SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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JUL 10 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
DIRECTORS OF DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Unleashing U.S. Military Drone Dominance

When I became the Secretary of Defense, I committed to rebuild our military to match threats to capabilities. Drones are the biggest battlefield innovation in a generation, accounting for most of this year's casualties in Ukraine. Our adversaries collectively produce millions of cheap drones each year. While global military drone production skyrocketed over the last three years, the previous administration deployed red tape. U.S. units are not outfitted with the lethal small drones the modern battlefield requires.

On June 6th, President Trump issued Executive Order 14307 to support the American drone industry and arm our warfighters. The Department of Defense is going above and beyond this order. I am rescinding restrictive policies that hindered production and limited access to these vital technologies, unleashing the combined potential of American manufacturing and warfighter ingenuity. I am delegating authorities to procure and operate drones from the bureaucracy to our warfighters.

Our mission is threefold. First, we will bolster the nascent U.S. drone manufacturing base by approving hundreds of American products for purchase by our military. Leveraging private capital flows that support this industry, our overt preference is to Buy American.

Second, we will power a technological leapfrog, arming our combat units with a variety of low-cost drones made by America's world-leading engineers and AI experts. Drone dominance is a process race as much as a technological race. Modern battlefield innovation demands a new procurement strategy that fuses manufacturers with our frontline troops.

Finally, we'll train as we expect to fight. To simulate the modern battlefield, senior officers must overcome the bureaucracy's instinctive risk-aversion on everything from budgeting to weaponizing and training. Next year I expect to see this capability integrated into all relevant combat training, including force-on-force drone wars.

Emergent technologies require new funding lines. To address the urgent need for drones, investment methods outlined in Executive Order 14307 are being investigated.

The directives detailed in the attached memorandum support our industrial base, reform acquisition, and field new technology for the warfighter. Lethality will not be hindered by self-imposed restrictions, especially when it comes to harnessing technologies we invented but were slow to pursue. Drone technology is advancing so rapidly, our major risk is risk-avoidance. The Department's bureaucratic gloves are coming off.

PBH

Attachment:
As stated

Controlled By: DOGE
CUI Category: Controlled Technical Information, Procurement and Acquisitions
Limited Dissemination Control: FEDCON
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# ATTACHMENT

**Tab A**

SUBJECT: Regulations and Instructions, Unleashing U.S. Military Drone Dominance

References: (a) Executive Order 14307, "Unleashing American Drone Dominance," June 6, 2025
(b) Section 848 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, Pub. L. No. 116-92
(c) Sections 1821 through 1825 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2024, Pub. L. No. 118-31, the "American Security Drone Act of 2023"
(d) Section 817, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, "Modification to Prohibition on Operation or Procurement of Foreign-made Unmanned Aircraft Systems"
(e) Guidance for Procedures for the Operation and Procurement of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to Implement Section 848 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020
(f) Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Memorandum, "Exception to Policy Requirement for Blue Small Unmanned Aircraft System," October 13, 2022
(g) Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3255.01, "Joint Unmanned Aircraft Systems Minimum Training Standards," Change 1, October 31, 2011

Executive Order 14307 (reference (a)) requires the Department to procure low-cost domestically produced drones, supporting our warfighters and our Nation's industry. The DoD must go above and beyond this Executive Order to achieve battlefield superiority. The Department will invest in unmanned aerial systems (UAS) such as one-way attack capabilities and loitering munitions consistent with the force planning construct in the 2025 Interim National Defense Strategic Guidance. By the end of 2026, every squad will have low-cost, expendable drones, prioritizing Indo-Pacific combat units and consistent with other Secretary of Defense strategic guidance documents.

This memorandum rescinds Reference (e), the 2021 memorandum "*Guidance for Procedures for the Operation and Procurement of UAS to Implement Section 848 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2020*," and Reference (f), the 2022 memorandum "*Exception to Policy Requirement for Blue Small Unmanned Aircraft System*." This new guidance delegates authority to our training commands and operational forces and requires a new procurement strategy to facilitate 24-hour modifications by frontline personnel assuming the greatest risk. My intent is rapid proliferation of diverse Group 1 and 2, or "small," UAS across every unit that can wield this capability to defeat the enemy in combat. We will prioritize the integration of UAS manufactured in the United States over those made abroad.

Effective immediately, O-6 commanders or equivalents may grant authority to operate

(ATO) and may procure, test, and train with small UAS that are compliant with statutory limitations, from laboratory prototypes to commercial products to molds fabricated by members of the U.S. Armed Forces using compliant critical components. This authority may not be further delegated. Such UAS must remain in closed loop cyber networks, cordoned from DoD networks. O-6 commanders and equivalents are also authorized to test non-lethal autonomous small UAS in controlled environments, in coordination with installation commanders.

