



Policy Priorities for 2021
Proposed Executive Actions for the First 100 Days

The next Administration, regardless of who sits in the White House in January 2021, will have a significant opportunity to leverage and enable the fast-growing commercial drone industry for the benefit of all Americans. The Commercial Drone Alliance¹ has identified several concrete actions the White House and Executive Branch can take on Day 1 or within the first 100 days of 2021 that will support the continued revitalization of the U.S. economy, keep Americans healthy, and enable a safe return to work—all while ensuring America’s continued leadership in aviation innovation and enhancing the growth and development of the U.S. commercial drone industry.

Drones can provide extensive benefits and essential services to American citizens, consumers, and businesses, such as:

- Delivering critical supplies, life-saving medical equipment, and medicines;
- Assisting with fire, accident, public safety and natural disaster response, crop assessments, search and rescue missions, and newsgathering;
- Inspecting and monitoring railroad tracks, bridges, power lines, energy facilities, industrial equipment, wind turbines, communications towers, parked aircraft, and other critical infrastructure.

The commercial unmanned aircraft systems (UAS or drone) industry has been operating safely for years and has a strong history of working closely in collaboration with the federal government to safely and securely integrate drones into our National Airspace System (NAS). The executive actions proposed below will provide vast benefits to the American public while promoting safety and security, fostering the continued growth of the U.S. economy, enabling the U.S. to continue to lead the world in aviation innovation, and supporting the advancement of critical UAS, Urban Air Mobility (UAM) and other Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) technologies here in the United States. The actions we propose here are actions that can be taken by the Executive Branch in the short term focused on

¹ The CDA is an independent non-profit organization led by key leaders in the commercial drone industry. The CDA brings together commercial drone end-users, manufacturers, service providers, advanced air mobility companies, drone security companies, and vertical markets including oil and gas, precision agriculture, construction, security, communications technology, infrastructure, newsgathering, filmmaking, and more. The CDA works with all levels of government to collaborate on policies for industry growth and seeks to educate the public on the safe and responsible use of commercial drones to achieve economic benefits and humanitarian gains. Learn more at www.commercialdronealliance.org.

UAS industry growth; a separate CDA document proposes short-term executive actions to promote the UAM and broader AAM industry. CDA will follow up with longer term legislative priorities separately.

Support America's COVID-19 Response

- **Enable Drone Delivery Operations at Scale.** Beyond vaccines and medical supplies, Americans are increasingly seeking contact-free delivery service. Industry is evolving quickly to meet these needs—but the regulatory frameworks struggle to keep pace. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should accelerate efforts to integrate routine Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations into the National Airspace System. To safely and broadly enable UAS delivery operations to communities in need, the White House should direct the FAA to provide a scoring matrix system that identifies criteria and assigns point values in order to create a transparent, predictable process for UAS operators to attain air carrier status. If necessary, the White House should direct the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs to fast-track regulatory changes. Streamlining of UAS-critical processes will promote innovation while ensuring that technological and safety advances are implemented efficiently.
- **Broadly Enable Expanded Commercial Drone Operations.** Broadly enabling flights over people, BVLOS, and at night in a safe and secure manner is critical to unlocking the benefits of using drones for many commercial and public safety tasks, including buttressing the nation's COVID-19 response. This will also foster new job opportunities within the industry. The White House should require the FAA to enable a safe and workable framework for operations over people, including over moving vehicles. The White House should also direct the FAA to expeditiously prioritize expansion of true BVLOS operations by providing guidance and a detailed framework for building an acceptable safety case for such operations that do not require visual observers.
- **Unlock High-value, Low-Altitude Operations.** The Administration should unlock the airspace by starting from the ground up—literally. On Day 1, the President should issue an Executive Order directing the FAA to enable low-altitude BVLOS operations to inspect critical infrastructure across the country, such as bridges, energy facilities, and railroads. Low-altitude BVLOS operations would offer incredible value, enabling state DOTs and commercial operators to inspect infrastructure more effectively, at a lower cost, while maintaining social distancing requirements that have impacted inspection crews. BVLOS flights would be limited to a low altitude within close proximity of the operator. Authorizing commercial operators to conduct these operations within a framework designed to ensure safety would buttress our nation's COVID-19 response, propel innovation and efficiency and advance U.S. leadership in aviation.
- **Launch Vaccine Delivery UAS Rapid Response Task Force.** Once the nation has access to a vaccine to combat COVID-19, it will be critical to immediately distribute the vaccine to the vast majority of all Americans, including those in hard-to-reach areas. The Administration should launch a UAS Vaccine Delivery Rapid Response Task Force with a focus on the areas hardest hit by the coronavirus to enable UAS delivery of vaccines and other critical supplies to vulnerable and difficult-to-reach populations, including to remote, rural, and tribal areas. To ensure success of the program, the FAA must provide clear benchmarks for UAS vaccine delivery approvals to enable rapid response efforts.

