

Sixty-third  
Legislative Assembly  
of North Dakota

ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1373

Introduced by

Representatives Becker, Anderson, Beadle, Heilman, Hofstad, Monson, Rohr, Toman,  
Hanson

Senator Sitte

1 A BILL for an Act to provide for limitations on the use of unmanned aircraft for surveillance; and  
2 to provide for a legislative management study.

3 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF NORTH DAKOTA:**

4 **SECTION 1.**

5 **Definitions.**

6 As used in this Act:

- 7 1. "Law enforcement agency" means a person authorized by law, or funded by the state,  
8 to investigate or prosecute offenses against the state.  
9 2. "Unmanned aircraft" means any aircraft that is operated without the possibility of direct  
10 human intervention within or on the aircraft.  
11 3. "Unmanned aircraft system" means an unmanned aircraft and associated elements,  
12 including communication links and the components that control the unmanned aircraft,  
13 which are required for the pilot in command to operate safely and efficiently in state  
14 airspace.

15 **SECTION 2.**

16 **Prohibited use of unmanned aircraft system.**

- 17 1. Except as provided in section 3 of this Act, a law enforcement agency may not use an  
18 unmanned aircraft for surveillance of a person within the state or for the surveillance of  
19 personal or business property located within the borders of the state to gather  
20 evidence or other information pertaining to criminal conduct, or conduct in violation of  
21 a statute or regulation except to the extent authorized in a warrant issued by a court  
22 which satisfies the requirements of the Constitution of North Dakota.

1       2. Warrants to conduct surveillance with an unmanned aircraft may only be issued in a  
2           criminal investigation.

3       **SECTION 3.**

4       **Exceptions.**

5       This Act does not prohibit any use of an unmanned aircraft for surveillance during the  
6 course of:

7       1. Patrol of national borders. The use of an unmanned aircraft to patrol within twenty-five  
8           miles [40.23 kilometers] of a national border, for purposes of policing that border to  
9           prevent or deter the illegal entry of any person, illegal substance, or contraband.

10      2. Exigent circumstances. The use of an unmanned aircraft by a law enforcement agency  
11           is permitted when exigent circumstances exist. For the purposes of this subsection,  
12           exigent circumstances exist when a law enforcement agency possesses reasonable  
13           suspicion that absent swift preventative action, there is an imminent danger to life or  
14           bodily harm.

15      3. An environmental or weather-related catastrophe. The use of an unmanned aircraft by  
16           state authorities to preserve public safety, protect property, survey environmental  
17           damage to determine if a state of emergency should be declared, or to conduct  
18           surveillance for the assessment and evaluation of environmental or weather-related  
19           damage, erosion, flood, or contamination.

20      4. Testing, training, education, and research of unmanned aircraft systems.

21      **SECTION 4.**

22      **Prohibited surveillance.**

23      This Act prohibits any use of an unmanned aircraft for:

24      1. Use of force. A state agency may not authorize the use, including grant a permit to  
25           use, of an unmanned aircraft while armed with any lethal or nonlethal weapons,  
26           including firearms, pepper spray, bean bag guns, mace, and sound-based weapons.

27      2. Domestic use in private surveillance. A state agency may not authorize the use,  
28           including granting a permit to use, of an unmanned aircraft to permit any private  
29           person to conduct surveillance on any other private person without the express,  
30           informed consent of that other person or the owner of any real property on which that  
31           other private person is present.

1       3. Surveillance of the exercise of constitutional rights. A state agency may not authorize  
2       the use, including granting a permit to use, of an unmanned aircraft for the purpose of  
3       the surveillance of persons engaged in the lawful exercise of the constitutional right of  
4       freedom of speech and freedom of assembly.

5       **SECTION 5.**

6       **Remedies for violation.**

7       Any aggrieved party may obtain in a civil action all appropriate relief to prevent or remedy a  
8       violation of this Act.

9       **SECTION 6.**

10       **Prohibitions on the conduct of unmanned aircraft surveillance and the use of**  
11       **acquired surveillance as evidence.**

12       1. Evidence obtained or collected in violation of this Act is not admissible as evidence in  
13       a criminal prosecution, including use during trial, at sentencing, before a grand jury, as  
14       rebuttal evidence, or during administrative hearings in any court of law in the state.  
15       The prohibition on the use or admissibility of evidence in this subsection does not  
16       apply to evidence of other unrelated criminal activity that is observed during a duly  
17       warranted flight.

18       2. Any imaging or other forms of observational data gathered by unmanned aircraft  
19       surveillance from or concerning the parties or places subjected to surveillance in  
20       violation of this Act may not be preserved by law enforcement or government agencies  
21       for any purpose unless required by a court of law.

22       3. Any imaging or any other forms of data lawfully obtained under this Act for which there  
23       is not a reasonable and articulable suspicion that those images or data contain  
24       evidence of a crime, or are relevant to an ongoing investigation or trial, may not be  
25       retained for more than ninety days, unless the retention is attendant to general agency  
26       guidelines regarding the retention of evidence in criminal cases. In those cases, the  
27       imaging or other data may not be distributed to agencies, entities, or individuals if the  
28       distribution is not necessary to meet general agency guidelines regarding the retention  
29       of evidence in criminal cases.

30       4. An unmanned aircraft may not conduct any type of surveillance that would violate  
31       state laws regarding the interception of aural communications, electronic messaging,

1           personal location data, or acquire video or still images of a person within a home or  
2           place without first obtaining all required warrants in compliance with state statutes  
3           relevant to the interception of such voice communications, digital communications,  
4           physical surveillance data, or to capture the still or video images of a person or interior  
5           or a place for which a search warrant is prerequisite to its lawful search.

6           **SECTION 7.**

7           **Documentation of unmanned aircraft surveillance.**

- 8           1. The person authorized to conduct the surveillance under this Act shall document all  
9           use of unmanned aircraft for surveillance. The person shall document all surveillance  
10           flights as to duration, flight path, and mission objectives, including the names of place  
11           or persons authorized to be subject to surveillance.
- 12           2. The flight information must be certified as accurate and complete by the supervising  
13           person authorized by a court to conduct the surveillance.
- 14           3. The flight information required under this section must be retained for five years.
- 15           4. Except for the operational capabilities of the unmanned aircraft system and other  
16           operational information strictly related to the technical conduct and physical security of  
17           the surveillance operation, a person accused of a crime that includes evidence  
18           gathered through the use of unmanned aircraft system surveillance may obtain all  
19           information relating to the person acquired in the course of the surveillance through  
20           subpoena and discovery proceedings available in criminal proceedings.
- 21           5. Other persons who have an interest in obtaining the documentation required by this  
22           section may obtain that documentation pursuant to chapter 44-04.
- 23           6. The documentation required by this section applies to all uses of unmanned aircraft  
24           systems, including testing, training, education, and research.

25           **SECTION 8.**

26           **Application to federal law.**

27           This Act may not be construed to limit, constrain, or adversely impact testing and operations  
28           of a state test range under the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 [Pub. L. 112-95;  
29           126 Stat. 11].

30           **SECTION 9. LEGISLATIVE MANAGEMENT STUDY - UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEM**

31           **SURVEILLANCE.** During the 2013-14 interim, the legislative management shall consider

Sixty-third  
Legislative Assembly

- 1 studying the implications of using unmanned aircraft systems for surveillance purposes. The
- 2 legislative management shall report its findings and recommendations, together with any
- 3 legislation necessary to implement those recommendations, to the sixty-fourth legislative
- 4 assembly.