



SMALL UAV
COALITION
*A Partnership for
Safety & Innovation*

July 23, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

The undersigned associations representing the U.S. domestic drone industry strongly support the nomination of Michael Kratsios to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) and designated as the United States Chief Technology Officer. Our organizations urge the swift confirmation and designation of Mr. Kratsios to these very important roles.

The integration of unmanned aircraft systems ("UAS," or so-called drones) into the National Airspace System (NAS) has had, and will continue to have, a significant economic impact in the United States. It is projected that the value of domestic drone activity will rise from \$40 million in 2012 to a projected annual impact of \$31-\$46 billion for U.S. GDP in 2026.¹ The safety, security, economic, and efficiency benefits of commercial UAS operations are substantial. For example, UAS can inspect and monitor industrial equipment, wind turbines, communications towers, energy facilities, railroad tracks, bridges, power lines, pipelines, and other critical infrastructure; assist with law enforcement, fire, accident and natural disaster responses, and crop assessments, as well as search and rescue missions and newsgathering; and deliver supplies, products, life-saving medical equipment, and medicines, among countless other beneficial use cases. Indeed, Congress has repeatedly and rightly emphasized the tremendous potential of expanded UAS operations to enhance commercial and academic use, spur economic growth, and improve emergency response efforts.

¹ McKinsey & Company, *Commercial drones are here: The future of unmanned aerial systems*, available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/capital-projects-and-infrastructure/our-insights/commercial-drones-are-here-the-future-of-unmanned-aerial-systems>

In line with Congressional intent, Mr. Kratsios has been instrumental to the federal government's efforts to encourage the development and use of UAS. He was the driving force behind the UAS Integration Pilot Program, which has brought state, local, and tribal governments together with private sector entities to accelerate safe UAS integration, including flights over people, beyond the remote pilot's visual line of sight, and for package delivery. The program has achieved major milestones in leveraging drones for use cases such as expanding healthcare access and life-saving operations, surveying damage in the wake of natural disasters, and enhancing precision agriculture and infrastructure inspection operations. The UAS IPPs are providing the FAA with essential information to improve remote identification and tracking systems, drone traffic management and collision avoidance technologies – all vital components for developing future regulations and guidance on the safe and secure implementation of UAS into the NAS.

While the federal government has taken important steps forward to integrate UAS safely and securely over the last few years, it is also true that much work remains to be done. Mr. Kratsios is well-suited to spur and help to organize important federal government activity that will allow the American public to properly take advantage of the significant benefits of drone use. For example, the FAA will shortly propose a framework for remote identification, which is a critical step forward for the community. Implementation of Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM), also happening now, will enable a safe, efficient, sustainable and secure integration of drones into the NAS. And the federal government has much more to do to implement the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. These efforts are critical for the drone industry, and under Mr. Kratsios' leadership, OSTP is playing a vital role to move these processes forward.

Mr. Kratsios understands that the United States could lose its leadership position in aviation and UAS if it does not move expeditiously to further integrate UAS operations into the NAS. In that regard, he has worked tirelessly with others in the U.S. Government to ensure that the United States does not surrender its leadership role even as other countries have forged ahead to embrace and enable expanded UAS operations and their safe integration into airspace.

In sum, Mr. Kratsios understands the technical and policy aspects of this evolving technology and the need for a reasonable regulatory regime to deliver the significant benefits of drone operations to the American public and businesses. These organizations believe that Mr. Kratsios is extremely qualified and well suited to be an Associate Director of OSTP and the U.S. Chief Technology Officer. We urge the swift confirmation and designation of Mr. Kratsios to these important roles.

Thank you,

Aerospace Industries Association (AIA)
Alliance for Drone Innovation (ADI)
Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI)
Commercial Drone Alliance (CDA)
Small UAV Coalition