

**BEFORE THE
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

IN THE MATTER OF

Petition of L3 Unmanned Systems, Inc. for Exemption

Docket No. FAA-2018-0752

COMMENTS OF THE SMALL UAV COALITION

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The Small UAV Coalition¹ is pleased to provide its comments in support of the petition by L3 Unmanned Systems, Inc. (“L3”) for an exemption to operate the Latitude HQ-60 and HQ-90, unmanned aircraft weighing more than 55 pounds (also marketed by L3 as FVR-series UAS), for the collection of aerial data for inspection, photography and other purposes in the vicinity of L3’s bases of manufacturing and operations. The maximum gross takeoff weight for both aircraft is 135 lbs.²

Unmanned Aircraft Systems (“UAS”) offer a safe and efficient means of conducting a variety of operations. Members of the Small UAV Coalition share an interest in advancing regulatory and policy changes that will permit the operation of UAS in the near term within and beyond the line of sight, with varying degrees of autonomy, for commercial and other civil purposes, including UAS that weigh more than 55 pounds. The Coalition believes that granting this petition will help to advance this objective.

The two UAS are both hybrid quadcopters that will conduct Vertical Takeoffs and Landings (VTOL) with an electric motor and use a gas engine for forward flight. L3 seeks authority to operate “at or near” Luray Airport, Potomac Airpark, Warrenton Airport and Culpeper Airport, all in Virginia in Class G airspace.

L3 seeks an exemption from Part 107’s 55 lb. weight limit under the authority of section 333 of Public Law 112-95. In all other respects, L3 would comply with Part 107 (and obtain a waiver if

¹ Members of the Small UAV Coalition are listed in www.smalluavcoalition.org.

² In Latitude Engineering, LLC’s petition for exemption to operate the HQ-60 and HQ-90 UAS, FAA-2018-0619, the empty weight of the two unmanned aircraft are the same – 65 and 75 lbs., respectively – but the maximum gross takeoff weight of both aircraft is stated as 104 lbs. in Latitude’s petition and 135 lbs. in L3’s petition.

necessary.) It is not known whether the FAA will grant an exemption from Part 107's weight limit (which is contained in the definition of "small unmanned aircraft," or instead require L3 to obtain an exemption under section 333. In the preamble to the Part 107 final rule, in discussing the transition from operating under a section 333 exemption to operating under Part 107, the FAA stated:

For example, an operation with a section 333 exemption that does not fall under part 107, such as an operation of a UAS weighing more than 55 pounds, would not have the option of operating in accordance with part 107 rather than with its section 333 exemption.

81 Fed. Reg. 42064, at 42084.

Assuming that FAA may consider this petition as requesting a section 333 exemption, it appears that L3 will comply with the standard conditions and limitations FAA has imposed when granting section 333 exemptions. In particular, L3 will operate within the visual line of sight of its pilots, who appear to hold FAA airman certificates.³ The UAS is equipped with collision avoidance lights for visibility, and "may" be equipped with a transponder given that it will operate to and from small airports subject to agreement with the airport operator. The UAS will have functions to return to home and land immediately, and will have geo-fencing capabilities. The only difference between operations that were routinely given section 333 exemptions and operations now authorized under Part 107 is the weight of L3's unmanned aircraft.

With respect to the operating environment, L3 seeks to operate to and from and near Class G airports in Virginia. L3 will coordinate with airport management and maintain advisory declarations on published radio frequencies to communicate with manned aircraft operators. The Coalition supports L3's petition also because its experience operating at non-towered airfields in coordination with airport operators and manned general aviation traffic will foster the integration of UAS operations in the navigable airspace.

In sum, the Small UAV Coalition supports L3's petition in consideration of its agreement to comply with the conditions and restrictions the FAA has imposed in section 333 petitions, the many safety features detailed in its petition. Accordingly, the Coalition requests the FAA grant L3's petition for exemption.

³ Elsewhere in its petition, L3 states that its pilot in command "will retain an FAA Remote Pilot Certificate." The Coalition believes that in considering whether to grant a section 333 exemption, FAA should accept a remote pilot certificate with small UAS rating in lieu of private or other pilot airman certificate.

Respectfully submitted,



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