STATEMENT BY

BRIGADIER GENERAL L. SCOTT RICE

BEFORE THE

SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

SECOND SESSION, 111TH CONGRESS

ON

THE INTEGRATION OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS INTO THE NATIONAL AIRSPACE SYSTEM: FULFILLING IMMINENT OPERATIONAL AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2010

NOT FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION

UNTIL RELEASED BY

THE SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE

****

Opening Remarks

Chairman Dorgan, Ranking Member DeMint, distinguished members of the subcommittee; I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the integration of unmanned aerial systems into the National Airspace. The National Guard continues to work to develop a safe and secure program for Predator and Global Hawk training within the continental United States.

Statement

The Air National Guard anchors the Total Air Force team, providing trained and equipped units and personnel to protect domestic life and property; preserving peace, order, and public safety; and providing interoperable capabilities required for Overseas Contingency Operations. The Air National Guard, therefore, is unique by virtue of serving as both a reserve component of the Total Air Force and as the air component of the National Guard.

By any measure, the Air National Guard is accessible and available to the Combatant Commanders, Air Force and our nation's governors. Currently, the nation has over 13,000 Air National Guard members deployed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other overseas regions. At 16 alert sites, three air defense sectors, and Northern Command, 1,200 Guard Airmen vigilantly stand watch over America's skies. Amazingly, 75-percent of our deployed Airmen are volunteers, and 60-percent are on their second or third rotations to combat zones.

In the past year, Air Guard members helped their fellow citizens battle floods, mitigate the aftermath of ice storms, fight wild fires, and provide relief from the devastating effects of a tsunami. Early in the year, Guard members from Kentucky, Arizona, and Missouri responded to debilitating ice storms, which resulted in the largest National Guard call-up in Kentucky's history. Last spring, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota Air National Guard members provided rescue relief and manpower in response to Midwest flooding. In September, the Hawaii Air National Guard sent personnel from their Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological and High Yield Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), a command and control element, and a mortuary affairs team, to American Samoa in response to an 8.4 magnitude earthquake-generated tsunami. These are just a few examples of how the Air Guard provides exceptional expertise, experience, and capabilities to mitigate disasters and their consequences.

The face of aviation has irrevocably changed with the entry of Remotely Piloted Aircraft into the mainstream of warfighter support and combat operations. The Air National Guard is on the frontline of this new and emerging capability. Our ability to meet the demands of the Combatant Commanders, warfighters and growing domestic response needs require a flexible National Airspace framework that facilitates the training of our Airmen.

Today, the Air National Guard operates Remotely Piloted Aircraft in six states and represents approximately 25-percent of the total Air Force capability. This critical Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance platform is in constant demand by our warfighters and its growth is a top priority for the Department of Defense. In fact, during the past five years, we have more than tripled our overall capacity. The Air Force continues to rapidly increase its Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capability and capacity to support combat operations. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance provides timely, fused, and actionable intelligence to the Joint force, from forward deployed locations and globally distributed centers around the globe. The exceptional operational value of Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance assets has led Joint force commanders in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa to continually increase their requests for these forces. Over the last two years, the Air Force increased the number of remotely piloted aircraft fielded by 330-percent. This rapid growth rate is outpacing our training pipelines and exponentially increasing our need for home station training. As more sites come online around the country, we will need effective and safe solutions in place for transiting National Airspace.

Remotely Piloted Aircraft have a defined requirement and a need for equal access to the National Airspace System to meet mission training. The Federal Aviation Administration has defined what types of airspace these assets are currently able to operate within as restricted areas, warning areas and non-joint use Class D airspace. The preferred lateral dimensions for Remotely Piloted Aircraft Operating Space are 50 nautical miles by 100 nautical miles with a minimum of a 5,000 foot altitude block below 18,000 feet. A minimum of five nautical mile 'cylinder' of airspace is required over Air-to-Ground Range impact areas for air-to-surface laser operations and weapons deliveries. Minimally, Remotely Piloted Aircraft can operate within a lateral dimension of 20 nautical miles by 20 nautical miles within a 5,000 foot altitude block below 18,000 feet. The Remotely Piloted Aircraft will use the Operating Space to train with other air and ground assets to accomplish the missions of both assets.

We stand ready to work with the Federal Aviation Administration, the Air Force and state/local authorities as they examine solutions for meeting the training needs of our Airmen.

Closing Remarks

The men and women of the Air National Guard greatly appreciate the cooperation and support you have provided in the past and look forward to working with you as we meet today’s challenges.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.