



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Aviation
Administration**

Office of Airports Safety and Standards

800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20591

October 26, 2016

Dear Airport Sponsor:

This letter provides guidance on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Detection and Countermeasures Technology Demonstrations / Evaluations at airports.

Background: The United States Congress charged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), under Section 2206 of Public Law 114-190 (July 15, 2016), to “establish a pilot program for airspace hazard mitigation at airports and other critical infrastructure using unmanned aircraft detection systems” in cooperation with the Department of Defense (DOD), Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and other federal agencies. After completion of the pilot program, the FAA “may use unmanned aircraft detection systems to detect and mitigate the unauthorized operation of an unmanned aircraft that poses a risk to aviation safety.” In addition, recognizing the FAA’s long-standing authority, Section 2206 requires consultation with the heads of other agencies to “ensure that technologies that are developed, tested, or deployed by [other agencies] to mitigate threats posed by errant or hostile unmanned aircraft system operations do not adversely impact or interfere with safe airport operations, navigation, air traffic services, or the safe and efficient operation of the national airspace system.”

The FAA UAS Integration Office is working through Cooperative Research and Development Agreements (CRDAs) with UAS detection manufacturers to evaluate the small UAS detection and identification capabilities, using different methodologies and systems on and near airports. The FAA is also partnering with DHS, DOD and other federal agencies interested in this research, as outlined in Section 2206. These activities have taken place at selected airports around the country, and the agencies are planning additional evaluations later this year and next year.

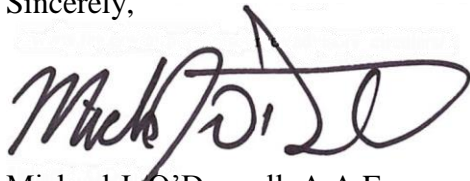
Issue: Recently, technology vendors contacted several U.S. airports, proposing to conduct demonstrations and evaluations of their UAS detection and counter measure systems at those airports. In some cases, the airport sponsors did not coordinate these assessments and demonstrations with the FAA in advance. It is important that federally obligated airports understand that the FAA has not authorized any UAS detection or counter measure assessments at any airports other than those participating in the FAA’s UAS detection program through a CRDA, and airports allowing such evaluations could be in violation of their grant assurances.

Unauthorized UAS detection and counter measure deployments can create a host of problems, such as electromagnetic and Radio Frequency (RF) interference affecting safety of flight and air traffic management issues. Additionally, current law may impose barriers to the evaluation and deployment of certain unmanned aircraft detection and mitigation technical capabilities by most federal agencies, as well as state and local entities and private individuals. There are a number of federal laws to consider, including those that prohibit destruction or endangerment of aircraft and others that restrict or prohibit electronic surveillance, including the collection, recording or decoding of signaling information and the interception of electronic communications content.

Any federally obligated airport that is contacted by a vendor requesting to demonstrate evaluate and deploy any UAS detection or counter measure technology on or near the airport should first contact their local FAA Airport District Office (ADO) before entering into any agreement to conduct UAS detection or counter measure evaluations or demonstrations at their airport. The ADO will then work with the FAA Office of Airport Safety and Standards and the FAA UAS Integration Office to provide a timely response to the airport.

Further information on the FAA's UAS detection efforts can be found at:
https://www.faa.gov/uas/programs_partnerships/uas_detection_initiative/

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael J. O'Donnell". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the end.

Michael J. O'Donnell, A.A.E.
Director of Airport Safety
and Standards