Commanders are encouraged to engage in local innovation through three-dimensional printing, key component purchasing, and other mission-specific opportunities. O-6 commanders and equivalents may nominate critical components and systems for priority Blue List review. The Blue List, currently maintained by the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU), is a list of DoD-approved UAS, components, and software. Multiple nominations for the Blue List will be ranked at the Military Service level.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments shall program, plan, and budget for funding necessary for testing of and training with small UAS at the Military Department level to avoid depleting operational funding, while taking reasonable actions to make such funds available for use in Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and FY 2026. Purchases will favor U.S. companies with documented supply chains for critical components to the maximum extent practicable.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments shall determine airworthiness and material release requirements for UAS, exempting Group 1 and Group 2 UAS, with few exceptions. Accordingly, I direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to immediately revise reference (g), Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3255.01, "*Joint Unmanned Aircraft Systems Minimum Training Standards*," to exclude Group 1 and Group 2 UAS. Group 1-2 UAS operator training and qualifications depend on mission requirements and are hereby delegated to the Military Departments, with minimal additional medical standards applied to small UAS operators. DoD entities outside of the Military Departments shall adhere to standards prescribed by the Secretary of the Army.

Following testing, the first General, Flag officer or Senior Executive Service equivalent in the chain-of-command may approve large purchases of UAS and critical components manufactured by U.S. companies that are compliant with statutory requirements and certify them for the Blue List using the checklist developed by the DIU. The Deputy Secretary of Defense has final approval of the Blue List checklist. Items on the Blue List have ATOs and are available for purchase and operation by all U.S. military units on all military installations. UAS built by members of the U.S. Armed Forces with Blue List critical components do not need Blue List certification.

For UAS and critical components (as defined in reference (b)) from non-covered foreign countries, as defined in reference (d), and for unfamiliar domestic systems with complex supply chains, the DIU, the Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering (USD(R&E)), the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment (USD(A&S)) in concert with the DoD Chief Information Officer (CIO), the Secretaries of the Military Departments, and the

Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) (hereinafter "empowered agencies") may each independently certify drones, software, and critical components for the Blue List. These empowered agencies must respond to submissions within 14 days. All DoD empowered agencies may also obtain Blue List certification through one of the vendors the Department has approved to certify items for the Blue List. In coordination with the Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) and the Military Departments, the DIU will work with approved vendors to provide training teams to institutionalize in-house and, where appropriate, approved third-party contracted risk assessment and certification expertise.

By January 1, 2026, the DIU will transfer publication and maintenance of the Blue List to the DCMA, and the Director, DCMA, shall then become responsible for publication and maintenance of the Blue List. The Blue List will become a digital platform that will continuously update an aggregate list of all certified UAS parts and systems, those with follow-up requirements, the latest user ratings, and all vendors approved to certify UAS parts and systems for the Blue List. The DCMA and the DIU will inform and align vendors on evolving Blue List expectations and develop a ratings system to identify best-in-class systems across the Joint Force. The Blue List will be dynamic, retaining all previous component and supply chain findings, and including updated performance evaluations from testing and key lessons learned from training. The Blue List will be searchable using artificial intelligence tools. The Blue List will become a trust-but-verify system, managed by the DCMA, which will use sampling to ensure DoD vendors meet statutory requirements. The DCMA will be properly resourced to accomplish this mission.

Reflecting Executive Order 14307 (reference (a)), the DoD's goals are to support U.S. industry, outfit our warfighters with a variety of American drones, and train for modern combat using methods that include force-on-force UAS exercises. I authorize O-6 commanders and equivalents to operate or procure the absolute minimum quantities of critical components from covered foreign entities or equipment from covered foreign entities (as defined in reference (c)) necessary for the limited purposes of research, training, testing, analysis for electronic warfare, or development of UAS or counter-UAS technology, as permitted by section 1823(b)(1) of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2024. Equipment procured from covered foreign entities or containing critical components from covered foreign entities is untrustworthy and must not be able to transfer or download data from a foreign entity or otherwise pose a national cybersecurity risk.

I authorize General and Flag officers and SES equivalents to exercise my authority in section 1823(b)(2) of the NDAA for FY 2024 to procure covered UAS systems for the sole purposes of conducting counterterrorism or counterintelligence activities, protective missions, or for electronic warfare, information warfare operations, cybersecurity, or development of UAS or counter-UAS technology. I do not delegate this authority for any other mission types, and all other requests for exemptions or waivers under reference (c), the American Security Drone Act, may be acted on only by the Secretary of Defense or the Deputy Secretary of Defense. Covered foreign entity systems must not be able to transfer or download data from a foreign entity or otherwise pose a national cybersecurity risk.

Small UAS resemble munitions more than high-end airplanes. They should be cheap, rapidly replaceable, and categorized as consumable. The Secretaries of the Military Departments will modify or delete all internal policies overregulating procurement, testing, training, and fielding of small UAS that are inconsistent with this guidance. For example, small UAS do not require STANAG 4856 standards. Group 1 and Group 2 UAS will be accounted for as consumable commodities, not durable property. I direct the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in consultation with the USD(R&E) and the USD(A&S), to evaluate potential revisions to current DoD classifications of UAS, specifically evaluating the wide range of UAS weights in Group 3, which currently ranges from 56 lbs. to 1,319 lbs., affecting U.S. product design.

