



July 9, 2020

The Honorable Jim Inhofe
Chairman
U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Inhofe, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Thornberry,

The Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) is the world's largest nonprofit dedicated to the advancement of unmanned systems and robotics. Our membership includes organizations from across the defense industrial base that support the Nation's growing integration of unmanned and autonomous systems in the force protecting our Nation. As such, we want to provide some industry perspective on the current discussions regarding the FY21 President's Budget submission as it relates to autonomy and unmanned systems, specifically the budget request supporting the Navy's unmanned programs.

AUVSI appreciates the support Congress has shown for the growth and integration of unmanned systems in the future Navy Fleet architecture. We share Congress' confidence that fielding unmanned maritime systems (UMS) is required to both ensure continued U.S. naval dominance and support the industrial base. While we understand Congress' desire to move carefully as the Navy develops the UMS fleet, we are extremely concerned with the potential disruption of funding being contemplated. It is imperative that Congress continues to fund the research and development (R&D) efforts included in the Navy's FY21 budget request. Failing to do so will disrupt the significant investment industry has made in unmanned systems over the last several years. The severe reduction in funding being considered in the FY21 NDAA would eliminate jobs, drive many small companies out of business, and cause larger companies to shift their R&D investments to more stable opportunities. Industry has invested significant resources to support the Navy's UMS programs and will continue to do so if those programs are adequately funded. The shift to unmanned is inevitable and timely, and both the Navy's FY21 President's Budget and industry's investment support the research and development effort needed to field this critical capability.

We would also like to address the concern expressed by Congress in the reliability of unmanned systems. While AUVSI strongly concurs with the need for reliability, we believe the current proposed language will not achieve the intended goal. In fact, the language as proposed will slow development and ultimately increase the cost of the needed capability. Unmanned systems have demonstrated well documented reliability for years in the commercial sector performing in a range of demanding and complex environments. Trying to apply uniquely US Navy requirements will simply drive up cost, decrease competition, and significantly delay fielding of the systems to the Warfighters that need them. For example, language that focuses exclusively on the reliability of individual components fails to recognize that reliability can be achieved in different ways when viewed from a systems reliability approach. The clear intent of the Navy's R&D effort is to field systems that can prove out these different approaches in a realistic operational context. We therefore support the FY21 President's Budget request to fully fund the continued development of R&D systems.



Industry experience through prototyping and in-water testing has determined that mission autonomy and hull, mechanical, and electrical (HM&E) automation have progressed significantly due to the procurement of other UMS prototypes and fielded platforms. Further, industry has also determined that the wholeness of autonomy is critical to mission duration and success, and the emphasis on testing should be on that wholeness rather than focusing on individual components of UMS.

AUVSI asks that Congress carefully consider language in FY21 defense authorization and appropriations legislation to ensure it does not include budget reductions and restrictive language that will dissuade industrial base investment in UMS. Based upon both Navy and OSD support, industry has committed significant investments to UMS capabilities. These investments have manifested substantive achievements in the development of autonomy, reliability, integration of advanced payloads and sensors, and propulsion.

The proposed language will drive industry to move their investments away from UMS to other markets, and it will drive small developing businesses out of the unmanned maritime business and cost jobs throughout the developing unmanned industrial base. AUVSI, requests Congress fully support the FY21 budget request and fully fund the Navy's critical unmanned systems R&D effort.

AUVSI is grateful for the support that Congress has demonstrated for UMS programs in the past and welcomes the opportunity to meet and discuss specific questions regarding the membership's concerns.

Sincerely,

Brian Wynne
President & CEO, AUVSI

Cc: All members of the Senate and House Committees on Armed Services