Put Americans Back to Work

- **Promote State/Local Planning for UAS Activities.** To put Americans back to work and enable innovation to prosper safely here at home, we must support state and local governments as they undertake strategic planning for “next-generation” infrastructure systems. As air transportation needs evolve, vertiports, dronepads, and digital systems will become increasingly necessary. Direct NASA and the FAA to work with industry to provide guidance to enable states and cities to plan for UAS/UAM activities. In addition, match funding and provide logistical support for state and local governments to pilot UAS/UAM infrastructure and other programs that promote innovation.
- **Grow U.S. UAS Manufacturing Capabilities and the Supply Chain System.** In an effort to put Americans back to work and promote American competitiveness, the White House should work with NASA, DOD, DOT, FAA, DOC and other agencies to immediately grow and fast-track UAS manufacturing capabilities in the United States. Relatedly, in order to stimulate the UAS marketplace, the White House should support NASA’s ongoing efforts to build a reliable U.S. UAS supply chain system and to identify gaps and vulnerabilities in the current supply chain system for unmanned vehicles, as well as downstream components. Collaboration between the federal government and industry on these important issues is critical to open the industry safely and securely.
- **Launch Workforce Initiative to Transition Veterans into the Commercial Drone Sector.** Direct the FAA, Veterans Administration (VA), and White House to coordinate with private industry on the development of a program aimed at recruiting experienced veterans into jobs within the civil drone industry. This initiative would help put experienced veterans back to work and leverage their skills and knowledge to benefit the American public and the UAS industry.
- **Promote Diversity in the UAS Industry.** Work with and incentivize private industry to attract diverse talent to the fast-growing and emerging UAS industry. Ensuring a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and skills in the industry will grow the economy while providing better solutions and driving innovation and creativity for the benefit of the American public.

Enhance Safety

- **Empower the FAA’s UAS Integration Office.** Empower the UAS Integration office to become the office of primary responsibility for most UAS-related waivers and approvals. The UAS Integration Office is a champion for safe and secure UAS integration, but currently lacks the internal authority necessary to maximize its effectiveness. The White House should immediately empower the UAS Integration Office to “own” certain regulatory approvals.
- **Implement a Comprehensive Remote Identification Framework.** Remote Identification (remote ID) is a crucial step towards expanded and scalable drone operations, which is the key to unlocking the enormous potential of commercial UAS operations here in the U.S. Implementation of a comprehensive remote ID framework that supports all airspace users will enable future development and commercialization of UAS operations.
- **Enhance UAS Industry Access to Spectrum.** The successful realization of the public benefits of UAS operations requires access to spectrum to ensure the full integration of UAS into the NAS, and the corresponding public benefits. The White House should direct the FCC to work

quickly to enable all available communications technology for the industry, for the benefit of American society.

- **Prioritize UAS Experience in the Executive Branch.** In considering new political appointments, hire into senior positions within the White House and relevant executive branch agencies personnel that understand and appreciate the value and safety benefits of UAS operations to government, industry, and the American public.
- **Promote Global Standardization and Harmonization on UAS Regulations.** Global standardization and harmonization of requirements and approvals for the commercial drone industry will enhance safety and promote the ability of U.S. companies to operate and sell UAS-related products and/or technology abroad. Global standardization will also support U.S. companies in the global UAS industry supply chain.
- **Streamline FAA Processes Governing UAS Operations.** Streamline FAA processes to promote transparency, enhance regulatory accountability and consistency, and improve communication around regulatory approvals, which will promote safety and enable expanded operations that benefit the American public. The FAA's review process must recognize that small UAS (those below 55 pounds) present far lower levels of risk than manned aircraft. Indeed, many drones used to conduct highly valuable inspections of critical infrastructure weigh less than five pounds. Even so, the FAA continues to apply incongruous standards and approaches designed for manned aircraft to very small drones performing safe and highly effective operations. That must change. U.S. leadership in aviation and Artificial Intelligence hangs in the balance.
- **Appoint a Domestic Drone Interagency Coordinator.** Appoint a Domestic Drone Interagency Coordinator to coordinate, streamline, and improve efficiencies around interagency processes related to UAS integration. UAS is a fast-growing, high-value sector of the economy. At present, interagency disagreements sometimes linger longer than necessary. Although these disagreements are part of the governing process, a Domestic Drone Interagency Coordinator could help to forge consensus, respond to concerns, and drive the regulatory system and the industry forward. Creating such a position would advance innovation and maintain U.S. leadership in the rapidly expanding drone economy.
- **Implement UAS Traffic Management.** Direct the FAA to expeditiously implement UAS traffic management (UTM), which will safely enable new types of UAS operations in low altitude airspace. UTM is a critical safety and security tool comprised of services and protocols offered by qualified providers to drone operators, and it will enable advanced drone operations by digitalizing current air traffic control procedures. These services will help the drone industry to conduct operations Beyond Visual Line of Sight, deliver packages, inspect infrastructure, and conduct life-saving humanitarian missions. Early successes by the FAA and NASA have yielded globally-recognized UTM services and form the basis for international adoption. The United States should continue to support efforts to validate and operationalize the development of UTM capabilities and standards.

