

Wiley Rein Watching UAV Issues

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It began as an innocuous notice issued by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in March 2012 announcing its plan to integrate unmanned aerial systems, alternatively referred to as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), into civilian airspace. The FAA notice was implementing a congressional mandate in the February 14, 2012, FAA Modernization and Reform Act. The actions being taken by the FAA to integrate the UAVs into civilian airspace are, when viewed in isolation, noncontroversial. There are already UAVs operating in civilian airspace under a routine, case-by-case FAA certification process, as well as UAVs operating under non-civilian (law enforcement and military) authority. The rulemaking was a predictable next step to make commercial and civilian uses more routine. However, this rulemaking, in the context of several contemporaneous privacy and security issues, sparked a reaction that is likely to change our legal landscape in the coming months.

The UAV market is expected to grow dramatically as new UAV technologies and applications are being developed in the military, law enforcement, and commercial spheres. The rising interest in the use of UAVs will be accompanied by a diverse and novel set of legal issues and regulatory obstacles. Wiley Rein attorneys have a depth of expertise that enables us to address UAV issues from a variety of angles. Wiley Rein is participating in the adaptation of law to a new world by combining the depth and expertise of its Aviation, Telecommunications, Privacy, and Government Contracts groups.