UAS reform must occur throughout the Department. The DoD CIO will streamline its internal processes related to the Joint Frequency Allocation-to-Equipment Process (JF-12 certification process). DoD CIO will coordinate with the Department of Commerce to ensure necessary updates are made to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Manual of Regulations and Procedures for Federal Radio Frequency Management to support updates to the JF-12 certification process. Small UAS interfaces and communications protocols should be fully available to the DoD (to facilitate interoperability) but should not be forced to conform to legacy military interfaces or communications requirements that increase cost and decrease speed of delivery. Operational testing must accelerate, streamline, and standardize safe weaponization of UAS for scale. Weapons Boards shall respond to small UAS arming requests within 30 days. Battery certifications should be completed within a week. Military Services that develop drones and tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) shall also establish red teams to develop counter-UAS TTPs in tandem. The Department expects operational commands to prefer commercial U.S. systems that include digital twins or high-fidelity simulations that allow units to train personnel more rapidly and cost-effectively.

U.S. capital markets have responded to the rapid UAS expansion, supporting commercial start-ups. The technological half-life of drones demands fusion between manufacturers and our frontline units. To date, the Department's approaches have failed to field UAS at scale and speed. To keep pace, we will execute a UAS continuous-adaptation model that includes:

1. Iterative commercial purchasing based on published, broad minimum requirements, refreshed in small lots every few months to prevent vendor lock before scale purchases endorsed by warfighters.
2. Front-line modularity that permits members of the U.S. Armed Forces to assemble systems using commercial parts and swappable payloads and software packages.
3. Software authorities that allow firmware and software to be updated within hours after an automated cybersecurity validation (including air-gapped testing, where appropriate) and expedited command authorization, eliminating unnecessary delays.
4. Data pipelines logged each day for nightly model retraining and modification.
5. A performance paradigm in which contracting officers and program executives are rated by speed of delivery, flexibility, and responsiveness.

Installation commanders will be evaluated on integration of drones against their unique installation restrictions from geography to applicable Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations on the airspace above their installations. Working with the FAA, they will remove inappropriate range restrictions, fast-track and expand spectrum approval, and establish a variety of UAS training areas that include live fire, combined arms, and swarm testing. All officials with authority over restricted airspace will reduce congestion to allow the proliferation of UAS. This will include the co-use of airspace, ranges, and training facilities, with appropriate separation for safety, to maximize opportunities for all Military Services to train on all groups of UAS. Within 90 days, the Secretaries of the Military Departments, in consultation with the USD(R&E), will jointly designate at least three national ranges, with diverse terrain (including at least one with over-water areas) for deep UAS training, with low/no inter-service cost transfer. Units operating UAS will access DoD grounds with abundant airspace and spectrum allocation. By 2027, major training events across the Department must integrate UAS. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness will ensure the Defense Readiness Reporting System is modernized accordingly.

Small UAS are such critical force enablers that they must be prioritized at the same level as major weapons systems. No later than September 1, 2025, the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Air Force will establish deliberately screened, active-duty experimental formations purpose-built to enable rapid scaling of small UAS across the Joint Force by 2026, prioritizing initial fielding to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command units. Within 30 days, the Office of Strategic Capital and Department of Government Efficiency will present options, including advance purchase commitments, direct loans, or other incentives called for in Reference (a) that accelerate the growth of the U.S. industrial base to outfit our combat units with cheap and effective U.S.-made UAS. To maximize these investments, each Military Service will establish, resource, and empower unsubordinated program offices solely focused on UAS, with an immediate priority towards small UAS. These program offices will compete to determine best practices in rapid acquisition and industry engagement with operational units. Drone dominance is a process race as much as a technological race. Major purchases shall favor U.S. companies, informed by Blue List ratings and strategic guidance.

As per the President's Executive Order 14307 (reference (a)), the Military Departments must think broadly about the potential for UAS to replace many existing systems. Within 60 days, drawing on the expertise of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation (CAPE) as necessary, the Secretary of each Military Department will identify programs that would be more cost effective or lethal if replaced by UAS. Additionally, in 2026, as part of the FY27 budgeting process, the Military Departments shall report on the changes they have made to their procurement systems and Table of Organization and Equipment since this directive was published.

U.S. capital markets attract the best entrepreneurs and engineers in the world. U.S. scientists lead in artificial intelligence. The U.S. military has the Nation's best and brightest in its ranks. Our adversaries have a head start in small UAS, but we will perform a technological leapfrog and establish small UAS domain dominance by the end of 2027. We will accomplish

this urgent goal by combining the Nation's best qualities, including risk-taking. Senior officers must set the tone. Accelerating this critical battlefield technology requires a Department of War culture.