



ACLU Report on Domestic Drones Finds Need for New Privacy Protections

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ACLU Recommends New Rules to Ensure Expanding Drone Use by Police and Other Agencies Respects Americans' Privacy Rights

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NEW YORK – A report released today by the American Civil Liberties Union finds that protections must be put in place to guard Americans' privacy from surveillance by unmanned aerial drones.

Next month the Federal Aviation Administration is expected to propose new rules to make it easier for law enforcement agencies to gain permission to use drones in the U.S., and police departments and other government agencies are expected to greatly increase their use. If the FAA is unable to implement the needed privacy reforms, then Congress should act, the report says.

"Our privacy laws are not strong enough to ensure that the new technology will be used responsibly and consistently with democratic values," warns the ACLU report, *Protecting Privacy From Aerial Surveillance*. "We need a system of rules to ensure that we can enjoy the benefits of this technology without bringing us a large step closer to a 'surveillance society' in which our every move is monitored, tracked, recorded and scrutinized by the authorities."

The report recommends that drones should not be deployed unless there are grounds to believe that they will collect evidence on a specific crime. If a drone will intrude on reasonable privacy expectations, a warrant should be required. The report also calls for restrictions on retaining images of identifiable people, as well as an open process for developing policies on how drones will be used.

"Historically, the fact that manned helicopters and airplanes are expensive has imposed a natural limit on aerial surveillance. But the prospect of cheap, flying video surveillance cameras will likely open the floodgates," said Jay Stanley, the report's co-author and senior policy analyst with the ACLU's Speech, Privacy & Technology Project.

The report details different types of drone technology, as well as the risks of pervasive video surveillance, such as discriminatory targeting, improper use and the chilling effects on behavior and expression that occur when people believe they are being watched. It also outlines the current use of drones by U.S. law enforcement agencies so far, including the Department of Homeland Security and police departments in Texas, Florida and Colorado.

"The deployment of drone technology domestically could easily lead to police fishing expeditions and invasive, all-encompassing surveillance that would seriously erode the privacy that we have always had as Americans," said Catherine Crump, the report's other co-author and staff attorney with the Speech, Privacy & Technology Project.

The full report is available at:
www.aclu.org/DomesticDronesReport

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