



Department of Energy
Savannah River Operations Office
P.O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

DEC 13 2017

Ms. Nina Spinelli, Chairperson
Citizens Advisory Board
Savannah River Site
P. O. Box A
Aiken, South Carolina 29802

Dear Ms. Spinelli:

SUBJECT: Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 346 - Drone Spotting Over Savannah River Site (SRS)

Thank you for your recommendation on the drone sightings over SRS. The United States Department of Energy-Savannah River Operations Office (DOE-SR) partially accepts your recommendation and submits the following responses to each recommendation subpart.

CAB Recommendation:

- (1) *Continue investigating the drone sightings as allowed within its' own agency regulations*

DOE-SR accepts this subpart. As with any suspicious and/or unauthorized activities occurring within SRS boundaries, SRS Protective Force and Law Enforcement initiate the appropriate response to determine the nature of the activities and effectively mitigate any potential security threat.

- (2) *Continue to work with needed authorities to understand and implement the best use of air space over the site, to protect the site activities and workers*

DOE-SR accepts this subpart. DOE-SR continues to work with the appropriate DOE Headquarters Offices (Office of Security and Office of Aviation Management) in the coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration and other government agencies, in establishing authority for response to and control of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) operations over DOE-SR. These actions will include initiating the Departmental authority for establishing restrictions on UAS operations over DOE sites and the appropriate Rules of Engagement and enforcement actions for unauthorized UAS operations.

- (3) *To provide updates to the SRS CAB about findings related to UAS*

DOE-SR does not accept this subpart. UAS operations are authorized within the National Airspace System. While some UAS operations will not be authorized over SRS, there will be coordinated and approved UAS operations that occur within the SRS boundaries. As with any unauthorized activities that occur within SRS boundaries that are deemed a suspicious and/or security incident, the appropriate response will be initiated and thoroughly investigated.

Security and/or criminal violations will be coordinated with the appropriate local, state, and/or federal law enforcement authorities for proper disposition. Details of security and/or criminal investigations are not shared with the public due to the protection of sensitive information.

(4) Consider partnering with sister agencies to utilize site resources for drone testing

DOE-SR accepts this subpart. As with any other testing or research and development of new technologies, DOE-SR routinely coordinates with the appropriate entities (Savannah River National Laboratory, etc.) to facilitate the ability to support operations in the enhancement and development of technology in support of SRS, DOE and national interests.

The Department thanks you for your recommendation and values the CAB's position on the SRS programs, but will only be able to partially accept the CAB's recommendations for the Drone Spotting Over SRS.

If you have any questions, please contact me or have your staff contact Ron Bartholomew, of my staff, at (803) 952-5544.

Sincerely,



for Jack R. Craig
Savannah River Site Manager

SPD-18-021

cc:

K. Ellis, EM-5.31

D. Borak, EM-4.32

Recommendation 346
Drone Spotting Over SRS

Background:

The Savannah River Site (SRS), a 310 square mile (198,046 acres) Department of Energy site, is located in the sand-hills region of South Carolina. It encompasses parts of Aiken, Barnwell and Allendale counties and is bordered on the west by the Savannah River and Georgia. SRS is close to several cities, including Augusta, Georgia and Columbia, South Carolina. It is also within a few hours of Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Greenville and Charlotte.ⁱ

The Savannah River Site is home to over fifty-years of innovation, design, and storage of materials that spawned from the Cold War Era. Included at the site are canyons that down blend uranium and plutonium, over 10,000 bundles of used-nuclear fuel, and 150,000 gallons of transuranic waste stored in tank farms. Additionally, the site is home to labs and research center that contribute information used around the globe.

During the summer of 2016, eight drones were spotted flying over the Savannah River Site. According to releases from the Department of Energy (DOE), several reports of UAS (Unmanned Aerial System) flying over K-Area, H-Area, E-Area and MOX were made. At the time, airspace over the site was unrestricted, although the devices did pose a safety and security concern.

At this time, the operator(s) of the spotted drone(s) have yet to identified. The Federal Aviation Administration maintains a website dedicated to understanding rules and regulations surrounding drone usage and registration, including weight regulations and operator presence near the drone.

