

FY2025 NDAA: Countering Uncrewed Aircraft Systems

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Background

Congress has expressed concerns about the threats posed by uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS, commonly known as drones) to U.S. military personnel and defense installations at home and abroad, as well as an interest in the ability of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) to detect and mitigate UAS threats. DOD is developing, acquiring, and fielding defensive counter-UAS weapon systems, as in those systems that are able to locate, identify, track, and intercept adversary drones. During consideration of a FY2025 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), Congress evaluated policy provisions related to DOD's counter-UAS capabilities and authorities, and whether to authorize more, the same, or less funding than the President requested for such activities. This product provides an overview of the counter-UAS provisions and funding authorizations in the enacted version of the legislation (P.L. 118-159) and in the House-passed and Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC)-reported versions of the FY2025 NDAA (H.R. 8070 and S. 4638, respectively).

Legislative Provisions

The enacted FY2025 NDAA and the House-passed and SASC-reported versions of the bill contained multiple legislative provisions directly related to counter-UAS (see **Table 1**). The enacted and proposed versions of the NDAA also contained legislative provisions that are indirectly related to counter-UAS, such as those provisions pertaining to general air defense capabilities and other technologies, which are not addressed in this product.

In addition to the legislative provisions in the House-passed and SASC-reported bills, the House Armed Services Committee (HASC) and SASC included items of special interest (ISIs) in the committee reports on H.R. 8070 and S. 4638 that addressed counter-UAS. For example, both HASC and SASC included an ISI directing DOD officials to brief the committees on aspects of “low-cost” counter-UAS capabilities. Both committees further directed DOD officials to provide a briefing on “AI-enabled, combat-validated UAS defeat capabilities.” Unlike enacted provisions of law, directive report language is not legally binding, though agency officials typically regard it as a [congressional mandate](#).

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Table I. Selected FY2025 NDAA Legislative Provisions on Counter-UAS

House-Passed H.R. 8070	SASC-Reported S. 4638	Enacted Legislation (P.L. 118-159)
Section 902 would have amended Chapter 4 of Title 10, U.S.C. to include Section 149b, which would require the Secretary of Defense to designate a senior official as the executive agent for countering small UAS.	Section 916 would have required the Secretary of Defense to establish or designate a “C-UAS Task Force” with responsibility for reviewing and updating DOD memoranda and policies related to counter-UAS.	Section 925 adopts the Senate provision with an amendment requiring a report on training (see “Discussion”).
Section 1251 would have required the Secretary of Defense to provide a report on cooperative efforts by the United States and Israel on efforts to counter Iranian UAS threats.	No similar provision.	Not adopted; however, conferees directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a briefing to the congressional defense committees by March 1, 2025, on the use of drones by Iran-backed groups.
No similar provision.	Section 113 would have required the Secretary of the Army to certify “at least one additional interceptor and production manufacturer” for the low, slow, small UAS integrated defeat system (LIDS).	Section 113 adopts the Senate provision, with an amendment requiring the Army to submit a plan for the procurement and fielding of additional interceptors.
No similar provision; however, in an item of special interest in its report on H.R. 8070, HASC encouraged the Secretary of Defense to establish a “global UAS threat library.”	Section 335 would have required the Joint Counter-Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Office (JCSO) to establish and maintain a library of information related to UAS threats, counter-UAS solutions, and incursions at DOD installations.	Section 353 adopts the Senate provision.
No similar provision.	Section 352 would have extended the expiration date of DOD’s authority to counter UAS threats to certain covered facilities and assets from 2026 to 2027.	Not adopted (see “Discussion”).
No similar provision.	Section 1057 would have required the Secretary of Defense to (1) develop a “holistic strategy” for countering UAS, (2) develop a process for investigating and prosecuting a UAS offense, and (3) evaluate DOD policy as it relates to UAS incursions.	Section 1090 adopts the Senate provision with an amendment requiring the Secretary of Defense to submit an assessment of DOD’s counter-UAS enterprise and requiring DOD to coordinate with other federal agencies.
No similar provision.	Section 1058 would have required the Secretary of Defense to conduct a “large-scale exercise” to test DOD’s ability to respond to UAS threats to DOD installations.	Section 1073 adopts the Senate provision with an amendment extending the deadlines for the exercise and accompanying report to December 1, 2025, and March 1, 2026, respectively.
No similar provision.	Section 1087 would have required the Director of the All-Domain Anomaly Resolution Office to provide at least one representative to serve on the C-UAS Task Force.	Section 1089 adopts the provision with a clarifying amendment.

Source: CRS analysis of House-engrossed text of H.R. 8070, the SASC-reported text of S. 4638, and the [joint explanatory statement](#) to accompany House amendment to Senate amendment to H.R. 5009.

