

# AUVSI Submits Comments to Congress on Defense Appropriations

ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, October 23, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ --

Today, the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) [published a letter](#) sent to U.S. House and Senate Defense Appropriations Committee members, urging Congress

to fully fund the Autonomy Enterprise Platform (AEP) at \$50 million, the Tactical Unmanned Ground Vehicle (TUGV) program at \$142.1 million and the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) at \$1 billion in the final conference version of Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 Department of Defense (DoD) appropriations legislation.



The FY 2024 Senate Defense Appropriations bill provides \$50 million to create an AEP, which will be used by DoD's Chief Digital and Artificial Intelligence Office (CDAO) to accelerate the development and testing of autonomous systems at an enterprise, all-domain level. In addition to funding, the AUVSI letter urges Congress to ensure the program works to increase access for small businesses and startups to integrate capabilities into programs of record.

In the ground autonomy domain, AUVSI requests the restoration of \$19.6 million in funding cut from the TUGV program to match the funding requested by the House and in the President's Budget of \$142.1 million. The U.S. Army will use this funding to produce uncrewed ground combat vehicle prototypes to develop, integrate and inform follow-on production and fielding decisions. In the letter, AUVSI also writes that, "Equally important in this program is leveraging commercial autonomy (dual use), which is helping lower costs to the DoD."

Finally, the AUVSI letter supports robust and increased funding for DIU, and specifically references the House Defense Appropriations Report's recommendation of \$1 billion in funding for DIU to form a "hedge portfolio" to support integration of uncrewed systems and robotics within three years. DIU was created to help the U.S. military make faster use of emerging commercial technologies and focuses on accelerating the adoption of commercial technology at speed and scale. DIU will use its funding to procure and acquire key autonomous technologies that support warfighters.

AUVSI's letter is timely and critical given DoD's recent announcement of the "Replicator" initiative

to field thousands of uncrewed systems within two years and with Congress' ongoing work on annual appropriations bills. These three areas can play key roles in the rapid fielding of advanced technologies for defense uses.

Michael Smitsky, Vice President of Government Relations at AUVSI, said: "These programs accelerate the fielding of trusted, all-domain autonomous systems and help to reestablish U.S. competitive advantages and robotics superiority in the new era of strategic global competition. Congress must fully fund these critical areas to enhance DoD program effectiveness and boost the defense industrial base while reducing risk to our servicemembers."

AUVSI's comments follow the recent launch of its [Defense Advocacy Committee](#), which advocates for multi-domain policies and funding for uncrewed and autonomous systems in the Department of Defense.

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