

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 6846

To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct annual assessments on terrorism threats to the United States relating to the malicious use of unmanned aircraft systems by covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DECEMBER 18, 2025

Mr. CRANE (for himself, Mr. GARBARINO, Mr. McCAUL, Mr. STRONG, and Mr. OGLES) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security

A BILL

To amend the Homeland Security Act of 2002 to require the Secretary of Homeland Security to conduct annual assessments on terrorism threats to the United States relating to the malicious use of unmanned aircraft systems by covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Detecting and Evalu-
3 ating Foreign Exploitation of Novel Drones Act” or the
4 “DEFEND Act”.

5 **SEC. 2. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ON TERRORISM THREATS TO**
6 **THE UNITED STATES ARISING FROM THE**
7 **GLOBAL PROLIFERATION AND MALICIOUS**
8 **USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS.**

9 (a) IN GENERAL.—Title III of the Homeland Secu-
10 rity Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 231 et seq.) is amended by
11 adding at the end the following new section:

12 **“SEC. 324. ANNUAL ASSESSMENT ON TERRORISM THREATS**
13 **TO THE UNITED STATES RELATING TO THE**
14 **USE OF UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS BY**
15 **COVERED FOREIGN ADVERSARIES, INCLUD-**
16 **ING TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS.**

17 “(a) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 270 days after
18 the date of the enactment of this section and annually
19 thereafter for six years, the Secretary shall submit to the
20 appropriate congressional committees an assessment of
21 terrorism threats to the United States relating to the glob-
22 al proliferation and malicious use of covered unmanned
23 aircraft systems by covered foreign adversaries, including
24 terrorist organizations, and the resulting implications such
25 activities present for the homeland security of the United
26 States, including implications for domestic preparedness

1 for the malicious use of unmanned aircraft systems and
2 the collective response to related terrorism threats.

3 “(b) MATTERS INCLUDED.—Each assessment of ter-
4 rorism threats under subsection (a) shall include the fol-
5 lowing:

6 “(1) An analysis of the methods, trends, tactics,
7 and technologies, as of the date of such assessment,
8 by which covered foreign adversaries, including ter-
9 rorist organizations, seek to use covered unmanned
10 aircraft systems to surveil, disrupt, damage, or de-
11 stroy critical infrastructure of the United States or
12 a foreign country, target civilian populations, con-
13 duct kinetic strikes or terrorism attacks, or other-
14 wise undermine public safety or regional stability.

15 “(2) An evaluation of the risks that such meth-
16 ods, trends, tactics, and technologies may be rep-
17 licated, adapted, or learned from by other covered
18 foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations,
19 or by lone actors or domestic violent extremists, to
20 carry out similar terrorist attacks within the home-
21 land, including efforts to compromise border security
22 or port security, exploit vulnerabilities in the home-
23 land’s transportation systems, soft targets, mass
24 gathering events, or other high-risk venues, or to

1 cause mass casualties or disruption through the use
2 of covered unmanned aircraft systems.

3 “(3) An assessment of how covered unmanned
4 aircraft systems are employed for intelligence, sur-
5 veillance, or reconnaissance purposes by covered for-
6 eign adversaries, including terrorist organizations,
7 including the collection, transmission, or exploitation
8 of imagery or geospatial data, and how such data
9 could be leveraged to facilitate espionage, cross-bor-
10 der operations, or attacks against critical infrastruc-
11 ture of the United States.

12 “(4) An analysis of how covered foreign adver-
13 saries, including terrorist organizations, acquire,
14 manufacture, smuggle, or divert covered unmanned
15 aircraft systems into conflict zones, including via
16 ground convoys, commercial shipping containers, rail
17 shipments, small vessels, fixed- or rotary-wing air-
18 craft, over-the-road freight transport that may con-
19 ceal or co-transport other illicit or seemingly innoc-
20 uous goods, or any other illicit trafficking networks,
21 and the applicability of such methods to potential
22 entry into the homeland through seaports, airports,
23 or land border crossings.

24 “(5) An analysis of emerging technologies inte-
25 grated into covered unmanned aircraft systems that

1 enhance their operational effectiveness, resilience,
2 and lethality, when used by covered foreign adver-
3 saries, including terrorist organizations, including
4 the use of artificial intelligence, autonomous naviga-
5 tion and targeting systems, advanced surveillance
6 sensors, precision-guided payloads, encrypted com-
7 munications links, physical tethering mechanisms
8 (such as fiber optic cables that enable uninterrupted
9 command and control in contested environments),
10 cybersecurity-resilient architectures designed to pre-
11 vent intrusion or remote exploitation, or any other
12 adaptations intended to defeat or bypass electronic
13 warfare countermeasures through resistance to jam-
14 ming, spoofing, or signal degradation.