Discussion

DOD's Counter-UAS Authority

DOD is one of four federal departments—the others being the Departments of Justice, Homeland Security, and Energy—authorized by Congress to take action to mitigate UAS threats to certain covered facilities and assets in the United States. In its authorization to DOD, first provided in Section 1697 of the FY2017 NDAA (P.L. 114-328) and codified as [10 U.S.C. §130i](#), Congress defined “covered facilities and assets” as those that are identified by the Secretary of Defense, located within the United States, and directly related to certain DOD missions, such as those pertaining to nuclear deterrence, missile defense, and national security space, among others. Congress has since modified and extended the partial termination date of this authority (e.g., P.L. 115-91, §1692, and P.L. 118-31, §1681). In a DOD [legislative proposal](#) submitted to Congress on April 5, 2024, DOD recommended an amendment to Section 130i in several ways, such as by adding new missions to those already covered by Section 130i. The Biden Administration, in a Statement of Administration Policy on H.R. 8070, also [urged](#) Congress to “pass a durable, multi-year authorization and expansion” of DOD’s counter-drone authority. Section 352 of the SASC-reported FY2025 NDAA (S. 4638) would have extended DOD’s authority in Section 130i by one year, from 2026 to 2027. The House bill contained no similar provision. Congress did not adopt the provision in the enacted legislation.

Coordination within DOD

The House-passed and SASC-reported versions of the FY2025 NDAA proposed different approaches to coordinating DOD’s counter-UAS activities and policies. Section 902 of the House-passed version would have established an executive agent for oversight of counter-small UAS training and technology programs. Specifically, Section 902 would have amended Chapter 4 of Title 10 of the *U.S. Code* to require the Secretary of Defense to “designate a senior official” who would coordinate requirements for small counter-UAS across the services, provide common training programs, and conduct joint research and development activities. Section 916 in the SASC-reported version of the NDAA would have required the Secretary of Defense to establish or designate a “C-UAS Task Force” with responsibility for reviewing DOD memoranda and policies related to counter-UAS and issuing updated guidance to the commanders of military installations. In Section 925 of the enacted FY2025 NDAA, Congress adopted the provision in the SASC-reported version of the NDAA and directed the Secretary of Defense and the C-UAS Task Force to complete the review of existing guidance within 90 days and the dissemination of updated directives within 120 days following enactment. Additionally, conferees amended the provision to require the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to the congressional defense committees on DOD’s counter-UAS training efforts within 120 days after enactment.

Funding Authorizations

In the enacted version of the FY2025 NDAA (P.L. 118-159), Congress authorized procurement and research, development, test, and evaluation (RDT&E) funding for certain programs for countering UAS at levels different than that requested by DOD. Several of these changes (summarized in [Table 2](#)), such as increased funding for the Army’s counter-UAS interceptors, referenced DOD’s [unfunded priority lists](#) (UPLs). The changes included the authorization of \$184.8 million more than requested in Army procurement funding for counter-UAS [interceptors](#) for the Low, Slow, Small Integrated Defeat System (LIDS), an Army unfunded priority. The enacted NDAA also authorized \$20 million more than requested for the Army’s Counter-Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Advanced Development program to accelerate work on the Next Generation Counter-UAS Missile (NGCM) and \$14.4 million for the Marine Corps Air Defense Weapon Systems program for work on a counter-UAS high powered microwave system.

Additionally, in the Air Force’s Operation and Maintenance account, Congress authorized \$36 million more than requested for “C-UAS Electronic Support,” one of U.S. Central Command’s unfunded priorities.

Table 2. Summary of Congressional Changes to Funding Authorizations for Selected Counter-UAS Programs in the Proposed and Enacted Versions of the FY2025 NDAA

(in millions of dollars of discretionary budget authority)

Account	Line	Line Item Title	DOD Request	House-Passed H.R. 8070	SASC-Reported S. 4638	Enacted Legislation (P.L. 118-159)
Missile Procurement, Army	010	Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Intercept	\$117.4	\$314.8	\$202.2	\$302.3
Other Procurement, Army	078	Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems	\$280.1	\$445.5	\$345.6	\$280.1
Procurement, Marine Corps	010	Ground Based Air Defense	\$369.3	\$333.3	\$369.3	\$364.3
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Army	078	Maneuver—Short Range Air Defense	\$315.8	\$253.2	\$315.8	\$284.5
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Army	088	Counter Small Unmanned Aircraft System Advanced Development	\$60	\$64.5	\$80	\$80
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Army	155	Counter—Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems Sys Dev & Demonstration	\$59.6	\$59.6	\$64.1	\$64.1
Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Navy	205	Marine Corps Air Defense Weapon Systems	\$74.1	\$88.2	\$74.1	\$88.5

Source: CRS analysis of House-engrossed text of H.R. 8070, the SASC-reported text of S. 4638, and the [joint explanatory statement](#) to accompany House amendment to Senate amendment to H.R. 5009.

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