

# Dozens of Federal Agencies Initiate Counter-UAS Collaboration



**Credit:** Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Alexander Kubitza, DOW  
[Release From C. Todd Lopez, DoW News](#)

Over 180 experts from the War Department and other agencies in the federal government met yesterday for a summit to begin a planned three-year effort to deliver counter-small unmanned aircraft system capabilities to warfighters and keep the skies over America safe from dangerous drones.

In August, Secretary of War Pete Hegseth launched the [Joint Interagency Task Force 401](#). Just two weeks ago, senior leaders from the department and partner agencies, including Secretary of the Army Dan Driscoll, met at the White House to discuss how to best leverage the new task force and defend the

homeland.

“My priorities for transformation and acquisition reform include improving mobility and affordability and integrating capabilities into warfighter formations,” Hegseth wrote in the August memo, which directed Driscoll to stand up the task force. “ must focus on speed over process by ... establishing JIATF 401 with expanded authorities to execute capability development and delivery timelines that outpace the threat.”

Launching the task force, which Hegseth said will maintain operational capabilities for 36 months, is fully in line with the president’s direction to reestablish air sovereignty over the U.S.

“ must enhance its capabilities to protect personnel, equipment and facilities at home and abroad,” Hegseth said.

Representatives from the War Department, Department of Homeland Security, FBI, Transportation Department, Federal Aviation Administration and other agencies – about 50 total – met for the first time at the Mark Center in Alexandria, Virginia, as part of an introductory summit for task force partners.

“This was an opportunity to bring together all of the services, all of our interagency partners that have shared interests and equities with countering small UAS threats, because no one agency can solve this on their own,” said Army Brig. Gen. Matt Ross, joint task force commander. “What we’re really trying to do is expand the community of interest into a community of action and make sure we’re taking tangible steps to defeat the UAS threat we face on a daily basis.”

The threat from small UAS is growing, Ross told task force members.

“Unmanned systems are a defining threat for our time, and I

say that because they're prolific, they're evolving quickly, and they're no longer confined to combat," he said. "The of drones is putting exquisite surveillance and precision strike capability into the hands of individuals and small groups that used to be reserved for our state adversaries."

Ross emphasized the task force's three lines of effort to defeat the counter-small UAS threats: defending the homeland, supporting warfighter lethality and joint force training.

In the short term, according to Ross, homeland defense will focus on the area around Washington; the southern border; and supporting the FIFA World Cup event in June 2026, which is a national special security event.

U.S. Northern Command and Joint Task Force Southern Border personnel have reported some 3,000 drone incursions over the border in the past year and have seen over 60,000 drones just south of the border looking into the U.S., according to Ross.

Ross affirmed his belief that addressing threats from drones at the border isn't about a hardware solution; it involves communications and data sharing.

"We need a common air picture that includes drones," he said. "In some cases, we need cross-domain solutions that will allow us to see data that's picked up on a secret radar and an unclassified sensor. We need to proliferate active and passive sensors that provide air situational awareness along the southern border."

That kind of integration is what JIATF 401 is all about, and it's what the task force is expected to bring to bear on the small UAS issue, according to Ross.

In the National Capital Region, the task force will monitor how sensors from various agencies are able to track threats as they move through the sky, how that information can be passed

to decision-makers and how those with the ability to take those threats out of the sky can be given the authority to do so.

“We’re not there yet, but we’re making progress,” Ross said.

Because the 2026 World Cup is a national special security event, it is a priority. One focus JIATF 401 has during the World Cup is to ensure security personnel have access through the Defense Logistics Agency to purchase counter-UAS capabilities that have been rigorously tested by the War Department.

Keeping the drone threat at bay and protecting the U.S. homeland – including people and infrastructure – will take a whole-of-government approach, Ross emphasized.

“It’s important that this is a joint and interagency effort because nobody can solve this problem alone,” Ross said. “ is a whole-of-government effort to be able to protect our critical infrastructure against the threat of unmanned systems. We’ve got to partner closely with our local law enforcement and other federal, state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement to be able to counter this threat, see it before it starts to manifest and then to defeat it before an attack is successful.”

Daniel Tamburello, the undersecretary of science and technology for the Department of Homeland Security, acknowledged that working together across the federal government will be crucial to mission success.

Both Northcom and DHS are responsible for protecting the homeland, including from drones.

“There’s a lot of overlap in those missions,” Tamburello said. “Jointness and interagency cooperation is actually extremely essential with this.”

The threat from drones will only continue to grow.

“The unmanned aerial system threat is one that has become prolific and widespread, and it’s only going to get bigger and more complicated as more people adopt these systems and learn how to use them,” Tamburello said. “They’ve become , they’ve become crowd sourced, ubiquitous and available pretty much anywhere. Any bad actor who wants to do something has a chance to do it, and we have to stop them.”

The goals for the task force, Tamburello said, include coordinating with every U.S. agency that deals with the threat posed by counter-UAS to enable interoperability and open communication.

“That is really going to be the best value for the taxpayer to make sure that we’re acquiring not only the best systems, but we’re not wasting money in the process,” he said.

Micheal Torphy, unit chief of the FBI’s UAS and counter-UAS programs within their Critical Incident Response Group, attended the summit. He said the task force’s interagency focus will empower the FBI.

“We’re exceptionally excited about this initiative, and we do believe it will enhance our ability to work with our partners to disrupt threats,” he said.

One of the things the FBI is bringing to the table is the National Counter-UAS Training Center, which recently opened in Huntsville, Alabama.

“Its purpose is to train state, local, tribal and territorial law enforcement officers on counter-UAS, getting them ready for the World Cup, America 250 and ultimately the Olympics and other events,” he said.

Torphy also said he thinks the interoperability inside the task force is going to make it easier for the FBI to work hand

in hand with other partners to contribute to the mission of keeping the skies over America safe.

“The way this has been rolled out has been extraordinary,” he said. “Gen. Ross and his team have been fantastic in getting us involved very, very early. We’re really excited about the future.”