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MailOnline

Is there a drone in your neighbourhood? Rise of spy planes exposed after FAA is forced to reveal 63 launch sites across U.S.

- Unmanned spy planes are being launched from locations in 20 states and owners include the military and universities

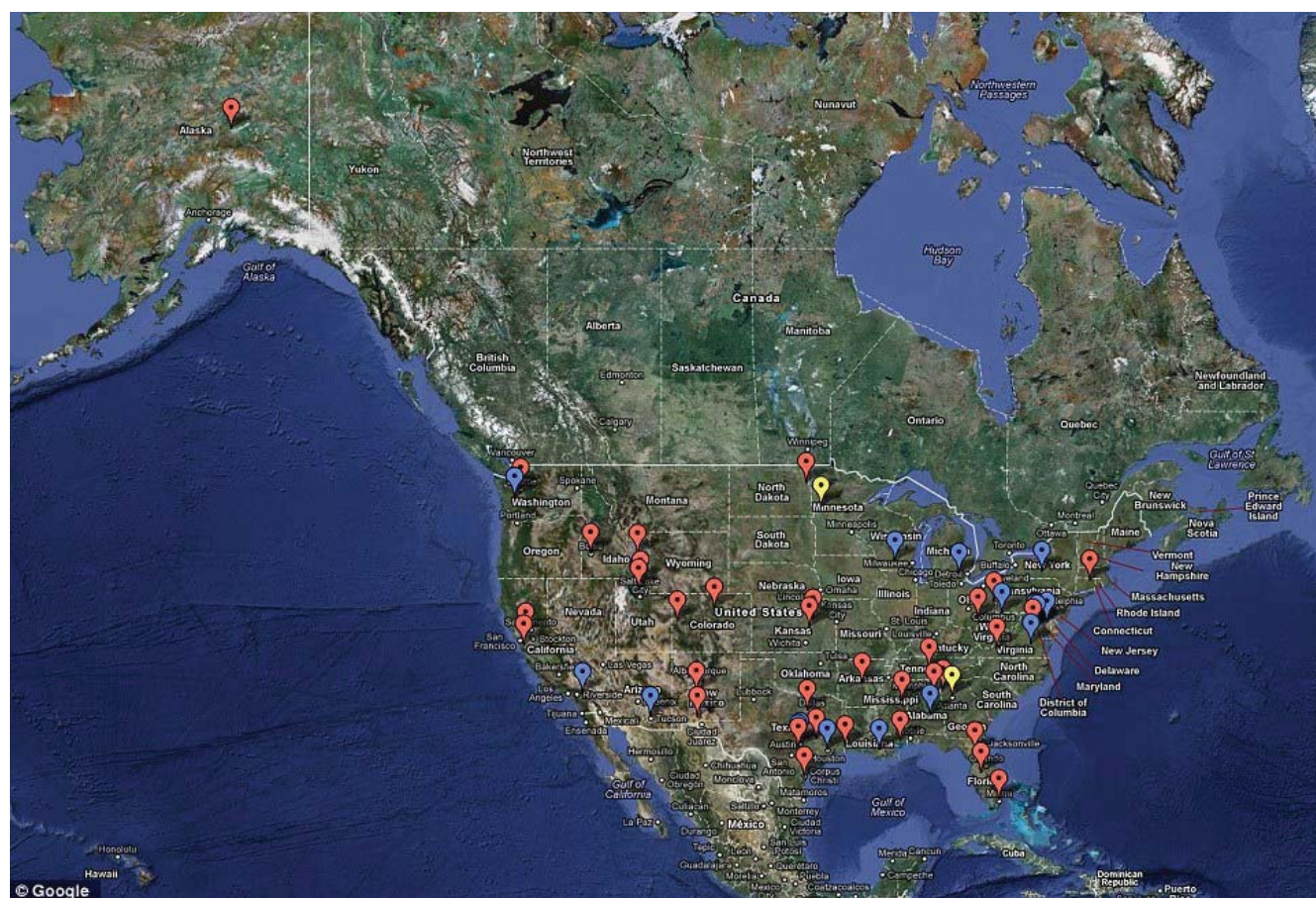
By [Julian Gavaghan](#)

PUBLISHED: 05:15 EST, 24 April 2012 | **UPDATED:** 07:39 EST, 24 April 2012

There are at least 63 active drone sites around the U.S, federal authorities have been forced to reveal following a landmark Freedom of Information lawsuit.

The unmanned planes – some of which may have been designed to kill terror suspects – are being launched from locations in 20 states.

Most of the active drones are deployed from military installations, enforcement agencies and border patrol teams, according to the Federal Aviation Authority.



