

Longer wait for Kenyans to fly drones

Kenyans will wait longer to fly drones following a delay in issuing a gazette notice guiding the use of aerial unmanned vehicles (AUVs).



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The Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) says it is waiting for the AG to approve regulations presented to the State Law Office earlier in the year.

The National Security Advisory Committee (NSAC) approved the draft regulations on drones in January.

"The draft regulations have received approval by the Cabinet Secretary -- Ministry of Transport, and await formal promulgation at the Attorney General's Office," KCAA director-general Gilbert Kibe said.

NSAC is chaired by president Uhuru Kenyatta and comprises all security agencies including the Kenya Defence Forces and Kenya Police Service.

KCAA is banking on drones to enhance innovation, create jobs, and facilitate service delivery to remote places.

1000 applicants awaiting approval

At least 1,000 applicants are seeking approval to operate drone-based transport services in Kenya, hinting at high demand for the robotic aircraft.

Companies want to use the UAVs for film shooting, relief services, and other commercial purposes, according to the regulator.

Non-military use of drones had been restricted in the country due to lack of a legal framework. The proposed regulations require commercial drone owners to have security clearance from the Ministry of Defence and have trained pilots, among other things.

Need to define training standards

Speaking at a conference on drones in Nairobi, Kibe said there is need to define training standards and testing mechanisms to ensure that integration of drones in conventional airspaces does not introduce undesirable safety and security risks.

Kenya will hire foreign pilots to man the vehicles because it does not have enough personnel. Civilians are limited to flying drones at a height of not more than 400 feet.

Failure to follow all the rules will attract a maximum fine of Sh500,000 or a jail term not exceeding three months, the proposed laws state.

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