15 “(6) An evaluation of the use of low-cost, high-
16 volume swarms of covered unmanned aircraft sys-
17 tems deployed by covered foreign adversaries, includ-
18 ing terrorist organizations, in any region of active
19 conflict as determined by the Secretary, in consulta-
20 tion with the heads of other relevant Federal depart-
21 ments or agencies the Secretary determines appro-
22 priate, and the extent to which similar swarm tactics
23 could overwhelm law enforcement within the home-
24 land or overwhelm homeland defense systems, in-

cluding the potential to exhaust counter-UAS systems and associated resources or create mass panic.

“(7) An assessment of the use of covered unmanned aircraft systems by covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations, in any region of active conflict as determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the heads of other relevant Federal departments or agencies the Secretary determines appropriate, to deliver chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear payloads or simulants, including efforts to repurpose agricultural or industrial spraying unmanned aircraft systems for non-conventional attacks, and whether such scenarios are adequately modeled or prepared for in homeland security planning.

“(8) A review of how covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations, in any region of active conflict as determined by the Secretary, in consultation with the heads of other relevant Federal departments or agencies the Secretary determines appropriate, have experimented with water-launched unmanned aircraft systems and unmanned aircraft systems deployed from shipping containers or disguised vehicles, and the implications such tactics may pose for port security, land border

1 security, or the security of critical infrastructure of
2 the United States or a foreign country in proximity
3 to seaports within the homeland.

4 “(9) An assessment of lessons learned from on-
5 going and recent global conflicts regarding the utili-
6 zation, defense, and defeat of covered unmanned air-
7 craft systems, and from the experiences of allied and
8 partner countries in countering unmanned aircraft
9 system-enabled attacks conducted by covered foreign
10 adversaries, including terrorist organizations, includ-
11 ing an evaluation of the effectiveness of mobile
12 counter-UAS system platforms, passive detection
13 and tracking technologies, airspace management and
14 deconfliction tools, and regulatory mechanisms (such
15 as drone zoning laws), the applicability of such les-
16 sons to Federal, State, and local homeland security
17 operations, and the manner in which the Depart-
18 ment has incorporated, or plans to incorporate, such
19 lessons into its homeland security planning, counter-
20 UAS systems strategy, and interagency coordination
21 activities.

22 “(10) An assessment of the adoption, adapta-
23 tion, and potential operational use of unmanned air-
24 craft systems by transnational criminal organiza-
25 tions, cartels, or other illicit groups in the Western

1 Hemisphere that are supplied by or emulating cov-
2 ered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organi-
3 zations, including cross-border weaponization trends,
4 narcotics trafficking, and surveillance of law enforce-
5 ment operations.

6 “(11) A review of the Department’s research
7 and development efforts to counter emerging threats
8 posed by covered unmanned aircraft systems used by
9 covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist orga-
10 nizations, and how such efforts contribute to domes-
11 tic preparedness for and collective response to ter-
12 rorism.

13 “(12) A description of how the Secretary has
14 incorporated input, technology, and best practices
15 from private sector entities, including such entities
16 the counter-UAS systems or detection technologies
17 of which are currently deployed in regions of active
18 conflict as determined by the Secretary, in consulta-
19 tion with the heads of other relevant Federal depart-
20 ments or agencies the Secretary determines appro-
21 priate, involving covered foreign adversaries, includ-
22 ing terrorist organizations, in order to strengthen
23 domestic preparedness and accelerate adoption of ef-
24 fective counter-UAS system capabilities.

1 “(13) Any other matter relating to covered un-
2 manned aircraft systems the Secretary determines
3 appropriate.

4 “(c) TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING.—To en-
5 hance domestic preparedness against terrorism threats as-
6 sessed in accordance with subsection (a), the Secretary,
7 in consultation with the heads of relevant components and
8 offices of the Department, as determined by the Secretary,
9 shall develop recommendations, training modules, and ex-
10 ercises for Federal, State, local, Tribal, and territorial law
11 enforcement to recognize, report, and respond to malicious
12 use of unmanned aircraft systems by covered foreign ad-
13 versaries, including terrorist organizations, incorporating
14 lessons learned from current and recent global conflicts.

15 “(d) CONSULTATION.—The Secretary shall develop
16 each assessment of terrorism threats under subsection (a)
17 in consultation with representatives of the following:

18 “(1) Components and offices of the Depart-
19 ment.

20 “(2) The Department of Defense.

21 “(3) The Office of the Director of National In-
22 telligence.

23 “(4) Any other representatives of Federal de-
24 partments or agencies the Secretary determines ap-
25 propriate.

