

OPEN LETTER TO THE UAV INDUSTRY

You may well be aware of or have read about the imminent merger of the UK's Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC) and the UK's Defence Manufacturers' Association (DMA), both highly respected and pre-eminent trade associations. Aerospace and Defence have always been close and this will no doubt create a very powerful new representative body, but it is also a sign of the times.

The current recession may not yet be affecting military demands and requirements while the conflicts in the Middle East and Asia continue but the civil aerospace world is always feeling the full brunt of the downturn in passenger numbers and general consumer spending. Airlines are already on thin ice and before this recession is out, there will be further consolidations and casualties. As a result the civil world will feel its effects for many years to come.

Where does this leave the UAV or UAS industry? It is the emerging sector within both Aerospace and Defence. It has real potential and real growth prospects but its interests could be subsumed by those fighting for survival in the larger sector. The UAS industry needs a concerted voice and it needs to work together in a collaborative but competitive way. It may have interests in other strands of Aerospace and Defence but no one industry member can claim to be bigger, better and more powerful than the rest. Even the biggest need to pay heed to Government.

We are as an industry dependent on government cooperation: cooperation in buying, using and operating our products, and cooperation in allowing others in regulated environments to operate our products. And it is not just one government that holds sway: it is all those in the industrial world. We need consensus, uniformity and transparency to operate across boundaries and borders without changing circumstances. This is why trade associations at the national and regional level are important - UAVS representing primarily UK interests, UVS International looking after European ones, AUVERSI American ones and UVS Canada Canadian ones.

These different trade associations may have different agendas and mandates but collectively they are working towards the common good of this industry. Supporting these associations through membership subscriptions and active participation in the events and activities they organise ensures this industry has a voice and the collective objectives are achieved.

UAVS has delivered. It instigated ASTRAEA and is actively supporting its successor. It has been the key construct behind CAP 722. It represents your industry at a high level in many different fora. It wants to and will do more if its members continue to support it and give it the directives and mandates to pursue that this industry needs.

Your continued support and participation is crucial and with it this industry can really grow.



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Chairman of the UAVS Council

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