

Bill passed to aid uncrewed vehicle testing

By Sean Lin / Staff reporter

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The Legislative Yuan yesterday passed the Act for Uncrewed Vehicle Technology Innovations and Experiments (無人載具創新實驗條例), which exempts developers from certain legal restrictions when testing uncrewed vehicles for a prescribed period of time.

The act defines uncrewed vehicles as land vehicles, aircraft and ships — or any combination thereof — that are remotely controlled or capable of autonomous operations by surveying their surroundings, determining their position and determining the best route.

The law is based on the concept of a regulatory sandbox first incorporated in the Financial Technology Development and Innovative Experimentation Act (金融科技發展創新實驗條例), which was passed in December last year and allows financial technology firms to completely or partially bypass financial regulations when testing innovative financial services, said the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which governs autonomous vehicles.

The act allows successful applicants to circumvent a plethora of mostly traffic laws when field testing uncrewed vehicles at locations designated by the ministry. These include items in the Road Traffic Management and Penalty Act (道路交通管理處罰條例), the Highway Act (公路法), the Civil Aviation Act (民用航空法) and the Ships Act (船舶法).

Monitoring staff should have full control over any uncrewed vehicle by way of unobstructed two-way communications using an automated system, the act stipulates.

In the event that applicants need to set up, manufacture or import telecommunications devices to test uncrewed vehicles, they can expedite the process by notifying the National Communications Commission without having to pass a review, the act says.

However, no uncrewed vehicle tests or experiments shall breach the Money Laundering Control Act (洗錢防制法) or the Counter-Terrorism Financing Act (資恐防制法), and applicants must shoulder any legal liabilities under the Civil Code or the Criminal Code as a result of their tests, it says.

Tests or experiments with uncrewed vehicles should not exceed one year and can be extended once by no more than a year after obtaining approval from the ministry, the act says.

The ministry should publish an overview of approved projects that includes their permitted scope, their time frame and the laws they are exempted from on its Web site and must inspect the testing location if necessary, it says.

It must order an applicant to make the necessary improvements should any test or experiment exceed the approved scope, affect public transportation, pollute the environment, threaten

participants' safety, or compromise national or social security, and it can terminate a project if an applicant fails to comply within a prescribed period.

Should an accident occur during testing, the applicant should immediately stop tests, inform the ministry and issue any necessary compensation to those affected, the act says, adding that testing should only resume after adequate measures are adopted to ensure safety.

Democratic Progressive Party caucus whip Ker Chien-ming (柯建銘) said that the act makes Taiwan the first nation to create a regulatory sandbox to aid research and development of uncrewed vehicles.

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