Rise of drones

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), also known as drones, are aerial systems that can be remotely controlled for short and long range military and civilian purposes. There are all different types of drones with different shapes and sizes and different capabilities. They are usually equipped with a camera and can also be armed with missiles. Drones can be a very useful tool for the military. Bringing them into the United States to use against U. S. citizens may be very helpful, but it may do more harm than good. Drones can be put into five different categories including, target and decoy, reconnaissance, combat, research and development, and civil and commercial UAV's. Target and decoy drones provide ground and aerial gunnery a target that simulates an enemy aircraft or missile. Reconnaissance drones provide battlefield intelligence. Combat drones provide attack capability for high-risk missions. Research and development drones are used to further develop UAV technologies to be integrated into field deployed UAV aircraft.

Civil and commercial drones are specifically designed for civil and commercial applications. If drones are used properly, they could bring a lot of good to the United States. They can be used to help protect the public, monitor wildlife, manage resources, and promote scientific research. Small drones can provide immediate situational awareness to first responders; transported in the trunk of a police vehicle, the back of a fire truck, or carried in a backpack, drones give them a birds-eye view of the situation, day or night, to save lives and protect property.

Drones are already being used to monitor sensitive wildlife areas and populations. Small drones are increasingly providing a means of collecting important information in inaccessible areas to facilitate more effective

resource management. Dams, pipelines, offshore oil platforms, microwave transmission towers, power plants and ports are some examples of large, sometimes remote infrastructure that can be accessed easily and safely by small drones to provide color and thermal video for convenient visual inspection.

Peering into a volcano is made easier and safer with small drones and is just one example of the new ways they can help scientists gain a better understanding of the way earth and its biosphere operate. In recent news, a former LAPD police officer and ex-United States Navy reservist by the name of Christopher Dorner was charged a series of shooting attacks on police officers and their families. From February 3rd, to February 12th, four people were killed, including two police officers. Three police officers were wounded as well.

He was the subject of one of the largest manhunts in LAPD history, pning two U. S. states and Mexico. Before Dorner died during a standoff with police at a cabin in the San Bernardino Mountains, there was talk that Dorner was being hunted by U. S. drones. Some agencies flatly denied drone use in this case, but others have refused to confirm or deny whether drones were being used. If drones were used to help find Dorner, it should not be covered up or overlooked. There are significant barriers to the Army’s use of unmanned aerial systems within the United States. Use of DOD intelligence capabilities for DSCA missions -such as incident awareness and assessment, damage assessment, and search and rescue - requires prior Secretary of Defense approval, together with approval, together with approval of both the mission and use of the exact DOD intelligence community capabilities. Certain

missions require not only approval of Secretary of Defense, but also coordination, certification, and possibly, prior approval by the Attorney General of the United States. As a general rule, ‘ Military forces cannot use military systems for surveillance and pursuit of individuals’. This is precluded by the Posse Comitatus Act, as reflected in DoD Directive 5525. 5. (John Glaser, February 18, 2013) The Pentagon now has over seven thousand aerial drones, compared with fewer than fifty a decade ago. Last year's budget included nearly five billion for drone research, development and procurement. The CIA has about thirty Predator and Reaper drones, which are operated by Air Force pilots from a U. S. military base in an undisclosed state. The cost per flight hour varies by the type of drone. Predator and Reaper drones cost about $2500 - $3500 per flight hour.

Larger armed systems such as the military’s Global Hawk cost about ten times as much. The use of drones by the United States Government is constantly evolving. Currently, the U. S. military, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Central Intelligence Agency own and operate drones overseas and along the U. S. -Mexico border. In the last decade, the U. S. government has come to rely increasingly on drones for surveillance and air strikes. Even local law enforcement agencies have begun to use drones for surveillance.

It is unlikely that domestic drones will be armed, but as use rises, there are growing concerns related to privacy andcivil rights. The USA has been legally defined as the new “ battlefield” by the National defense authorization act which also allows for the arrest and indefinite detention of American citizens without trial, without legal representation and even without the ever being

charged. Drone strikes are completely silent because the Hellfire missiles they are armed with arrive faster than the speed of sound. You would not even hear the missile until after its explosion.

The blast radius of a Hellfire missile is fifteen to twenty meters and everything inside that radius is completely obliterated. This is more than enough to destroy entire homes, apartments and office buildings, not to mention vehicles and light bunkers. There is virtually no citizen defense against drones and they can strike targets anywhere in the country with zero warning. Currently, the two primary agencies using drones abroad are the U. S. military and the CIA. Decisions to use drones for surveillance are generally made within the usual military and civilian chain of command structures.

The process for deciding to use drones for strikes in countries that are not declared combat zones are less well known. Most of the drones that have begun to appear in the skies above the U. S. don’t resemble the Predators or Reapers flown by the U. S. military and CIA above Afghanistan and Pakistan. Instead, these smaller versions of flying unmanned vehicles almost rival the animal kingdom in their diversity. Government agencies such as NASA and U. S Customs and Border Protection operate aircraft-size military drones that take off from runways like airplanes.

Labs in the United States have even built tiny drones that look like hummingbirds. Most drones resemble the radio-controlled aircraft and toy helicopters flown by hobbyists for decades. They are capable of taking off horizontally, vertically, or being throw into the air. Jim Williams, a Federal Aviation Administration official, stated that no armed drones would presently be permitted in U. S. airspace. But what good are the promises of

government officials when the Constitution, especially the Fourth Amendment, has been gutted? “ More than one thousand four hundred applications to use drones in U.

S. airspace have been approved for police, universities, and at least seven federal agencies. ” (Ron Paul, February 18, 2013) Emotivism offers a perspective on our ethical claims that eliminates much of the traditional kind of argument based on reason. “ Something is good, on this view, if it is something about which we feel good, something is wrong if it is something about which we feel bad. ” (Mosser, K. 2010) When it comes to drones, some people may feel good about them and others may think that they will be wrongfully used. Our world can be turned upside down completely by misuse of drones.

Yes, they can help us find criminals and missing people, but they can also be used to do a lot of harm. Do we want to live in a society where the government is constantly above us watching? The East Germans and Soviets could only dream of suchtechnologyin the days of their dictatorships. We might ask ourselves how long before “ extraordinary” circumstances will lead to decision to arm those drones over US territory.

References

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