Exposed: Location of sites where licences have been granted for the use of drones within the U.S. There are 63 active sites based in 20 states. Red flags show active sites and blue show those locations where licences have expired since 2006

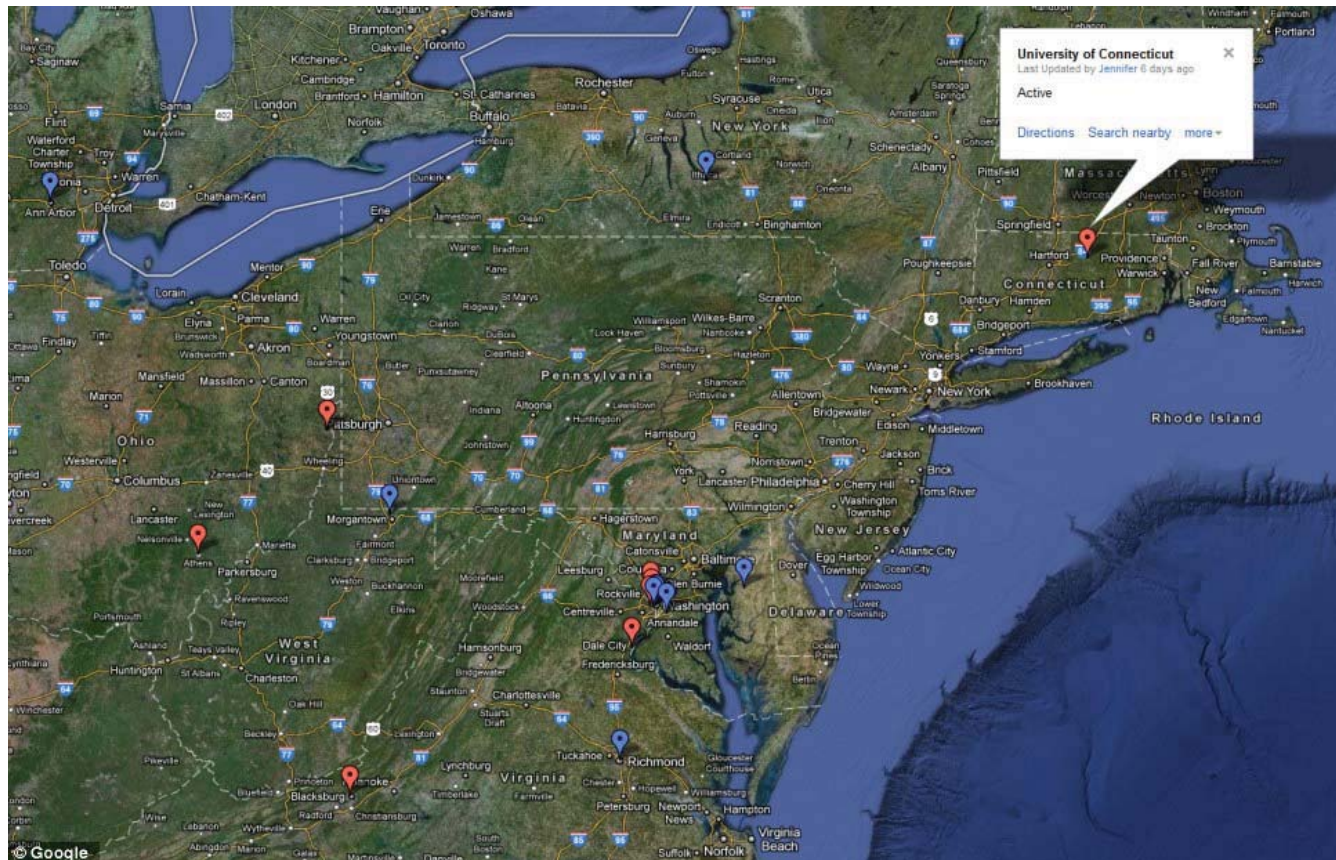
But, astonishingly, 19 universities and colleges are also registered as owners of what are officially known as unmanned aerial vehicles.

It is thought that many of institutions, which include Cornell, the University of Colorado, Georgia Tech, and Eastern Gateway Community College, are developing drone technology.

