

From: [Jeremy Bennett](#)
To: [Jeremy Bennett](#)
Cc: [Dean Lynch](#); [James Hutzler](#)
Subject: Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles or Aircraft Systems (Drones) Survey, Responses Cordially Requested
Date: Friday, December 13, 2024 10:53:12 AM

Dear County Administrators,

VACo is interested in obtaining information relevant to federal legislation as well as potential state legislation and resources pertaining to Chinese manufactured unmanned aerial vehicles or aircraft systems, commonly known as drones. VACo is interested in knowing the following:

1. Does your county use drones for a public safety or other purpose?
2. Would the proposed language in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) impact your county's use of drones (i.e., would you eventually need to replace your existing drones as they are of Chinese manufacture?)
3. What would be the fiscal impact to your county of replacing your drones?

For more context, Section 1709 of the FY25 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) related to unmanned aircraft systems entities was made public this past weekend. This is the negotiated version of the Countering CCP Drones Act that was sponsored by Rep. Stefanik, Sen. Scott, and Sen. Warner, which passed the U.S. House in September. The House is likely to pass the FY25 NDAA this week and the Senate to pass it next week, with President Biden signing it into law before Christmas: –

[FY25 National Defense Authorization Act](#)

In a nutshell, Section 1709 ([begins on page 1084](#)) of the FY25 NDAA does the following:

1. Within one year, requires a national security agency to make a determination if Shenzhen Da-Jiang Innovations Sciences and Technologies Company Limited (commonly known as “DJI Technologies”) and Autel Robotics (or its subsidiaries, affiliates etc.) pose an unacceptable risk to national security.
2. Within 30 days of such positive determination, the FCC must add DJI and Autel to its “Covered List.” If the agency doesn’t make a determination, DJI and Autel will be automatically added to the Covered List.
3. Once added to the Covered List, the FCC will be prohibited from certifying any new products or services, and thus operating such a device (by both private and public entities) will be illegal.
4. To be clear, private and public entities can continue using DJI/Autel equipment that has already been licensed by the FCC, but given the average three year life span of a drone, we estimate this use will generally end in 2027-2028.

Given that this **soon to be law will likely implement an operational ban on future (January 2025 at the latest) Chinese drone models, it underscores the (more important than ever) need for grant funding to help agencies/local governments transition away from such drone systems.**

Please email answers to the survey to Jeremy R. Bennett at jbennett@vaco.org at your earliest convenience. Thank you in advance for your attention to and assistance with this matter.

Sincerely,

Jeremy R. Bennett

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