days.

Langley is home to key national security assets like the F-22 Raptor stealth fighter and plays an important role in keeping us safe here in the nation’s capital. We have important Naval assets in the area there, too.

These drones demonstrated complicated aerial maneuvers and didn’t broadcast on known frequencies, suggesting that they weren’t just a local hobbyist making an innocent mistake. The incursions forced the base to ground days’ worth of missions over safety concerns.

But as far as we in Congress can tell, there was and still is no plan about how to deal with drone incursions. And nearly a year and a half later, we still know very little about who was flying these drones over Langley, or what they were doing.

These are not hypothetical questions or theoretical risks. Our adversaries are gaining intelligence, disrupting missions, and putting American lives in danger.

The [Tower 22 attack](#) in Jordan last year showed that even a moment's hesitation to a drone incursion can have deadly consequences. We cannot let that happen ever again, abroad or within our borders. We owe that to the three servicemembers who lost their lives in that attack.

The F-22s at Langley Air Force base cost an estimated \$350 million each. A swarm of a few dozen or hundred drones costs a fraction of that, and just one could cause severe, costly damage to an aircraft or endanger the lives of its crew.

There have also been incursions over nuclear facilities across the U.S.

Our job as the Oversight Committee is to find answers to questions, and I have many:

- Who is piloting the drones? Criminal actors? Local hobbyists? Foreign adversaries?
- What are they doing? Gathering intelligence? Probing for weaknesses? Planning an attack?
- And finally, what is our plan for dealing with them safely and effectively?

These drones are a clear and present national security threat that we need to have a plan to counter.

Base commanders need to be able to respond swiftly and proportionately to the threat. There are several areas I want to focus on today:

The first is counter drone authorities.

Right now, U.S. law allows the Departments of Defense, Energy, Justice, and Homeland Security to detect and respond to drone activities in certain situations, such as above nuclear facilities, missile defense assets, or other “covered” facilities.

Only around half of all military installations actually fall under this definition, which is based on legislation.

I look forward to learning more about whether Congress can help your agencies study or expand these authorities where appropriate to give DoD and its partners better ability to safely and effectively protect themselves and the American people.

The second is counter-drone technologies.

The solution is not as easy as just shooting them down, be it with high-tech rockets, directed energy weapons, or even an old-fashioned shotgun.

There are homes, businesses, and parks near Langley and many other bases. People live there, children play there. Shooting down drones could endanger those people and those communities, especially if we don't know what payloads the drones may be carrying. A missed shot could also pose a threat to commercial air traffic.

We have other technologies at our disposal to jam, disrupt, and even take over unknown or hostile drones.

A lot of the work developing these capabilities takes place in and around my district in Northern Virginia, and it's exciting to see how rapidly we're making developments in this space.

That being said, so far none of these technologies are silver bullets when we're talking about military bases surrounded by civilians, homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Jamming technologies, for example, can disrupt local emergency response services, 9-1-1, and commercial aircraft.

So, it would be great to hear more about how your agencies are supporting this work in government and in the private sector to develop and improve our counter-drone capabilities.

Finally, there's the issue of jurisdiction.

This is a complex issue. Several agencies have jurisdiction, including DoD and FAA, who we have here before us, but also DHS, DOJ, and local law enforcement agencies.

But I'm not here to listen to you all point fingers at each other saying it's their fault, not ours.

Instead, I look forward to hearing about how you all, along with Congress, can combine your expertise in an effective way to come up with cross-jurisdictional solutions.

This is a timely hearing on an important issue, and I want to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to come up with a plan to protect our military bases, and to protect the American people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back.

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