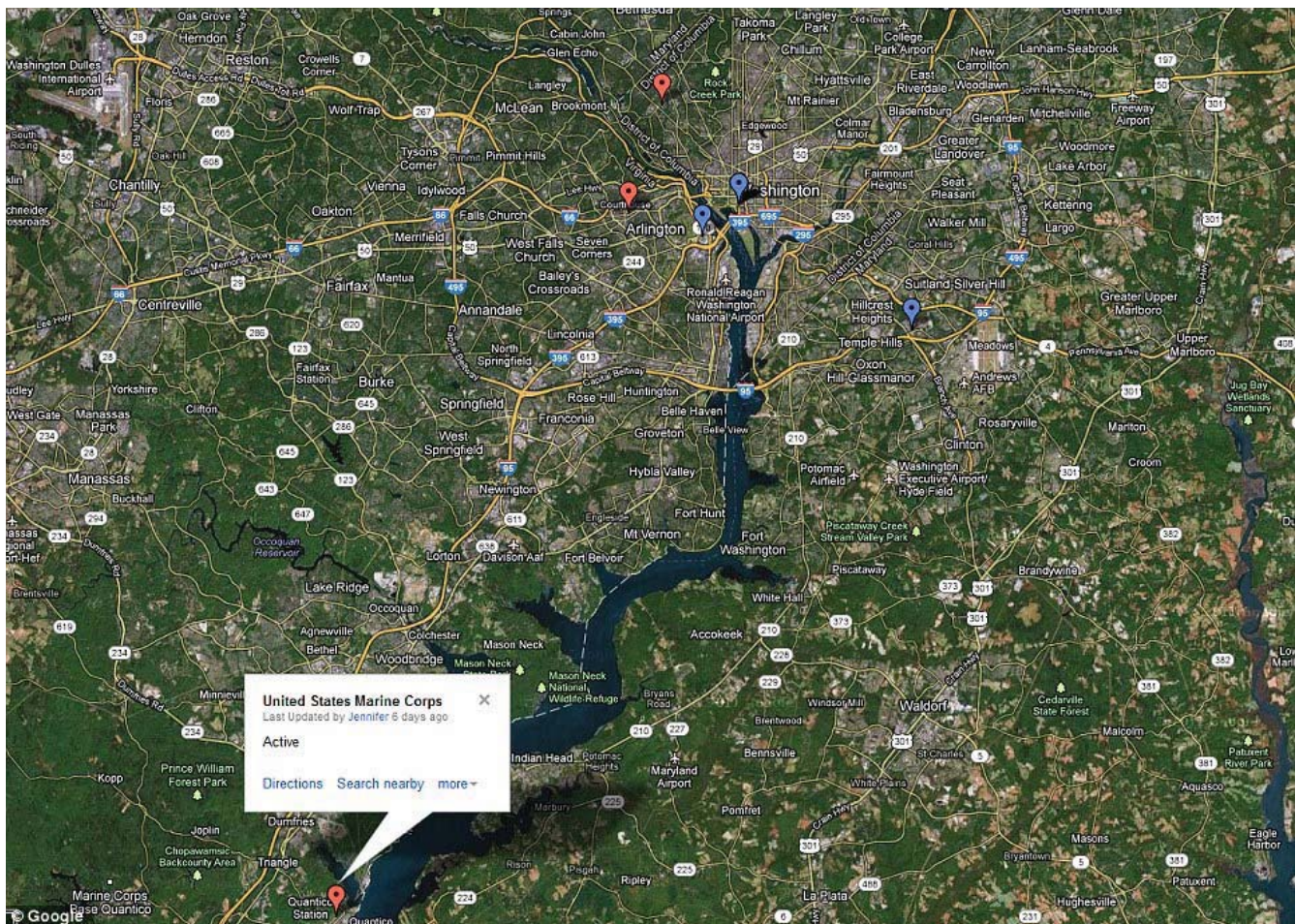
There are also 21 mainstream manufactures, such as General Atomics, who are registered to use drones domestically.

As well as active locations, the FAA also revealed 16 sites where licences to use spy planes have expired and four where authorisations have been

disapproved, such as Otter Tail County, Minnesota.



Unusual: The University of Connecticut - one of 19 educational institutions to own spy planes - is the drone site closest to New York City. The North East is the region with the highest concentration



Concentration: The Beltway around Washington DC has the highest concentration of urban and suburban drone sites, including the U.S. Marine Corp base as Quantico Station, Virginia

The authority revealed the information after a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#).

Its website hosts an interactive map that allows the user to zoom in to the area around where they live to see if any sites are nearby.

