



Top General Testifies Drones Pose a Threat

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U.S. Air Force Gen. Gregory M. Guillot, a four-star general and top commander of all air defenses for the continental U.S. and Canada, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 13th that the Pentagon needs more technology and expanded authorities to deal with the large numbers of drones over U.S. military installations, including in New Jersey.

The commander of NORTHCOM, the Northern Command of the U.S. military responsible for defending North America from various threats, and NORAD, North American Aerospace Defense Command, expressed concern over what he called the “rapidly evolving strategic environment” and “the emergence of small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) as a threat to infrastructure and personnel in the homeland.”

Military installations in New Jersey, especially in Ocean and Monmouth counties, and essential infrastructures have been subjected to surveillance as have been occurring across the state and country.

General Guillot said, “The availability and utility of small drones has grown exponentially over the last decade, and some have repeatedly employed these systems for illicit purposes. While U.S. and coalition forces overseas have faced the threat of weaponized unmanned systems for years, small drones have emerged as a significant risk to infrastructure and safety in the United States in a relatively short period of time. The widespread availability of small drones, coupled with a complicated regulatory structure and limitations on UAS countermeasures based on concerns for flight safety and privacy, has created significant vulnerabilities that have been exploited by known and unknown actors.”

He delivered the welcome news that USNORTHCOM will play a critical role in an enduring whole-of-government effort to protect people, infrastructure, aircraft, and facilities from malign incursions explaining that the effort will “require investment in robust and evolving mitigation technologies suitable for use in the United States, alignment with interagency and industry partners, and policy and statutory changes that balance safety, privacy, and defensive requirements.”

The General stated, “The primary threat I see for them in the way they’ve been operating is detection, and perhaps surveillance, of sensitive capabilities on our installations.” He described the threat as “widespread” stating “there were 350 detections reported last year on military installations...”

General Guillo’s comments are a stark contrast to the words and deeds of the Biden Administration’s national security team who late last year sent various high-level officials out to downplay or refute New Jersey residents, law enforcement, and military and elected officials who expressed well-founded concerns about drones flying directly over their homes, families, military installations, and critical water and power infrastructure.

In multiple briefings with the Biden officials, I relayed many credible reports, including from a Coast Guard Commanding Officer who told me more than a dozen drones, in formation, followed a 47-foot rescue boat a mere 100ft off the stern, as it made maneuvers in the ocean off Ocean County.

When I reported the incident on media outlets such as Fox News and NewsNation, Biden National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby claimed the drones in question were actually commercial airlines preparing to land at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Kirby also said, “We’ve done the detection, then the analysis. We’ve corroborated the sightings. And in every case that we have examined to date, we have seen nothing, nothing that indicates a public safety risk.”

Kirby’s misdirection was not unique. I wrote a letter in December to then Defense Secretary Llyod Austin asking the Pentagon to authorize the use of force to down one or more of these unmanned threats to uncover the mystery of the drones. His response was useless. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas said: “We haven’t seen anything unusual. We know of no threat.”

Meanwhile, Ocean County Sheriff Mike Mastronardy and Monmouth County Sheriff Shaun Golden stepped up as soon as these drone sightings started and, within their power and authority, worked to aggressively investigate and track drone appearances. They did—and continue to do—an amazing job.

Unfortunately, under current federal law and regulation, state law enforcement leaders are precluded from taking decisive action, leaving our highly trained officers—who are on the ground and situationally aware—hamstrung at the exact time of scrutiny and needed investigation.

This strange phenomenon has demonstrated the huge gaps that exist in our ability to counter unlawful drones.

To address this major deficiency, I introduced—the Law Against Nefarious Drones, Enforcement, Deconfliction (LANDED) Act—legislation to empower highly trained state and local law enforcement units to detect and stop any drones involved in unlawful activities.

I drafted my bill in consultation with, and in response to, a request from Sheriffs Golden and Mastronardy to provide local law enforcement officials new authorities to respond to potential threats posed by illegal drone activity.

Knowing how drone warfare has radically changed warfighting in Ukraine and Russia, the Middle East and elsewhere, we must remain vigilant and enhance our ability to address this threat.

General Guillot's sobering recognition that the size, quantity and flight maneuvers of the drones pose a "threat to infrastructure and personnel in the homeland" will no doubt help President Trump and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth to do everything they can to empower our commanders to respond to threats at bases and other critical infrastructure in New Jersey and around the country.