

Date of Hearing: April 13, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Rhodesia Ransom, Chair

AB 2043 (Calderon) – As Amended April 6, 2026

SUBJECT: Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force

SUMMARY: This bill requires Cal OES to establish and lead the Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force to develop a statewide strategy to protect mass gatherings, critical infrastructure, and other soft targets from attacks by unmanned aircraft systems. Additionally, this bill defines the task force's purpose, primary objective, goals, and the specific methods it may use to achieve them. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), by January 1, 2027, to establish and lead the Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force to develop a statewide strategy to protect mass gatherings, critical infrastructure, and other soft targets from attacks by unmanned aircraft systems.
- 2) Requires the Cal OES Director to seek to compose task force membership with representatives of all the following:
 - (a) State Threat Assessment Center.
 - (b) Department of the California Highway Patrol.
 - (c) Military Department.
 - (d) California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).
 - (e) California Utilities Emergency Association.
 - (f) California State Sheriffs' Association.
 - (g) California Police Chiefs Association.
 - (h) California Fire Chiefs Association.
 - (i) LA28 Organizing Committee of the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games (LA28).
 - (j) Any National Football League team based in California.
 - (k) Any Major League Baseball team based in California.
 - (l) Rank and file police officers.
 - (m) Firefighters employed by a public agency.
 - (n) Any organization devoted to the protection of personal privacy.
- 3) Authorizes the Director to appoint any other members to the task force.
- 4) Specifies the purpose of the task force is to organize and enhance the state's lawful capabilities to detect, identify, track, and monitor unmanned aircraft systems and to support local and tribal governments in combating the unlawful use of unmanned aircraft systems that pose a threat to the safety and security of individuals, communities, and critical infrastructure.
- 5) Specifies the primary objective of the task force is to develop and implement a statewide strategy to deter and counter attacks by unmanned aircraft systems by ensuring public safety

entities have the resources, training, and operational capacity to detect, track, identify, and mitigate unmanned aircraft system threats.

- 6) Establishes the goals of the task force, as specified, including protecting sensitive locations from unmanned aircraft threats, supporting the deployment of unmanned aircraft detection, tracking, identification and mitigation systems, and ensuring state readiness.
- 7) Authorizes the task force to achieve its purpose, primary objective, and goals by doing any of the following:
 - (a) Developing or updating response plans specific to unmanned aircraft systems that integrate detection systems into existing emergency operation plans or incident command systems.
 - (b) Conducting risk assessments to identify high-priority areas in alignment with federal prioritization framework, for the detection of unmanned aircraft systems, including critical infrastructure, public events, or disaster-prone areas.
 - (c) Leveraging existing training methodologies to document standard operating procedures for responding to unauthorized or malicious activity by unmanned aircraft systems.
 - (d) Coordinating with federal agencies to ensure compliance with and provide feedback on federal laws and regulations governing the detection and mitigation of unmanned aircraft systems.
 - (e) Planning for the integration of detection systems for unmanned aircraft systems with existing public safety technologies, including geographic information system (GIS) platforms or computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems.
 - (f) Ensuring first responders receive appropriate training on the operation of specific detection systems for unmanned aircraft systems.
 - (g) Developing train-the-trainer programs to build local capacity for ongoing training efforts, as appropriate in the context of federal training requirements.
 - (h) Providing scenario-based response training to prepare responders for real-world threats by unmanned aircraft systems, including swarming drones or unmanned aircraft systems equipped with payloads.
 - (i) Developing secure training for personnel on the interpretation of unmanned aircraft system detection data in the context of federal law and regulation and the integration of this data into decisionmaking processes in alignment with federal training standards.
 - (j) Designing tabletop exercises to simulate unmanned aircraft system-related incidents and test response plans, standard operating procedures, and coordination protocols.
 - (k) Organizing functional exercises to test the operation of unmanned aircraft system detection systems and the integration of these systems with other public safety technologies.

(l) Running full-scale exercises to simulate large-scale unmanned aircraft system threats, including unauthorized activity at a public event or near critical infrastructure, and multijurisdictional exercises to test coordination between the state, local agencies, tribal governments, federal agencies, and private sector partners.

(m) Conducting after-action reviews to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement following exercises.

8) Urgency Clause

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Defines unmanned aircraft and unmanned aircraft systems, as specified. (Government Code § 853.5)
- 2) Under the California Emergency Services Act, establishes the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) within the office of the Governor for the purpose of mitigating the effects of natural, manmade, or war-caused emergencies. (Government Code § 8550)

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown. A fiscal committee has not yet heard this bill.

COMMENTS:

Author's Statement: "The purpose of the Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems Task Force is to enhance California's capabilities to detect, identify, track, or monitor unmanned aircraft systems and to support local and tribal governments in combatting the unlawful use of unmanned aircraft systems that pose a threat to the safety and security of individuals, communities, and critical infrastructure. In recent years, criminals, terrorists, and hostile foreign actors with malicious intentions have intensified their use of drones. We need to have a statewide strategy to counter this evolving threat and to keep the World Cup and Olympic Games safe."