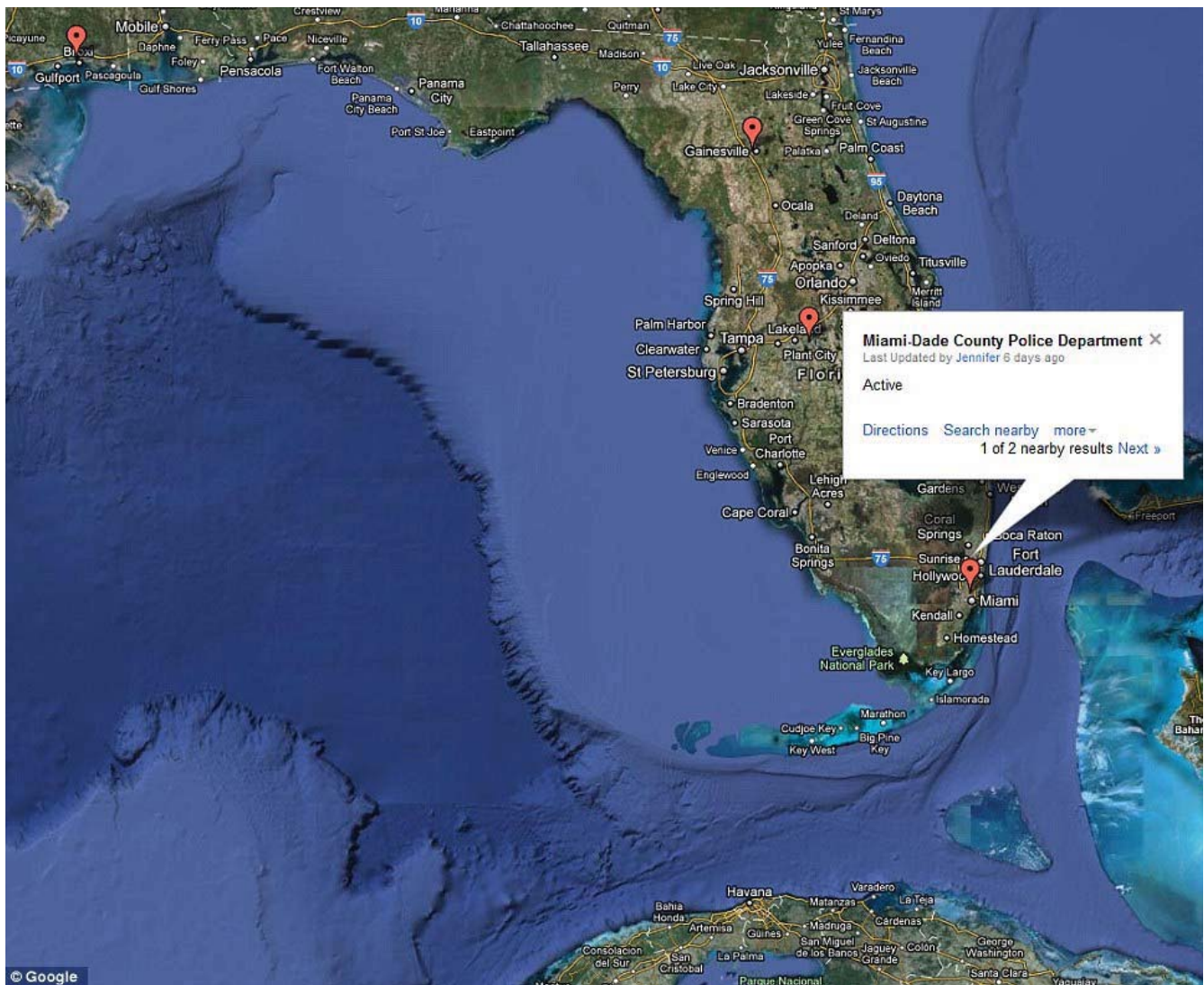
However, the FAA is yet to reveal what kinds of drones might be based at any of these locations.

The agency says it will release this data later.

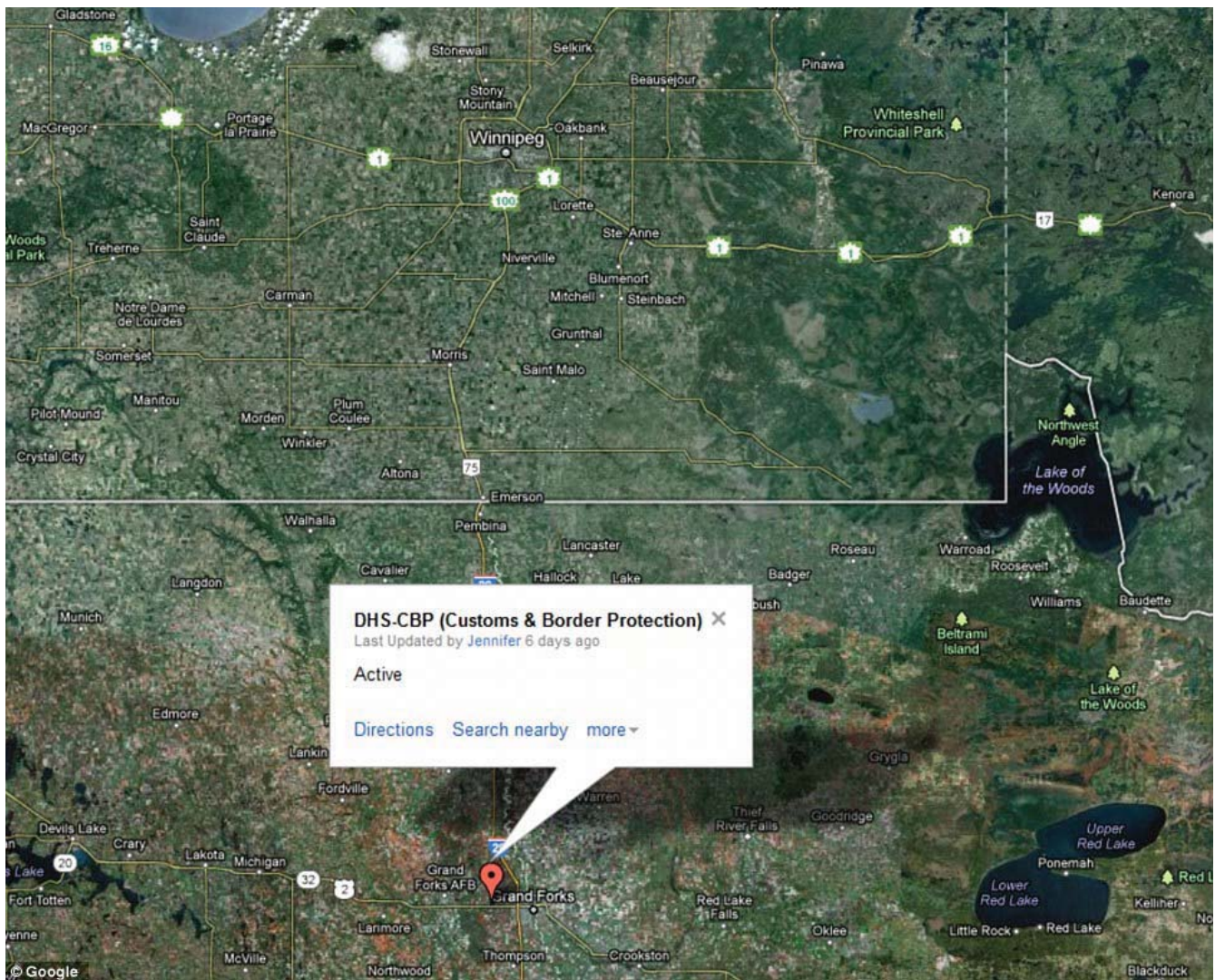
Most of the drones are likely to be small craft, such as the Draganflyer X8, which can carry a payload of only 2.2lb.

