

For: LeClairRyan, Alexandria, Va.  
From: Parness & Associates, Aberdeen, N.J.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**AVIATION LEADERS TAXI TOWARD DRONE INTEGRATION, ATTORNEY WRITES**

*--LeClairRyan aviation attorney cites successful FAA tests and new report by Altiscope/A<sup>3</sup> by Airbus as significant 'baby steps' toward goal of safely integrating Unmanned Aerial Systems into global airspace.*

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (9/20/18) – Leaders in aviation are making progress toward an increasingly urgent goal—finding ways to integrate drones into U.S. and global airspace, writes LeClairRyan aviation attorney Mark A. Dombroff in a new column for [AviationPros.com](http://AviationPros.com).

While the pace of progress might seem plodding to regulation-averse entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley, it is important to keep the scope and scale of the challenge in mind, says Dombroff, an Alexandria-based member of the national law firm and co-leader of its Aviation Industry practice.

“Integrating [Unmanned Aerial Systems] into our national airspace may not rank next to the moonshot in the annals of human achievement,” he writes. “However, it is similar in at least one respect: It will most certainly be hard.”

In the Sept. 18 column (“[Marking Milestones on the Path to UAS Integration](#)”), Dombroff cites successful “baby steps” completed this past August by the FAA’s UAS Integration Pilot Program. The participants successfully completed several trials focused on helping the agency better understand UAS capabilities and potential regulatory issues related to airspace integration, he notes.

“The trials in Oklahoma, Virginia, North Carolina and Kansas included using a drone to deliver medical supplies to a rural area; testing drones beyond the line of sight; and even using a drone to deliver an ice cream cone to a child,” Dombroff writes.

Since issuing its Part 107 UAS rules in June 2016, the FAA has ramped up its focus on integrating drones into the national airspace, he notes. To date, the agency has issued at least 2,000 waivers enabling pilots to operate UAS in ways not specifically authorized by Part 107. FAA has also issued at least 100,000 pilot certificates for commercial UAS operation, Dombroff reports.

The FAA’s focus, the attorney reminds readers, is to preserve the safety of U.S. airspace. “Naturally, regulators are cautious about allowing operators to fly UAS in ways that could carry risks, such as piloting drones beyond the line of sight,” he writes. “Nonetheless, FAA recognizes that the drone industry will not be able to move forward without expanding or eliminating many of today’s boundaries. These early tests are about moving the regulatory framework in that direction.”

In the column, Dombroff also lauds a recently published report by Altiscope as a step toward re-envisioning how the global air traffic-management system could integrate UAS.

Titled *Blueprint for the Sky: The Roadmap for the Safe Integration of Autonomous Aircraft*, the 26-page report is a thoughtful analysis of the issues involved, Dombroff explains. (The attorney was among the report’s reviewers.) “As the report notes,” he writes, “our skies are about to get much busier. By some estimates, commercial air traffic will double within 15 years even as the UAS world continues to grow.”

The FAA has already registered at least a million drones, and last year alone about three million UAS were shipped worldwide, Dombroff writes. “Meanwhile, entrepreneurs based everywhere from Silicon Valley to the United Arab Emirates are hard at work on larger-scale UAS that could one day be used as fully autonomous sky taxis, cargo delivery vehicles or airborne ambulances.”

Taken together, these efforts amount to early—but significant—milestones on the path to UAS integration, Dombroff concludes. “Bringing a new traffic-management system into reality will require deep involvement on the part of nearly all parties in the aviation business today.”

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