1 “(e) COLLABORATION.—In carrying out subsection
2 (a), the Secretary shall seek to collaborate with represent-
3 atives of private sector entities, each of whom shall be,
4 in the determination of the Secretary, a highly accom-
5 plished leader in the field of counter-UAS systems with
6 demonstrated experience in developing, deploying, or ad-
7 vising on covered unmanned aircraft systems used in re-
8 gions in which covered foreign adversaries, including ter-
9 rorist organizations, operate, in order to leverage private-
10 sector expertise and resources for research, analysis, and
11 evaluation of emerging threats relating to unmanned air-
12 craft systems.

13 “(f) BRIEFING REQUIRED.—Not later than seven
14 days after the submission of each assessment of terrorism
15 threats under subsection (a), the Secretary shall provide
16 to the appropriate congressional committees a classified
17 briefing on the findings, conclusions, and recommenda-
18 tions contained in such assessment.

19 “(g) FORM.—Each assessment of terrorism threats
20 under subsection (a) shall be submitted in classified form.
21 The Secretary shall also prepare an unclassified annex to
22 each such assessment, which shall be made publicly avail-
23 able on the website of the Department.

24 “(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1 “(1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
2 TEES.—The term ‘appropriate congressional com-
3 mittees’ means—

4 “(A) the Committee on Homeland Security
5 of the House of Representatives; and

6 “(B) the Committee on Homeland Security
7 and Governmental Affairs of the Senate.

8 “(2) COUNTER-UAS SYSTEM.—The term
9 ‘counter-UAS system’ has the meaning given such
10 term in section 44801 of title 49, United States
11 Code.

12 “(3) COVERED FOREIGN ADVERSARY.—The
13 term ‘covered foreign adversary’ means—

14 “(A) any foreign government, military, in-
15 telligence service, or other authority of a cov-
16 ered foreign country acting independently; or

17 “(B) any organization, group, or person
18 acting on behalf of, with the support, direction,
19 control, or influence of, or trained or supplied
20 by, such a foreign government, military, intel-
21 ligence service, or other authority, including any
22 proxy, militia, paramilitary organization, intel-
23 ligence or security service, or other state-spon-
24 sored actor that receives material support,
25 training, technical assistance, or operational co-

1 ordination from a covered foreign country and
2 engages in activities that threaten the national
3 security of the United States or its allies.

4 “(4) COVERED FOREIGN COUNTRY.—The term
5 ‘covered foreign country’ means a country that—

6 “(A) the intelligence community (as such
7 term is defined in section 3(4) of the National
8 Security Act of 1947 (50 U.S.C. 3003(4))) has
9 identified as a foreign adversary in its most re-
10 cent Annual Threat Assessment; or

11 “(B) the Secretary, in coordination with
12 the Director of National Intelligence, has iden-
13 tified as a foreign adversary that is not in-
14 cluded in such Annual Threat Assessment.

15 “(5) COVERED UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYS-
16 TEM.—The term ‘covered unmanned aircraft system’
17 means any unmanned aircraft system that—

18 “(A) is manufactured in a covered foreign
19 country or by an entity domiciled in a covered
20 foreign country;

21 “(B) uses flight controllers, radios, data
22 transmission devices, cameras, or gimbals man-
23 ufactured in a covered foreign country or by an
24 entity domiciled in a covered foreign country;

1 “(C) uses a ground control system or oper-
2 ating software developed in a covered foreign
3 country or by an entity domiciled in a covered
4 foreign country; or

5 “(D) uses network connectivity or data
6 storage located in a covered foreign country or
7 administered by an entity domiciled in a cov-
8 ered foreign country.

9 “(6) HOMELAND SECURITY ENTERPRISE.—The
10 term ‘Homeland Security Enterprise’ has the mean-
11 ing given such term in section 2200.

12 “(7) TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.—The term
13 ‘terrorist organization’ means—

14 “(A) any entity designated as a foreign
15 terrorist organization pursuant to section 219
16 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8
17 U.S.C. 1189); or

18 “(B) any entity engaged in terrorism, as
19 such term is defined in section 2(18).

20 “(8) UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM.—The term
21 ‘unmanned aircraft system’ has the meaning given
22 such term in section 44801 of title 49, United
23 States Code, except that the requirement relating to
24 safe and efficient operation in the national airspace
25 system shall not apply for purposes of this section.”.

1 (b) CLERICAL AMENDMENT.—The table of contents
2 in section 1(b) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 is
3 amended by inserting after the item relating to section
4 323 the following new item:

“Sec. 324. Annual assessment on terrorism threats to the United States relating to the use of unmanned aircraft systems by covered foreign adversaries, including terrorist organizations.”.