Police, border patrols and environmental agencies, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), could use for them effectively.

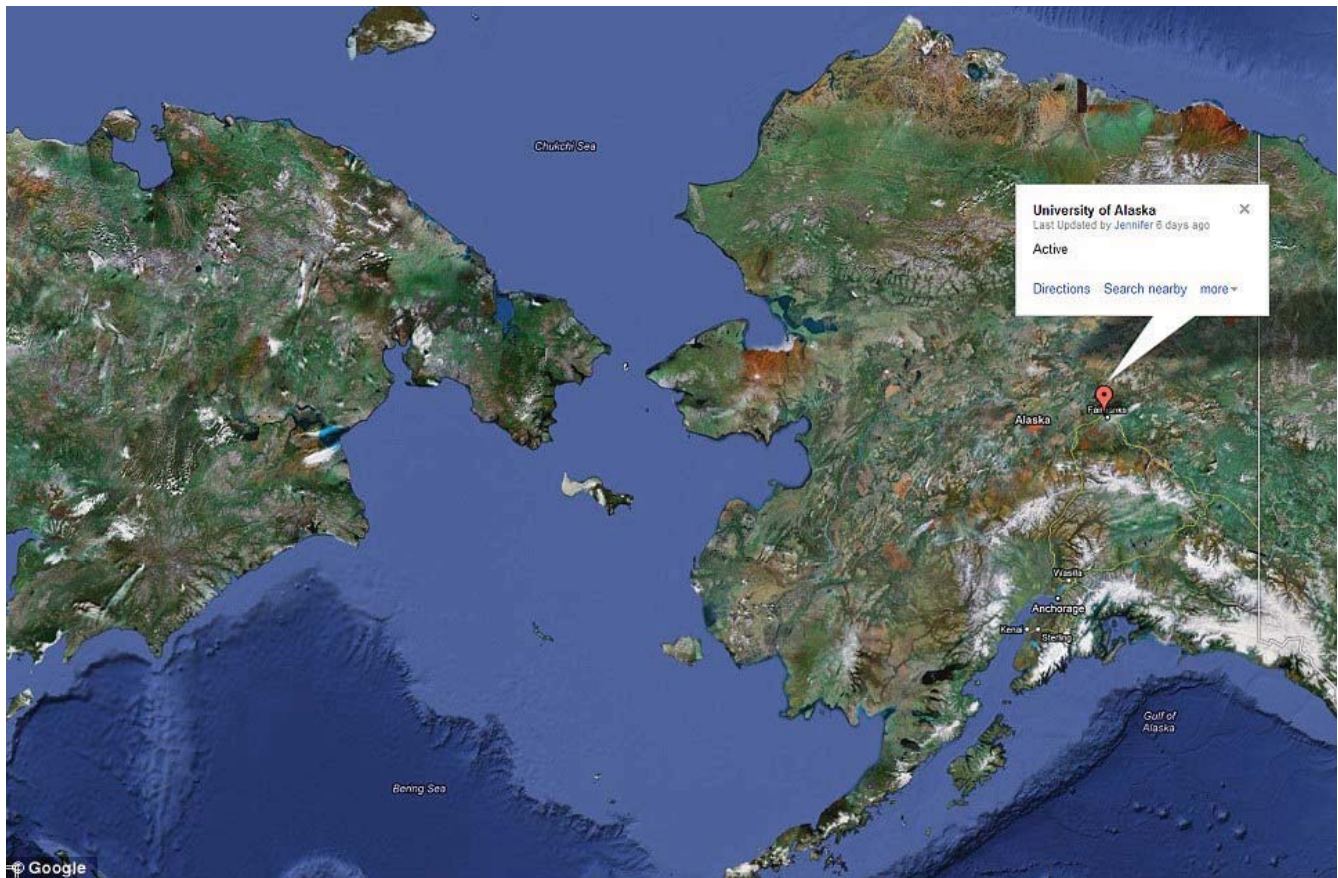
While few would object to vast open areas being monitored for wildfires, there are fears of privacy violations if drones are used to spy over cities.



