

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

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Introduction

Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Reed, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am here to discuss how the Defense Autonomous Warfare Group is leveraging critical reconciliation funding and streamlined acquisition authorities to prove out a new way of warfare. I am pleased by other essential partners as we fundamentally retool how the Department organizes for innovation and equips warfighters for an era of autonomous warfare.

Background

The character of warfare is undergoing a fundamental transformation. We have passed an inflection point. Autonomous capabilities are no longer an emerging technology but a present and rapidly accelerating reality on the battlefield. Our adversaries understand this. They are investing heavily, shortening development cycles, and integrating autonomous capability directly into their operational formations. They are learning, adapting, and fielding these capabilities at scale and speed that demands an immediate and sustained response.

A potent example is Russia's Rubicon unit. Based on open-source reporting, Rubicon was established with significant funding, operates outside of their conventional doctrine, centralizes procurement, is pioneering new tactics, and training their operators. This example is not just about a new capability; it is a fundamentally new command structure built to field autonomous capability at scale and speed.

The operational effects of their new model are already clear and deeply concerning. Open-source reporting from Ukraine indicates that Russia is employing drones with devastating effect, specifically to hunt and neutralize high-value targets like artillery, logistics, and re-supply hubs behind the front lines. By creating this specialized command, Russia has accelerated their kill chain and has the capability to attrit their enemy's combat power in a way its conventional forces could

not. This illustrates that the decisive advantage from autonomous warfare is not just in possessing the technology but in organizing it to employ it with focus, speed, and agility.

Autonomous transformation is not confined to a single domain. It spans from the seafloor to space and across the cyber domain, linking tactical actions to strategic effects. To master this new reality, we require unity of effort across the Joint Force, our industrial partners, and our allies. Seizing the opportunity presented by artificial intelligence and autonomy will secure a generational military advantage in the United States, but only if we act with purpose and resolve.

Defense Autonomous Warfare Group

The Defense Autonomous Warfare Group—what we call the DAWG—was established to unify the Department’s efforts. Its mission is to synchronize operational demand with technical innovation and industrial capacity, cutting across the traditional boundaries that have often slowed our process.

The DAWG has served as a critical proof of concept, demonstrating how the Department can and must organize for missions that span the entire Joint Force. We have proven that when operators, engineers, and acquisition professionals are integrated with a singular focus, we can move at the speed of relevance. This agility provides a unified and unambiguous demand signal critical to reinvigorating our nation’s defense industrial base.

What makes this effort different—and what gives me confidence in its success—is *how* we are executing it. We have collapsed the distance between the warfighter and the developer. Operators and engineers are now working side-by-side at the tactical edge, solving operational problems in real time. This ensures capability is informed directly by battlefield needs and refined through immediate, real-world feedback.

A core element of our success is the team itself. We have hand-selected experts for their deep experience in similar high-stakes, technology-driven operations. We are relying on their hard-

earned professional competency and military judgment to guide our rapid iteration on these developmental capabilities. Through their direct input, we are stress-testing the technology to define its operational limits. This process improvement leverages best practices from the private sector and military experience for the rapid development of new capabilities for the warfighter. While we will continuously iterate and improve, we will also remain disciplined. We are committed to locking in the most effective capabilities with trained, proficient operators, ensuring we are responsible stewards of taxpayer dollars.

This model works. We have accelerated development timelines, championed participation from industry partners, made efficient use of reconciliation funding, and provided much needed deconfliction across our Services. Importantly, we are positioned to deliver capabilities shaped directly by those who will employ them in combat. Under this framework, Mr. Owen West and Mr. Travis Metz are ensuring the systems we procure as part of Drone Dominance will meet the demands of the warfighter. Concurrently, the DAWG is ensuring that those capabilities are connected to operational as well as Service modernization efforts so that each acquisition sharpens the tip of the Joint Force spear.

The Drone Dominance initiative, powered by the insights from the DAWG, is a critical catalyst for this effort. Together, we are building the new institutional muscle memory required to ensure the United States maintains its decisive advantage in this new era of warfare.

Conclusion

Our objective is clear: to ensure that American warfighters can deter, and if necessary, defeat any adversary. We will do this by providing them with the tools to dominate the battlefield, preserve our ability to maneuver, and impose prohibitive costs on those who would threaten our interests anywhere, at any time.

With the continued support of this Committee, we will accelerate this critical work. We will ensure that the United States not only competes but leads the world in the age of autonomous warfare. The security of our Nation depends on it.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to our national defense. I look forward to your questions.