While the debate on drone usage continues to play out in the business world, media and court, safety concerns do exist for flying drones over SRS. Drivers of cars who work on site are required to possess a license and insurance, providing a level of safety and accountability. However, drone operators are not required to have insurance. If a car accident occurs on site, the car has a VIN, a license and operator that can be located. If a drone falls from the sky and causes injury, it could be near impossible for the operator to be located. When people enter the site and perform work, they have an expectation of a safe work environment. With drones flying overhead by operators who credentials and training are unknown, a risk occurs for drone related injuries.

More so, a private citizen is unable to walk onto the site and take photographs of buildings and structures. When a drone operator flies over the site, they bypass identification and security checks and are able to freely roam around the site. If a person is unable to move freely in a restricted area, then a drone should follow suit. At this time, the drone activities are unknown.

In recent news, the Trump administration is looking to Congress to allow the federal government to “track, hack and destroy any time of drone over domestic soil” with exceptions to laws that already govern surveillance, computer privacy and aircraft protection, according to a New York Times article.

While looking for a balance between civil liberty and safety, the government has voiced ongoing concern about small drone proliferation, including one that crashed over the White House fence in 2015. There are also growing concerns that as technology grows, drones will have the potential to carry objects, and the potential for terrorists to use them to deploy weapons onto secure areas is a reality that cannot be ignored.

Recommendation:

Given the nature of sensitive material housed at the site and public concern over the reported spotting of UAS, the Savannah River Site Citizens Advisory Board recommends that the Department of Energy:

1. Continue investigating the drone sighting as allowed within its own agency regulations.
2. Continue to work with needed authorities to understand and implement the best use of air space over the site, to protect site activities and workers.
3. To provide updates to the SRS CAB about findings related to the UAS.
4. *Consider partnering with sister agencies to utilize site resources for drone testing.*

Date(s) Rec'd in MGR Ofc:
Date(s) Ret'd from MGR Ofc:

AM/OD (Re)concurrence Review:	
Name:	Date:
ASA Initial/date: AP 12/7/17	
ASA Re-check:	

STAFF SUMMARY SHEET
Department of Energy (DOE)
Savannah River Operations Office (SR)

ROUTING SEQUENCE

Office	Action	Name/ Signature	Date	Office	Action	Name/ Signature	Date
1. SPD	originator	Johnson	7 DEC 2017	6. DDFO	concur	Folk	12/11/17
2. SPD	concur	Delmore	12/11/17	7. DDFO	concur	Mikolanis	
3. OSSES	concur	Szymanski	12/11/2017	8. ADM	concur	Johnson	12/12/17
4. OSSES	concur	Bartholomew	12/11/17	9. DM	concur	Spears	12/13/17
5. OEA	concur	Peterson	12/11/17	10. MGR	Sign	Craig	12/13/17

SUBJECT: Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) Recommendation Number 346—Drone Spotting Over Savannah River Site (SRS)

Originator (phone# / fax#): Tommy Johnson, (803) 952-7418 / (803) 952-7852
MGR#: **ECAT #:** **CIN #: SPD-18-021**
Due Date: 12/31/17 **Due To: Ms. Nina Spinelli, CAB**

Issue:

This is in response to the CAB Recommendation Number 346 pertaining to drone sightings over SRS.

Summary:

Recommendation Number 346 requests DOE-SR take specific actions pertaining to “drone” sightings that have been reported over SRS. The recommendations include “continue investigating drone sightings, work with needed authorities, provide updates to the SRS CAB about findings related to Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)s, and consider partnering with sister agencies to utilize site resources for drone testing.” DOE-SR’s response is to “partially accept” the CABs recommendation. DOE-SR is currently implementing three of the four subparts of the CABs recommendation. The subpart not accepted is reporting findings about UAS sightings to the CAB due to the fact security responses and security/criminal investigations involve sensitive information.

Recommendation:

Manager sign the letter.

Resolution of Nonconcurrences (If any): If an Office nonconcur, “Nonconcur” is to be written in the Action block and the basis for the nonconcurrency is to be provided by separate memo. The SSS is to be returned to the Originator by the nonconcurring office. The Originator will then either resolve the nonconcurrency or revise the SSS to explain why the action should proceed. The Originator will then forward the document to the next office with the nonconcurrency attached. If the Originator elects to proceed in spite of the nonconcurrency, a copy of the revised SSS is to be provided to the nonconcurring office. This document and any nonconcurrences, are to be retained as part of the official file.