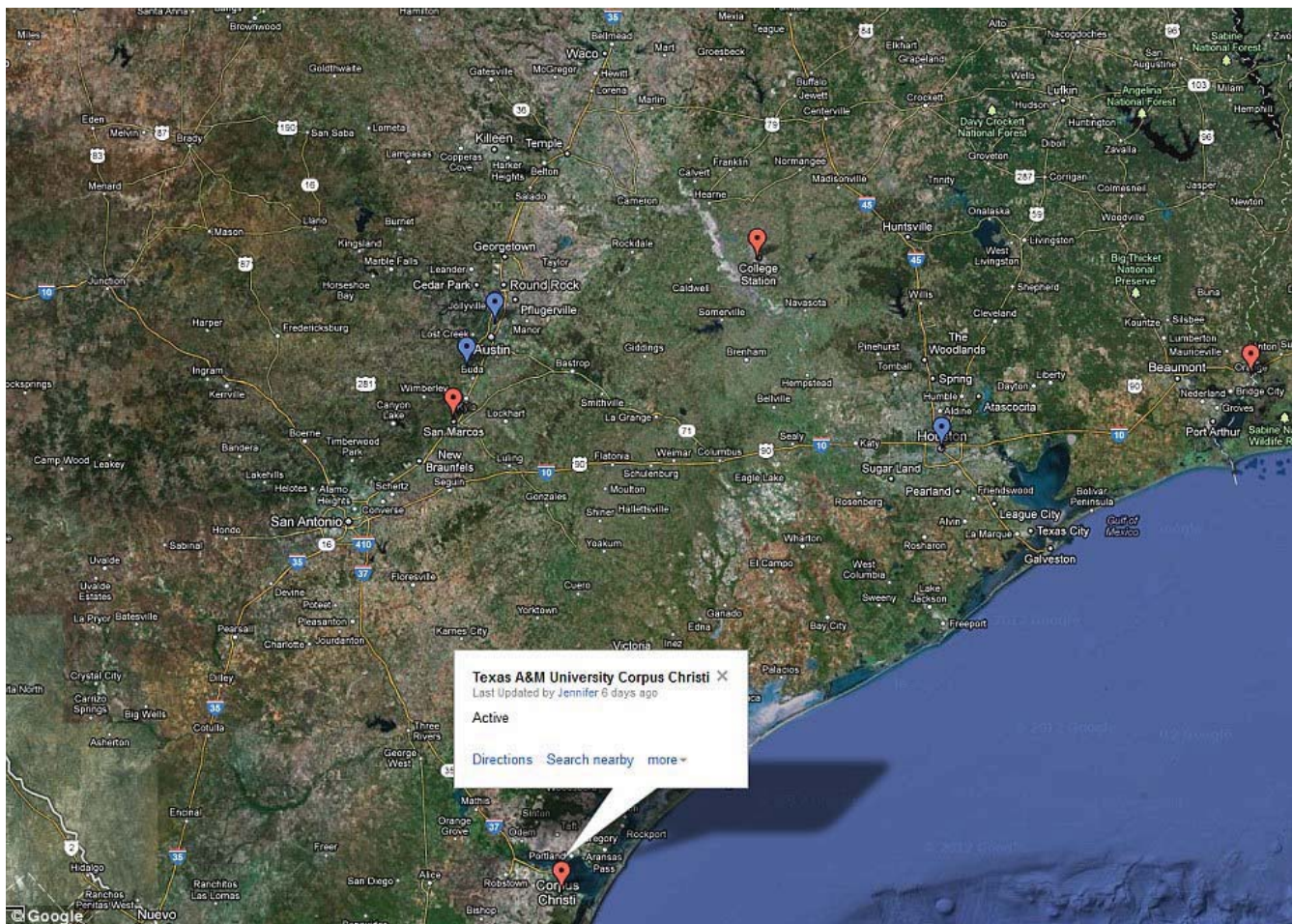
Florida: Mostly police and Sheriff departments are registered to use drones in the state



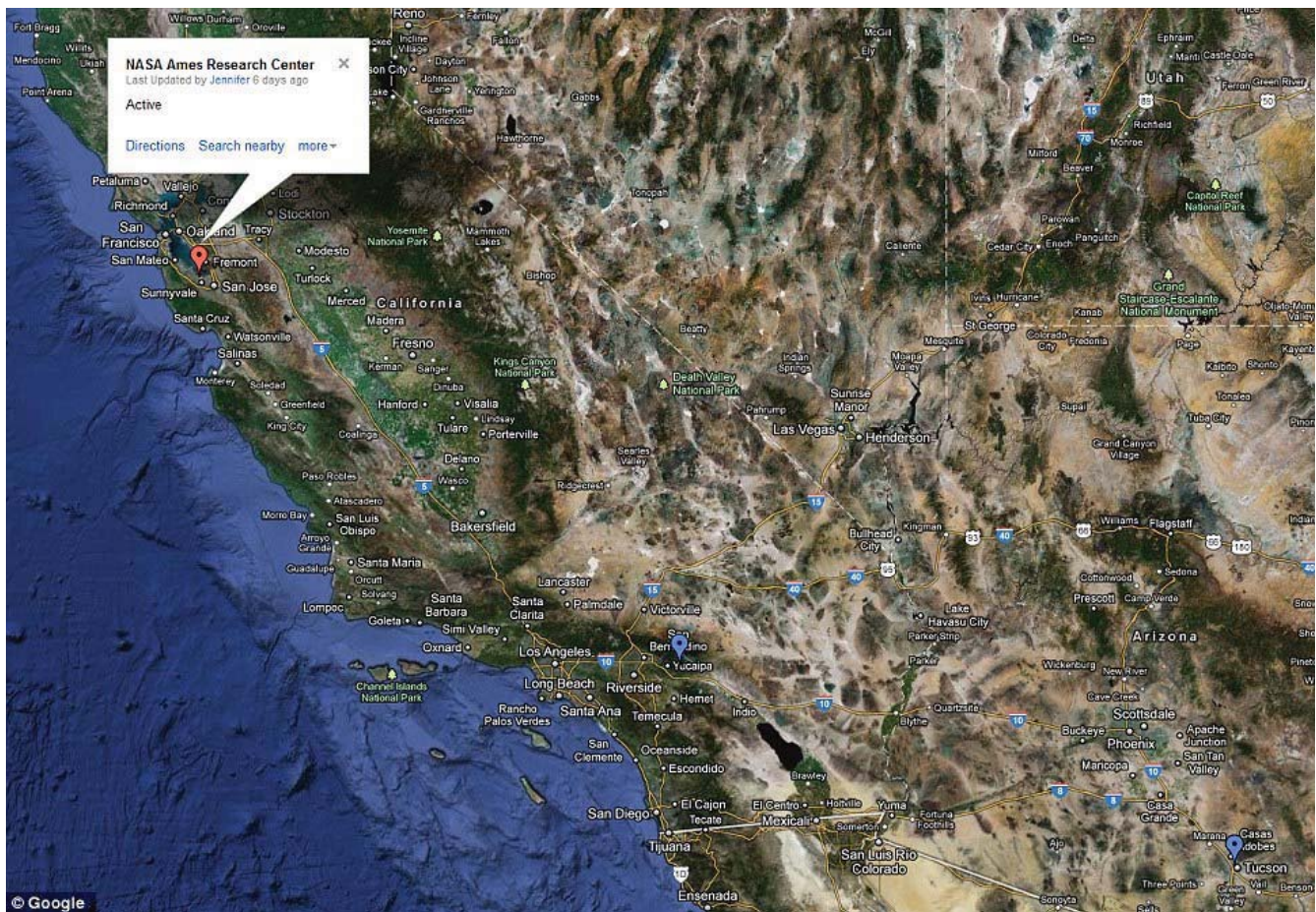
Watch out Canada! Border agents are registered to use drone in North Dakota, just a few hundred miles from Winnipeg, Manitoba



Remote: The University of Alaska's drones are the most distant from any major urban centres. They are, however, the closest to Russia



Hotspot: Texas has one of the highest number of drone sites



West Coast: There are comparatively few drone sites in California and Western states

Other drones – likely to be operated only by the armed forces – might include the MQ-9 Reaper and the MQ-1 Predator, which was used to kill American Al Qaeda boss Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen last September.

The FAA released two lists of public and private entities that have applied for authorisations to fly drones domestically.

Certificates of Authorizations (COAs), issued to public entities like police departments, are active in 42 locations, expired in 16 and disapproved in four.

Special Airworthiness Certificates (SACs), issued to private drone manufacturers, are active in 21 locations and not active in 17.

Among the other unanswered questions, however, are exactly how many drones each registered user owns.



Killer: Some of the drones owned by the military might be the MQ-9 Reaper, which has been used to target terrorists overseas



Watching you: Most of the drones are likely to be small craft, such as the Draganflyer X8, which can carry a payload of only 2.2lb. Police, border patrols and environmental agencies, such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), could use for them effectively

The FAA has confirmed that there were about 300 active COAs and that the agency has issued about 700-750 authorizations since the program began in 2006.

But this information does not reveal how many are owned, for example, by Miami Dade Police Department.

While the use of drones in the U.S. is little known, American operations overseas have been well documented.

As well as high-profile terrorists, campaigners claim hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed in the border regions of Pakistan, where they are most active.

