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## Navy drone crashes into Chesapeake Bay: What's a drone doing in Maryland skies? (Video)

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Photo: Drone on night surveillance AP

Tuesday, June 12, 2012 - Ad Lib by Catherine Poe

Catherine Poe



Ask me a question.

**EASTON, Md., June 12, 2012** — A Navy surveillance drone crashed Monday into the marshes of Bloodsworth Island, just off the coast of the Eastern Shore in Maryland, a summer destination for tourists. No one was reported killed or injured nor was there any significant damage on the ground.

The drones (called by the Navy the Broad Area Maritime Surveillance Demonstrators), which cost nearly \$200 million each, are 44 feet long, weigh 10 tons, and have a wing span of 116 feet, allowing them to fly as high as 11 miles and 11,000 miles or more in their search for intelligence information or to take out suspected terrorists.

The big question is what was a drone doing flying above a civilian area? Are there terrorist hanging out on the beaches of Ocean City? Mum was the word from Navy officials who would not comment on whether drones are routinely tested above the Bay or across the nine counties of the Eastern Shore.

This much is known: the unmanned drone crashed about 22 miles east of the Naval Air Station across the Bay on the Paxtuent River from where it took off. The [Naval Air Station](#) is "65 miles southeast of Washington,

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home of the Navy's test pilot school, drone operations and the principal research center for aircraft and support systems."

Add to the mystery the fact that Bloodsworth Island has been off-limits for generations since becoming a U.S. Naval Reservation.

All of which leads to even more questions: Was the drone shot down as practice? That would be expensive target practice. Did it crash accidentally? And how convenient that it just happened to crash on the Navy's own island.

Was it on a mission? And if the latter, what kind of mission in this area?

Is this a new breed of drone that is being tested? If not, then what it is being tested for?

The more questions, the quieter the Navy becomes. The U.S. Coast Guard has now constructed a safety perimeter around the crash site to allow the Navy to fully investigate the crash scene, but local news channels did get footage of the smoldering crash site (*see video below*).

Bloodsworth Island was first seen by Captain John Smith in 1608 and entered the Robert Bloodsworth family's possession when they bought it in 1799. Slowly the island shrank as the Bay reclaimed chunks of it, but not enough to keep it from being bought up by the Navy in 1948 for *target practice*. "Old tanks were deployed as targets for aircraft strafing with .50-caliber machine guns. Naval ships, largely destroyer class, would come into the Bay and conduct firing exercises."

The Navy has not used the island for bombing and strafing since the mid-nineties, although from time to time officials talk about starting up again, much to the consternation of neighboring islands and watermen.

So the crash of the drone has residents of the Eastern Shore scratching their heads and looking skyward with another question: What's next?



To contact Catherine Poe, see above. Her work appears in *Ad Lib* at the Communities @ *WashingtonTimes.com*. She can also be heard on *Democrats for America's Future*. She is also a contributor to broadcast, print and online media.

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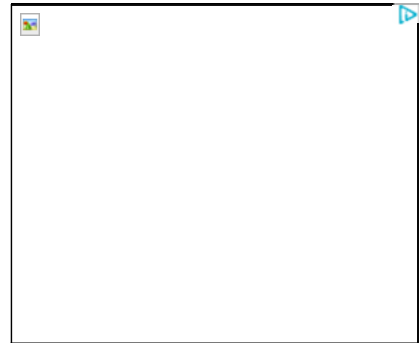
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