

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1869

To require the Secretary of Defense to carry out an operational experimentation program to evaluate the military utility of optionally piloted vehicle rotary-wing aircraft, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 22, 2025

Mr. CRUZ introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Armed Services

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Defense to carry out an operational experimentation program to evaluate the military utility of optionally piloted vehicle rotary-wing aircraft, 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,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Helicopter Operational
5 Versatility and Enhanced Readiness Act of 2025” or the
6 “HOVER Act of 2025”.

1 **SEC. 2. OPERATIONAL EXPERIMENTATION PROGRAM FOR**
2 **OPTIONALLY PILOTED VEHICLE (OPV) RO-**
3 **TARY-WING AIRCRAFT.**

4 (a) OPERATIONAL EXPERIMENTATION PROGRAM.—
5 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enactment
6 of this Act, the Secretary of the Army shall establish an
7 operational experimentation program using optionally pi-
8 loted vehicle (OPV) technology, including such rotary-wing
9 platforms as the Secretary determines suitable—

10 (1) to evaluate the military utility of optionally
11 piloted vehicle aircraft in contested environments;

12 (2) to assess integration of such aircraft with
13 crewed aircraft in multi-domain operations;

14 (3) to analyze cost and maintenance benefits of
15 autonomous flight;

16 (4) to develop future tactics, techniques, and
17 procedures (TTPs) for Army aviation; and

18 (5) to complement and inform ongoing Army
19 science and technology efforts relating to autonomy,
20 such as the Autonomy for Combat Environment
21 Sustainment (ACES), Mission Adaptive Autonomy
22 (MAA), and the ALIAS transition agreement with
23 the Defense Advance Research Projects Agency
24 (DARPA).

25 (b) DURATION.—The Secretary shall carry out the
26 program required by subsection (a) during the two-year

1 period beginning on the date of the commencement of the
2 program.

3 (c) CONVERSION.—Under the program required by
4 subsection (a), the Secretary shall convert at least three
5 existing rotary-wing aircraft of the Army into optionally
6 piloted vehicles.

7 (d) SPECIAL USE AIRSPACE.—The Secretary shall
8 ensure that all testing and evaluation under the program
9 required by subsection (a) is conducted in special use air-
10 space of the Department of Defense.

11 (e) PROGRAM MANAGEMENT.—The Secretary shall
12 carry out the program required by subsection (a) by acting
13 through the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisi-
14 tion, Logistics, and Technology in coordination with the
15 head of the Program Executive Office for Aviation.

16 (f) PARTNERSHIPS.—In carrying out the program re-
17 quired by subsection (a), the Secretary may collaborate
18 with stakeholders in the United States defense industry,
19 universities, and research institutions to advance option-
20 ally piloted vehicle technologies and integrate best prac-
21 tices to support rapid prototyping and ensure interoper-
22 ability with broader Joint All-Domain Operations initia-
23 tives.

24 (g) REPORT.—Not later than one year after the date
25 of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit

1 to the Committee on Armed Services of the Senate and
2 the Committee on Armed Services of the House of Rep-
3 resentatives a report detailing—

4 (1) progress on the conversion required by sub-
5 section (c) and experimentation efforts under the
6 program required by subsection (a);

7 (2) initial findings of the Secretary with respect
8 to the program on operational efficiency, cost sav-
9 ings, and effectiveness; and

10 (3) recommendations for potential future pro-
11 curement of optionally piloted vehicle platforms.

12 (h) IMPLEMENTATION FLEXIBILITY.—Nothing in
13 this section shall be construed to limit the ability of the
14 Secretary to adjust the scope, platform selection, or meth-
15 odology of experimentation to ensure alignment with exist-
16 ing service priorities and long-term modernization objec-
17 tives.

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