



### Why This Matters

The mission of the Office of Air and Marine (OAM) is to protect the American people and the Nation's critical infrastructure through the coordinated use of integrated air and marine forces. Air and marine forces are used to detect, interdict, and prevent acts of terrorism and the unlawful movement of people, illegal drugs, and other contraband toward or across U.S. borders. The unmanned aircraft system (UAS) provides command, control, communication, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capability to complement crewed aircraft and watercraft, and ground interdiction agents.

### DHS Response

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) concurred with our recommendations. CPB stated that it has established the Strategic Air and Marine Plan which defines CBP's planned UAS acquisition and sustainment over the next five years. Also, CBP stated that it has implemented flexible and responsive procedures to coordinate and support stakeholders' requests for deployment of the UAS when deemed appropriate. Regarding seeking reimbursement for expenses incurred fulfilling external stakeholder mission requests, CBP stated that there are ongoing efforts within the Department of Homeland Security to address this issue.

#### For Further Information:

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## CBP's Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems in the Nation's Border Security

### What We Determined

CBP had not adequately planned resources needed to support its current unmanned aircraft inventory. Although CBP developed plans to utilize the unmanned aircraft's capabilities in its Office of Air and Marine mission, its Concept of Operations planning document did not adequately address processes (1) to ensure that required operational equipment, such as ground control stations and ground support equipment, is provided for each launch and recovery site; (2) for stakeholders to submit unmanned aircraft mission requests; (3) to determine how mission requests are prioritized; and (4) to obtain reimbursement for missions flown on stakeholders' behalf. This approach places CBP at risk of having invested substantial resources in a program that underutilizes resources and limits its ability to achieve Office of Air and Marine mission goals.

### What We Recommend

We recommend that the Assistant Commissioner, Office of Air and Marine:

- 1) Analyze requirements and develop plans to achieve the UAS mission availability objective and acquire funding to provide necessary operations, maintenance, and equipment.
- 2) Develop and implement procedures to coordinate and support stakeholders' mission requests.
- 3) Establish interagency agreements with external stakeholders for reimbursement of expenses incurred fulfilling mission requests where authorized by law.
- 4) Postpone additional UAS purchases until recommendation #1 has been implemented.