

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3205

December 11, 2024

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Washington, D.C.

The Honorable Michael Whitaker
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
Washington, D.C.

Dear Secretary Mayorkas, Director Wray and Administrator Whitaker,

We write out of urgent concern regarding the unmanned aerial system (UAS) activity that has affected communities across New York and New Jersey in recent days. Due to the ongoing nature of these drone incidents, we request that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) brief us as soon as possible on how your agencies are working with federal and local law enforcement to identify and address the source of these incursions.

As you know, since late November, communities in the New York City area and northern New Jersey have reported several incidents of unattributable drone sightings at night, alarming both residents and local law enforcement. According to public reports, residents have reported that some of these drones are larger in size compared to other commercially available drone technology.¹ Some of these drones have been observed maneuvering near critical infrastructure and sensitive locations, including reservoirs and military installations.² In addition to potential privacy concerns raised by these aerial systems, we are also especially concerned about how these drones may harm public safety, especially given recent reports that a medevac helicopter was prevented from transporting a seriously injured patient for care because of the presence of these drones.³

The potential safety and security risks posed by these drones in civilian areas is especially pertinent considering recent drone incursions at sensitive military sites in and outside of the continental United States over the past year. Protecting civilian infrastructure, safety, and privacy as

¹ "Unidentified Drones Light Up New Jersey's Skies, Baffling Residents", Alyce McFadden, *The New York Times*, December 7th, 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/07/nyregion/new-jersey-drones.html>

² "What Are the Mystery Drones Reported over New York State and New Jersey?", Lee Billings, *Scientific American*, December 9th, 2024. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/what-are-the-mystery-drones-reported-over-new-york-and-new-jersey/>

³ "Mysterious SUV-sized drones may have blocked medical helicopter", Andrew Paul, *Popular Science*, December 9, 2024. <https://www.popsci.com/technology/new-jersey-drones/>

well as military assets and personnel will require a comprehensive response from Congress and the executive branch. For this reason, we request that the briefing you provide also include any authorities, tools, or staff your agencies may require to address these ongoing incidents and the broader security challenge posed by UAS.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to your response no later than December 23, 2024.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Cory Booker
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator