



July 29, 2025

The Honorable Pete Hegseth
Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

On behalf of the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) and our international membership base representing the full spectrum of autonomous systems (UxS) across air, ground, and maritime domains, we write to share key industry recommendations for executing the funding provided under the recently passed *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*. As the Department of Defense (DoD) moves to implement this historic multi-billion-dollar investment in the autonomous industry, we urge you to ensure these funds are quickly and strategically converted into real-world capabilities so they can address evolving threats, provide required tools to our warfighters, and fortify our nation's industrial base.

The DoD should adopt an implementation strategy that accounts for the unique operational demands of autonomous vehicles and systems across all domains and directly confronts shared industrial base vulnerabilities that threaten U.S. industry's ability to produce its capabilities at the speed and scale required. The DoD should prioritize purchasing UxS capabilities to enable U.S. industry growth. This targeted purchasing should include a focused subset of companies with the proven capacity and technological prowess to surge production when required and iterate its technologies to consistently meet evolving mission needs and defeat and deter adversarial advancements.

Iterative testing and continuous experimentation across the full spectrum of autonomous vehicles and systems remains essential, but it must be matched by procurement pathways that move successful prototypes into production and rapid capabilities fielding without delay. Further, the DoD should swiftly implement the guidance provided in the Secretary of Defense's *Unleashing U.S. Military Drone Dominance* memorandum and apply the policies and procedures outlined across the maritime and ground domains, in addition to air.

Evolving threats in the ground domain demands more than isolated prototypes—it requires deliberate, sustained investment in counter-UxS systems and robotic cargo transport capabilities that are scalable and rapidly fielded. Bridging this gap demands funding and acquisition strategies that abandon static and prescriptive programs of record, and shift toward modular, flexible contracting vehicles that support accelerated prototyping and continuous advancement. Rescinding these outdated processes will enable the DoD to better attract nontraditional vendors and foster true innovation. Investing strategically and at scale in ground counter-UAS technologies and robotics is not optional—it is a necessary hedge against tomorrow's threats and a critical step toward building resilient, adaptive ground forces.



In the maritime domain, uncrewed surface and underwater systems are increasingly central to persistent surveillance, mine countermeasures, and distributed deterrence. Here, implementation should focus on outcomes-driven acquisition strategies and flexible procurement that accelerate fleet integration of AI-first autonomous platforms and modular payload systems, combined with robust cybersecurity and forward manufacturing models that sustain operations in distributed environments.

The DoD should also expand and accelerate the use of the Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS) program to address critical vulnerabilities in the supply chain for UxS. The IBAS loan program is uniquely positioned to provide rapid, strategic investment to companies capable of scaling domestic production of rare earth elements, critical minerals, key components, and complete platforms that underpin UxS innovation and deployment. In today's strategic environment, where near-peer adversaries are moving with unprecedented speed to dominate autonomy and advanced manufacturing, the United States cannot afford procurement or financing delays that stifle industrial growth. By aggressively streamlining IBAS funding approvals and prioritizing companies that can demonstrate near-term production readiness, the Department can catalyze the development of a resilient, secure, and globally competitive UxS industrial base. This is essential not only to maintain our technological edge but also to ensure that the U.S. warfighter is equipped with the most advanced, reliable, and domestically sourced systems available.

Finally, the DoD's implementation strategy will benefit from structured, continuous engagement between OSD level entities, service component acquisition teams, warfighters, and industry—especially smaller and non-traditional firms whose innovation is often most dynamic. Empowering cross-functional Integrated Product Teams with real decision authority and continuing to leverage advanced purchase commitments and flexible acquisition tools like Other Transaction Authorities (OTAs) will increase agility, cut lifecycle costs, and expedite transition timelines to ensure procurement keeps pace with evolving warfighter needs and operational realities.

The autonomous systems funding included in the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to modernize our forces, strengthen the defense industrial base, and maintain the technological edge that underpins U.S. security through the advancement of autonomous vehicles and systems. AUVSI and our members stand ready to collaborate with the DoD to translate these investments into fielded capabilities and U.S. industry growth. We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue to help advance these shared goals.

Sincerely,

Michael Robbins

Michael Robbins

President & Chief Executive Officer
AUVSI