

To read the original Public Notice announcing the ban, please [click here](#).

To read the Public Notice announcing exceptions to the ban, please [click here](#).

To read agency guidance on how to request a Conditional Approval, please [click here](#).

Report from Washington

The Federal Communications Commission Bans Foreign-Made Drones and Drone Components, With Exceptions for Those On the “Blue UAS List” and Qualifying “Domestic End Products”

January 12, 2026

On December 22, 2025, the Federal Communications Commission (“Commission”) added all aerial drones (known as “uncrewed aircraft systems” or “UAS”) and drone critical components produced abroad to its list of covered equipment (“Covered List”), making new devices ineligible to receive Commission authorization and therefore prohibited from being imported for use or sale in the U.S. Shortly thereafter, on January 7, 2026, the Commission updated the Covered List to exclude until January 1, 2027, (1) drones and drone critical components included on the Department of War (“DOW”) Blue UAS Cleared List, and (2) drones and drone critical components that qualify as “domestic end products” under the Buy American Standard.

These determinations are a continuation of the Commission’s focus on supply chain rules to secure U.S. equipment and networks generally, and surveillance equipment specifically. Existing models already approved for continued importation and sale and those currently in use are not affected by the ban, which immediately went into effect for the Commission’s equipment authorization program. In the future, the Commission may retroactively ban or otherwise limit the marketing of older foreign-made drones and drone critical components.

Until now, the Covered List has only included specific entities and their particular products. However the Public Notice did not name Chinese companies SZ DJI Technology (the leading drone manufacturer) (“DJI”) or Autel Robotics. Instead, the ban applies to all non-U.S. countries and the Public Notice described at a high level the national security threats of drone attacks and disruptions, unauthorized surveillance, and sensitive data harvesting, and emphasized the importance of fostering a resilient industrial base for drones and other dual-use technology suited for commercial and military applications.

The Commission subsequently made exceptions to this blanket prohibition for two categories of drones and drone critical components which can now receive Commission authorization until January 1, 2027, when the exemptions will be reassessed. First, those that are included

on DOW's Blue UAS Cleared List—which requires rigorous security testing—are temporarily exempt from the Covered List. Second, those that qualify as “domestic end products” under the Buy American Standard—which requires products to be manufactured in the U.S. with domestic components that exceed 65% of the total cost of the finished product—are temporarily exempt. The termination date reflects the national security imperative to foster a domestic drone base and supply chain so that the U.S. can manufacture drones at scale.

The Commission may add more exemptions to the Covered List if the DOW or Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) determines that a given drone or class of drones, or a given drone critical component or class of drone critical components, does not pose unacceptable security risks. Drone producers, drone critical component producers, and other entities can request and obtain individual Conditional Approvals for their covered drone products by submitting information to be evaluated by DOW and DHS, including corporate structure and supply chain disclosures and a detailed onshoring plan.

Companies have a regulatory burden to ensure their supply chains do not include non-exempt foreign-made drones or drones with critical components produced by foreign countries. The prohibition positions domestic drone manufacturers to grow their footholds in American sectors currently dominated by DJI including agriculture, construction, emergency services, energy, and mining, and meet demand from hobbyists and real estate agents. American drone companies are not excused from due diligence: some rely on international diversified supply chains and, as such, may need to seek Conditional Approvals in the short term and invest in alternate modes of production in the long term.

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