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**Statement of Chairman Lamar Smith (R-Texas)**  
*Unmanned Aircraft Systems Research and Development*

**Chairman Smith:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Committee's first hearing of the 114th Congress. Today's hearing will examine research and development of unmanned aircraft systems, also known as UAS. The hearing will also provide an overview of how UAS research, development and flight tests enable the integration of UAS into the National Airspace System.

I'm going to use the term "drone," since that is how most people refer to them. However, the term unmanned aircraft systems is a more complete and accurate term. As the name suggests, UAS are complex systems made up of not only the aircraft, but also the supporting ground, air, and communications infrastructure.

Drones come in a variety of shapes and sizes and can carry out a wide range of missions. In the past 10 years, the public has become familiar with military drones. Less discussed are civilian and nonmilitary drones that have the ability to transform our everyday lives. Commercial drones have the potential to carry out a wide range of tasks across a broad range of sectors, including agriculture, weather, energy and disaster relief.

The Teal Group, an aerospace and defense industry market intelligence firm, predicts America will spend over \$11 billion dollars on UAS research, development, testing, evaluation and procurement over the next decade. Total worldwide spending for the same period is projected to be \$91 billion.

In 2013, the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International estimated that in the next ten years over 100,000 U.S. jobs could be created as a result of UAS integration into the National Airspace System. The report also notes that continued delays in integrating drones in the National Airspace System could cost the U.S. more than \$10 billion per year, or \$27.6 million per day, in potential earnings from investment in drones' R&D.

In June 2014, the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General released an audit report that criticized the FAA for being slow to integrate drones into the National Airspace System. The audit concluded it's unlikely that integration would be completed by the September 2015 deadline.

The FAA and NASA are working together to ensure safe and successful integration of drones in the National Airspace System. Some of the research being done seeks to ensure that drones have the technologies necessary to avoid midair collisions and the ability to be controlled from a central location.

Drones can greatly benefit our society. Farmers can use small drones to monitor their crops. Emergency responders could more quickly access disaster areas to search for survivors. Energy companies could examine power lines and pipelines to assess damage or prevent leaks.

UAS experimentation and testing at high schools and universities might lead to technology breakthroughs as well as inspire students to enter STEM fields. However, due to the delays in integrating UAS into the National Airspace System, the public is not yet allowed to use drones to do any of these things.

Many other countries have developed a regulatory framework supportive of drone use for such activities. Consequently, some U.S.-based companies have moved research, development, testing and high paying jobs offshore.

Our goal today is to better understand the research underway to overcome these barriers. We are particularly interested in hearing how government-funded and private sector UAS research and development informs, or should inform, the integration of UAS into the National Airspace System.

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