



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

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December 10, 2020

Admiral Karl L. Schultz
Commandant
United States Coast Guard
U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE
Washington, D.C. 20593

Dear Admiral Schultz:

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (Committee or T&I) has a keen interest in the United States Coast Guard's (Coast Guard's or Service's) ability to effectively and efficiently perform its many critical missions. That is why in section 812 of the *Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018* the Committee directed the Coast Guard to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) to assess the availability of unmanned systems (UxS) for use by the Coast Guard in improving marine domain awareness. That report, *Leveraging Unmanned Systems for Coast Guard Missions: A Strategic Imperative*, has been completed and provided to the Coast Guard.¹

To date, Coast Guard initiatives designed to assess the applicability of UxS to mission areas and to introduce their capabilities into the fleet and force structure have been slower and more ad hoc than the adoption and integration of UxS in military, science, and industrial applications. However, now that these technologies have matured and are more readily and reliably available, it is time for the Coast Guard to establish proactively a formal means to identify, investigate, and integrate these promising systems. This will allow the Coast Guard to establish funding needs and make a compelling case to Congress and the Administration for the additional resources to acquire and use these technologies.

We urge you to adopt the following recommendations from the NAS report and to realign plans, operations, budgets, and policies to enable the Service to capitalize on UxS through purposeful strategic action:

¹ See NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, *Leveraging Unmanned Systems for Coast Guard Missions: A Strategic Imperative* report (2020), available at <https://www.nap.edu/read/25987/chapter/1>.

1. Issue a High-Level UxS Strategy. UxS deployment should have a compelling rationale based on specific desired outcomes and supported by the Coast Guard's approach for achieving them.
2. Designate a Senior UxS Champion. UxS deployment needs a Flag or Senior Executive Service (SES) federal employee to champion the cross-organizational efforts required to identify, promote, advocate for, coordinate, and facilitate UxS strategic goals and objectives.
3. Create a UxS Program Office. As with other major acquisition programs, UxS deployment requires a program office that will work in concert with the senior leader charged with advancing the Service's UxS strategy to plan, coordinate, assess, and promote UxS activities within the Service, and to leverage relevant activities and capabilities outside the Service.
4. Expand and Normalize UxS Implementation. UxS deployment requires significant, systematic operations-related experimentation with low-cost UxS, such as designating field unit test platforms and rapid operational integration of UxS systems.
5. Determine Actual UxS Funding Needs. Broad, enduring UxS deployment throughout the Coast Guard requires an internal study of the necessary multi-year spending for research, assets, integration, personnel, and other aspects to enable full and sustained implementation of a UxS strategy.

To remain ready, relevant, and responsive, the Coast Guard must take a more strategic and accelerated approach to exploit existing and future unmanned systems' capabilities. Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions about this request, please have your staff contact Dave Jansen, of the majority staff at (202) 225-4472, or John Clark Rayfield of the minority staff at (202) 226-0204.

Sincerely,



Peter A. DeFazio
Chair



Sam Graves
Ranking Member



Sean Patrick Maloney
Chair
Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation



Bob Gibbs
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Subcommittee on Coast Guard
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