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EDITORIAL: Land of the drones

Government is gaining ground in the sky

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By [THE WASHINGTON TIMES](#)

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The Washington Times

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In the Age of Obama, Uncle Sam is watching. High-tech surveillance aircraft once limited to the use of the world's largest military organizations are now finding their way to local law-enforcement agencies. With the ability to put an eye in the sky over every square inch of U.S. soil, these machines have created an unprecedented opportunity to violate Americans' right to privacy. It's time to roll back this trend.

In February, lawmakers on Capitol Hill passed the FAA Reauthorization Act, which instructs the Federal Aviation Administration to draw up rules for the testing and licensing of commercial unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by 2015. Accordingly, the agency has projected the use of aircraft for surveillance will take off, putting as many as 30,000 in the skies above the states by 2020.

Privacy defenders are harshly critical of creeping Big Brother. Last week, former Judge Andrew P. Napolitano, the senior judicial analyst for Fox News whose column appears in The Washington

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Times, went so far as asserting that the first person to shoot down a government drone snooping in his backyard would be a "hero."

The war on terror has created the demand for and technology advances have enabled UAVs or "drones" equipped with cameras that give a bird's-eye view of action on the ground. Small backpack models equipped with a miniature digital camera and weighing just a few pounds have given troops a tactical advantage above the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. Better known are the full-sized varieties like General Atomics' Reaper that can climb to 50,000 feet and fire Hellfire missiles at terrorists.

Judge Napolitano has raised the specter of armed drones over American soil taking out purported enemies of the state, a Pandora's Box that opened when President Obama used drones in the assassination of Americans overseas. The president assumed the roles of judge, jury and executioner when he ordered on his own authority the September killing of American-born al Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen.

The Washington Times