SO WHICH PUBLIC ENTITIES ARE REGISTERED OWNERS OF DRONES? FULL LIST REVEALED HERE

U.S. Air Force	Mississippi Department of Marine Resources
Arlington Police Department	Mississippi State University
U.S. Army	U.S. Navy
City of Herington, Kansas	New Mexico Tech
City of North Little Rock, AR Police Department	Ogden Police Department
DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency)	Ohio University
DHS (Department of Homeland Security) / CBP (Customs and Border Protection)	Orange County Sheriff's Office
DHS (Department of Homeland Security) / Science and Technology	Polk County Sheriff's Office
DOE (Department of Energy) - Idaho National Laboratory	Seattle Police Dept
Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service	Texas A&M University Corpus Christi
Department of the Interior - National Business Center/Aviation Management Directorate	Texas A&M University - TEES
Eastern Gateway Community College	University of Alaska Fairbanks
Texas State University	University of Colorado
FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation)	University of Connecticut
Gadsden Police Department	
Georgia Tech Research Institute	University of Florida
Kansas State University	University of North Dakota
	USMC (United States Marine Corps)
Mesa County Sheriff's Office	
Miami-Dade Police Department	Utah State University
Middle Tennessee State University	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
New Mexico State University Physical Sciences Laboratory (NMSU-PSL)	Washington State Department of Transportation
NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration)	

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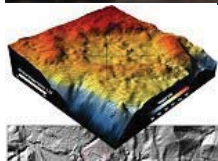
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Yep, they have them here in MA as well. I have reason to believe they have a couple stationed at the reserve base in the town next to mine. Every night around 2:00 am, I hear a single engined craft fly low over my house. I can also see them flying around at night in the distance across the highway flying over the other town I live between. These ones fly in a large circular pattern. These can be seen flying on alternate nights during the darkest hours. I knew there was a reason my state is called a commonwealth, the state government is run by these commie slime balls lol.

- John J, MA, USA, 26/4/2012 17:34

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So what! None of you can do anything about it! Bow before your masters.

- nemo, mt, 25/4/2012 17:36

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The Dragonfly is the scariest one- why? It's an inexpensive drone which makes it attractive to local law enforcement- they have the option of upgrading to better camera's- the thing is very quiet,, live in a high-rise? Keep your shades pulled lol. IR also available for see through walls capability... deployment takes about 15 minutes... wouldn't surprise me if they didn't stick a laser mic on one just for kicks... All for your own good, remember? if you don't have anything to hide i guess you don't have anything to be afraid of - I guess that's why his birth certificate and school financial records have been sealed- right?

- Glenn, Dallas, TX USA, 25/4/2012 15:02

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The Dragonfly is the scariest one- why? It's an inexpensive drone which makes it attractive to local law enforcement- they have the option of upgrading to better camera's- the thing is very quiet,, live in a high-rise? Keep your shades pulled lol. IR also available for see through walls capability... deployment takes about 15 minutes... wouldn't surprise me if they didn't stick a laser mic on one just for kicks... All for your own good, remember? if you don't have anything to hide i guess you don't have anything to be afraid of - I guess that's why his birth certificate and school financial records have been sealed- right?

- Glenn, Dallas, TX USA, 25/4/2012 14:57

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I noticed that institutions of "higher learning" are also often involved in promoting and advancing this Orwellian spy drone culture, with launch sites on their campuses.

- Red, Cheyenne, Wyoming USA, 25/4/2012 12:43

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"There is one site in all of New England, none in Illinois, five in east Texas, seven in Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia, and three in all of California. Sounds like selective deployment to me." I believe there are many more 'deployed' than indicated on these tinker-toy documents. I spent a couple of weeks in an isolated New Hampshire village in the fall of 2002. I saw them keeping their night-time vigil there, too. People aren't able to 'find' them due to light pollution. Get where you lose the city glare and you will see them. They appear to have LED 'running lights' and are obviously within the atmosphere - unlike planets & stars. They also have a 'herky-jerky' manner of maintaining position and most often do NOT follow Earth's rotation. After 2 am, the guys operating the computer controls must figure everyone is in bed. One of ours stops moving west around that time, parks low in the sky behind the Quonset so we are no longer able to see it from the house.

- donna k, Emmons Co., ND, USA, 25/4/2012 03:08

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Why does it always take a 'Freedom of Information' release for the Govm't to inform its citizens of domestic issues?? If it isn't illegal, what's the problem. No one trusts them anymore. They have their own Agenda, but it does not include the general public. Freedom is an illusion for ALL peoples.

- Ridgerunner, USA -Wisconsin, 24/4/2012 21:49

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I bet the US Government gets fan mail from Stalin. Drones in the sky, hands down your pants at airports, checkpoints on roads, large screens in Wal-Mart all emails and phone conversations routinely monitored...oh and you cannot keep chickens! Welcome to your world comrade. Are you getting it yet?

- Bill, KENT, 24/4/2012 21:38

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my neighborhood is on the close-up picture of the DC area. good to know for sure that big brother is watching... ::rolls eyes::

- anon, DC, USA, 24/4/2012 20:44

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The picture of the Draganflyer X8 shows it mounted with a Canon SLR carrying a cheap 18-55mm lens. For that lens to be affective at spying on me, it would have to be pretty much right in front of my face. At altitude, all it would see is a low resolution version of what everyone can see on Google Earth.

- Tommy, Los Angeles, CA, 24/4/2012 20:17

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