RMKS/1. This message promotes awareness of established Department of the Navy (DON) policy associated with the procurement and operation of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to include commercially available UAS, commonly referred to as drones, purchased using government funds or intended to support a government purpose. Regardless of how procured, compliance with airworthiness, operator training and certification, cybersecurity vulnerability assessment and mitigation processes, and airspace access requirements is mandatory to effectively manage potential risks and ensure safety in all UAS operations. This message cancels ALNAV 052/16.

2. Per reference (a), all United States Navy (USN) and United States Marine Corps (USMC) UAS of any size that are owned, leased, operated, used, tested, or demonstrated by DON activities, or any other DON public aircraft operation conducted by or for DON (including contracted UAS services), must have an airworthiness approval in the form of a flight clearance issued or promulgated by Commander, Naval Air Systems Command (COMNAVAIRSYSCOM).
3. All USN and USMC activities operating UAS shall comply with applicable sections of reference (b). USN activities operating UAS weighing 55 pounds or less, shall comply with reference (c). USMC activities operating UAS weighing 55 pounds or less, shall comply with reference (c) as implemented by reference (d).

4. On 23 May 2018, the Deputy Secretary of Defense (DEPSECDEF) released reference (e) suspending procurement and usage of all commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) UAS throughout the Department of Defense due to potential cybersecurity vulnerabilities. In addition to COTS UAS, UAS manufactured, assembled and/or used by DON entities, which utilize COTS hardware and/or software components such as autopilots, control stations and hand controllers may also present cybersecurity risks. UAS managed by a formal Program of Record under a DON designated program office which have obtained an authority to operate with a cyber vulnerability assessment are excepted from this suspension. Prior to procuring or operating COTS UAS for any purpose, to include contracting for the operation of COTS UAS services, DON activities must request a waiver or exception to DEPSECDEFs suspension policy through their chain of command, unless excepted as provided above. For further information on requesting a waiver or exception, USN activities should contact Director of Unmanned Systems, Autonomy, and Artificial Intelligence, Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Navy (DASN) (RDT&E) at 703-692 -3044. USMC activities should refer to reference (f) for guidance. For the purpose of assessing applicability of UAS to DEPSECDEFs suspension, and notwithstanding the definition of COTS in Federal Acquisition Regulation part 2.101, COTS UAS are defined as:

   a. All UAS that are sold in substantial quantity in the marketplace and offered to the government in the same form in which they are sold to non-government consumers. The UAS are commercially available to the public including domestic and foreign manufacturers.

   b. All UAS that in original form were commercially available, but have been modified with different hardware, software, or payloads.

   c. All UAS ground command and control elements to include smart phones or tablets with associated software and hardware.

5. Per reference (g) the purchase of commercial UAS with a Government-wide Commercial Purchase Card is prohibited.

6. The use of privately owned/personally procured UAS operated in conjunction with any official USN or USMC related activity is expressly prohibited.

7. Current policy and regulations relating to UAS will continue to evolve to enable rapid innovation while ensuring any risks are understood and effectively mitigated. Consultation and coordination with the applicable points of contact listed in paragraph 8 is highly encouraged prior to pursuing the acquisition and operation of UAS.

8. Points of contact

   a. For general information about airworthiness requirements: Mr. Rich Adams, AIR 4.0P, 301-342-8297, richard.adams@navy.mil.

   b. For information regarding airspace access requirements (U.S.
National Airspace, International Airspace, and Foreign National Airspace): Mr. Ray Lewis, OPNAV N98, 703-614-2641, ray.lewis@navy.mil.

c. For information regarding safety reporting requirements: Mr. Kimball Thompson, Deputy Director Aviation Safety Programs, Naval Safety Center, 757-444-3520 x7226, edward.thompson@navy.mil.

d. For information regarding program of record UAS: Mr. Patrick Buckley, DPEO(UW) for UAS Programs, 301-757-6308, patrick.buckley@navy.mil.

e. For information on non-program of record UAS flight clearances and compliance with CNAFINST 3710.9 or MCBUL 3710: COMNAVAIRSYSCOM Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division (NAWCAD) AIRWorks UAS Class Desk, Mr. Al Stumm, 301-342-8578, albert.stumm@navy.mil.

f. For information regarding operational policy in accordance with CNAF M-3710.7 and CNAFINST 3710.9: LCDR Jamie French, CNAP N455, 619-545-2845, jamie.french@navy.mil.

g. For information on DON limitations on COTS UAS use and associated waivers and exceptions: Ms. Ryan Fitzgerald, Director of Unmanned Systems, Autonomy, and Artificial Intelligence, DASN(RDT&E), 703-692-3044, ryan.fitzgerald@navy.mil.

h. For information regarding cybersecurity requirements: Mr. Steven Kern, COMNAVAIRSYSCOM NAWCAD, Cyber Warfare Technical Director, 301-342-6040, steven.b.kern@navy.mil.

8. Released by the Honorable Richard V. Spencer, Secretary of the Navy.

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