Foster Innovation and Competition

- **Enable Data Sharing to Lift Barriers to Commercial Drone Industry Growth.** Open the resources of the federal government to spur innovation, including by sharing radar and other relevant data collected by the federal government while maintaining appropriate privacy and

security measures. Data-sharing will lift critical barriers to industry growth and enable the UAS industry to help respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Lack of access to federal government data has inhibited the ability to identify trends and leverage the collective experience of the UAS industry to drive innovation and commercialization. The White House should direct FAA to launch a joint working group with industry to identify key information needs, data priorities, and recommended access processes.

- **Enable Large UAS.** Large UAS have tremendous potential to conduct operations safely and economically with significant public benefits – from agricultural operations to natural disaster assessments, public safety activities to commercial delivery, to passenger transportation and much more. However, to enable these significant benefits, clarity is needed. The White House should therefore direct the FAA to expeditiously establish a clear regulatory roadmap and provide regulatory certainty for certification and operation of large UAS.

Promote Security

- **Protect Critical Sites.** UAS security is an issue of national importance. Section 2209 of the FAA Extension, Safety and Security Act of 2016 requires the FAA to establish a procedure by which operators or proprietors of fixed site facilities can prohibit or restrict the operation of UAS in close proximity to such facilities. Once implemented, this important requirement will enhance UAS security efforts, yet the deadline for rulemaking has come and gone. The White House should require the FAA to implement Section 2209 immediately.
- **Implement a “Known Operator” Program for UAS.** While innovation has moved quickly forward, policymaking has lagged behind. The White House should direct the FAA or DHS to implement a “Known Operator” program to enhance safety and security protocols, promote regulatory compliance and incentivize authorized commercial operators (or public safety operators) to proactively gain the trust of public officials and the public. This program will enable positive use cases for commercial UAS while prioritizing safety and security. Such a program could be similar in concept to the TSA Pre✓ system and the TSA Known Shipper Program.
- **Enhance Drone Security.** It is a national security problem that, notwithstanding security issues around rogue drone use at sensitive sites, private industry and state and local public safety agencies do not have the legal ability to broadly test various counter-UAS technologies here in the United States. The White House should seek authority to enable the safe expanded testing of counter-UAS technology. In doing so, the White House should direct the FCC to issue experimental licenses to counter-UAS providers to allow them to test radio frequency (RF) based counter-UAS systems in areas that will not interfere with the public.
- **Streamline Drone Security Efforts.** The national security agencies should publicly share a UAS Security National Plan to develop and review the federal government’s counter-drone capabilities with an implementation timeline, as well as relevant goals over the next five years. The National Plan would document counter-UAS and air domain awareness requirements, and provide an implementation plan inclusive of funding, programs, and support for appropriate expanded counter-UAS authorities.

Promote U.S. Leadership in Aviation

- **Demonstrate Leadership in Global Aviation.** The United States must swiftly implement enabling UAS regulations, which are necessary to allow innovation to safely scale and to regain U.S. leadership in aviation innovation. It has been five years since there has been any significant regulatory action to enable drone use in the U.S., while other countries have raced ahead, including the European Union, Canada, Australia, and many others. The White House can also demonstrate continued U.S. leadership in global aviation and UAS integration specifically by immediately appointing a U.S. representative to the International Civil Aviation Organization, a specialized agency of the United Nations which supports a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector.
- **Integrate Drones into the NASA STEM Engagement Program.** Direct NASA to incorporate drones into its STEM Engagement Program, which is designed to build a diverse future STEM workforce by engaging students in authentic learning experiences with NASA people, content, and facilities. Work with industry to identify unique educational opportunities (such as university apprenticeships) and public outreach initiatives that will enhance public understanding of UAS operations and support the federal government's ongoing efforts to enable safe and secure UAS integration.