Equity Statement: "The purpose of this bill is to prevent drone attacks on critical infrastructure and mass gatherings. Unfortunately, disruptions to lifeline systems have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations."

SAFER SKIES Act (S.3481): Passed as part of the FY2026 National Defense Authorization Act, the SAFER SKIES Act (Act) expands the authority to use counter-unmanned aircraft system technologies to local, State, Tribal, and territorial law enforcement and correctional agencies as well as extending existing federal authorities for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) to respond to drone threats near airports, stadiums, and other sensitive locations through 2031. The Act also requires the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to train state and local law enforcement on counter-drone technology (a requirement before a local or state deploys the technology) and provides associated grant funding for the purchase of counter-drone equipment.

The author's office notes the importance of creating a task force to leverage the new authorities and grant funding provided by the Act.

Executive Order (EO) 14305: On June 6, 2025, President Trump issued EO 14305, titled “Restoring American Airspace Sovereignty.” This EO declared it is the policy of the United States to ensure control over our national airspace and to protect the public, critical infrastructure, mass gathering events, and military and sensitive government installations and operations from threats posed by the careless or unlawful use of UAS. Additionally, it created the Federal Task Force to Restore American Airspace Sovereignty to guarantee control over the national airspace. This task force is directed to review relevant operational, technical, and regulatory frameworks; develop and propose solutions to UAS threats; and make recommendations, as specified. The task force is chaired by the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and principals from related executive departments. The EO also directs relevant federal agencies to expand restrictions on drones near sensitive sites and critical infrastructure, improve existing enforcement mechanisms, recommend stronger penalties, improve drone detection and tracking as well as operator identification, provide state and local agencies with grants for counter-drone technology, assess protection needs for locations with a high risk factor and make related recommendations, and consider building the national counter-drone capacity.

Drone Flight Bans and Permanent Restrictions: Federal regulation prohibits drones from flying near designated national security sensitive facilities. This includes locations such as military bases, national landmarks, and certain critical infrastructure. Additionally, there are drone restrictions for major stadiums and sports arenas, airports, restricted or special use airspace, and Washington, DC.

Temporary Flight Restrictions: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) frequently establishes Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFRs) to restrict aircraft, which includes drones, from accessing designated airspace for a limited time. All unauthorized aircraft and drones are prohibited from entering these restricted areas without permission. TFRs are initiated when there are temporary hazardous conditions, a security-related event, or another special situation. In California, TFRs are most frequently seen in the airspace above wildfire response efforts.

Part 107 FAA Regulations and Waivers: To fly a drone under the FAA's Small UAS Rule (Part 107), the drone operator must obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate from the FAA. This certificate demonstrates that the operator understands the regulations, operating requirements, and procedures for safely flying drones. An operator may apply for a waiver, an official document issued by the FAA, which approves certain aircraft operations outside the limitations of the Part 107 regulations.

State Threat Assessment Center: The State Threat Assessment Center (STAC) serves as California’s information sharing clearinghouse of strategic threat analysis and situational awareness reporting to statewide leadership and the public safety community in support of efforts to prevent, prepare for, mitigate and respond to all crimes and all hazards impacting California citizens and critical infrastructure, while preserving civil liberties, individual privacy, and constitutional rights.

Arguments in Support: The Police Officer Research Association of California (PORAC) writes the rapid expansion of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) brings growing risks to public safety, including interference with emergency operations, threats to mass gatherings, critical infrastructure, and community spaces. With major events like the 2028 Olympics approaching, a coordinated statewide approach is essential. AB 2043 takes an important step forward by

bringing together public and private stakeholders to assess these risks and develop comprehensive response strategies. The integration of UAS detection systems into existing emergency operations plans and incident command structures will help ensure that first responders are better equipped to prevent, identify, and respond to emerging threats.

Double referral: Should this bill be approved, it will be referred to the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection.

Prior and Related Legislation:

AB 2113 (McKinnor, 2026). This bill would prohibit the operation of an unmanned aircraft within a 400-foot radius of, or above, a ticketed entertainment event, except under specified circumstances. The bill would make a violation of this prohibition an infraction punishable by a fine of \$500. (Currently in the Assembly Committee on Privacy and Consumer Protection)

AB 1749 (Dixon, 2026). This bill prohibits the use of a drone to knowingly or recklessly interfere with wildfire suppression efforts or related emergency response efforts, and authorizes the Attorney General, a county counsel, or a city attorney to bring civil actions, as specified, for each violation. (Currently in the Assembly Committee on Judiciary)

AB 426 (Dixon, 2025). This bill would have prohibited the operation of a drone at the site of an emergency that obstructs the emergency response and authorized the Attorney General, a county counsel, or a city attorney to bring civil actions, as specified, for each violation. (Held in Senate Appropriations)

SB 260 (Wahab, 2025) This bill establishes new requirements on residential property insurers when using aerial images taken by a remotely unmanned aircraft system (UAS) to gather evidence when evaluating policies, as specified; and creates criminal penalties for the use of UASs in specified locations, including near critical infrastructure, the California State Capitol, and any school with the intent to surveil. (Assembly Desk)

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC)

Opposition

None on file.

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