

Wiley Posts Podcast on Drones and National Security, Featuring Joshua Turner and Hon. Nazak Nikakhtar

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Washington, DC - Wiley, a preeminent Washington, DC law firm, addresses the benefits, national security risks, and regulatory oversight of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in a new podcast series on "Emerging Threats in National Security."

The episode on UAS (also known as unmanned aerial vehicles or drones) was hosted by partners Joshua S. Turner, co-chair of the firm's UAS and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Practice, and Hon. Nazak Nikakhtar, co-chair of the National Security Practice.

They noted that while the proliferation of UAS across the United States has brought tremendous benefits, drones can also be used for malicious purposes - including illegal surveillance, intellectual property theft, and physical attacks - by criminal organizations and foreign adversaries.

"Right now, one of the major issues before the government is the operation of drones manufactured and sold by high-threat actors abroad," including in China and Russia, said Nikakhtar, the former Assistant Secretary at the International Trade Administration and Under Secretary of the Bureau of Industry and Security (performing duties) at the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"And as we know from malign actors, civilian targets can be just as important as military targets," Nikakhtar said. "Understanding these vulnerabilities here is key to understanding why the U.S. government is moving forward with more aggressive regulations on the use of drones."

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Numerous government agencies are involved in that effort, including the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Communications Commission, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Energy, Interior, and State. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) also has a central role in advancing the safe integration of drones across the United States.

Turner and Nikakhtar said now is the time for U.S. drone manufacturers, operators, and related industries to make their positions known to policymakers.

“One of the upsides of being where we are in terms of the nascence of all of these regulations is that you still have an opportunity to get in there and influence what they are,” Turner said. “There’s a huge amount of information that’s available to the industry that isn’t necessarily available to the regulator.”

Wiley has been engaged in UAS matters since the outset of the Federal Aviation Administration opening the door to commercial uses. Drawing on its wealth of experience representing clients before regulatory agencies, obtaining necessary authorizations and licenses, and advising clients on regulatory obligations, the Wiley professional team has been significantly involved in the evolving legal landscape of UAS, representing clients from the operator, telecom, media, insurance, commerce, aviation, agriculture, higher education, public safety, transportation, and manufacturing sectors.

The firm’s leading National Security Practice combines our government contracts, international trade, export controls, sanctions, supply chain, technology, and telecom proficiencies; unparalleled relationships in DC; and insights into government policy and business strategies to provide a unique level of service, strategy, and outcomes for clients. We have a deep bench of unique and focused capabilities, strong relationships at numerous government agencies, and extensive experience serving a wide array of clients in every industry that is impacted by national security challenges and liabilities.