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INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF UAVS USE IN POLICE ACTIVITIES

Drone technologies have advanced rapidly in just a few short years, becoming more readily available and accessible. They provide police departments and other law enforcement agencies with improved situational awareness and enhanced operational response. As a result, a growing number of police departments across the U.S. are looking to leverage their rapid deployability, reach, and adaptability throughout their policing operations.

Why Are Drones Useful for Police Departments?

Cost Effective – Drones require much lower capital and operating expenditures compared to traditional police air support helicopters.

Lower Barrier to Entry – It is far easier to train law enforcement officers to operate drones in police related deployments rather than training them to pilot air support helicopters. The associated costs are significantly reduced as well.

Rapid Aerial Surveillance -Drones allow police departments to survey crime scenes and search grids within moments of arriving on scene, and to do so much more comprehensively from the air.

Efficiency – Drones can be deployed significantly quicker than traditional police air support helicopters.

Reduced Risk – Since drones are remotely operated, they allow police officers to conduct crime scene searches and assess dangerous situations up close (such as active shooter incidents) prior to having to physically send police officers into harm's way [1].

The dimensions and capabilities of unmanned aerial vehicles, their technological capabilities, and their cost-effectiveness make them an appealing tool for authorities to employ during operations, including domestic surveillance. The emerging technology raises Fourth Amendment privacy concerns and safety issues, which have been the subject of debate among law and policymakers. The nature of the existing public resentments regarding police use of this innovative tech is not fully understood. Effective policy implementation in which public understanding, support, and cooperation are integrated should be facilitated by a focus on the relative impact of perceived threat on community's perception toward police and their activities. [2, c.6].

UAVs have a wide variety of law enforcement application, including mapping crime scenes, providing aerial images, and 3D mapping of crash scenes. Master Deputy Matthew Devaney of the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office, US, stated, "Mapping crash scenes in this manner can help streamline crash scene investigations, ultimately clearing roadways safely and in a timely manner. They also have been used for traffic congesting, such as observing traffic patterns at large scale events – i.e., traffic flows at Covid-19 testing sites, around schools, or during traffic-related crashes, and

they help with real-time traffic management and flow." Devaney continued: "UAVs have further been used for event management at large-scale events, such as at large sporting events or other large gatherings, and can be used during disaster relief, such as tornados, flooding, and large-scale power outages."

The Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD), US, uses UAVs for several tasks, but primarily to augment officers on the ground in the provision of community services. "We use them anytime an 'overwatch' or 'eye in the sky' may assist the officers on the ground in completing a task. These tasks include typical SAR activities, missing persons, crowd management, tactical responses and evidence collection to name a few," said Micheal Heiser, SRPD Sergeant. "An example of successful UAV deployment includes locating an elderly missing person in physical distress that officers on the ground had been unable to locate. The drone saw a much larger field of view than officers at ground level and found the subject in a field. The UAV pilot was able to direct ground units in and render aid to the individual."

The Queensland Police Service (QPS), Australia, also uses UAVs to assist in operational situations. These include mapping traffic crash scenes, gathering evidence at crime scenes, recordings for media purposes, assisting at the management of sieges, and gaining situational awareness during disaster events such as floods and bushfires. "Our UAV operations are conducted in compliance with the relevant Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) legislation and regulations. These laws and regulations apply equally across all states and territories in Australia," said a QPS spokesperson.

The Emergency Services Unit (ESU) of the Ottawa Police Service (OPS), Canada, primarily uses UAVs for search and rescue. "If the SAR team is deployed to look for a missing person in a rural or wooded area, the UAV can cover a much greater search grid with greater speed and efficiency than traditional ground teams can accomplish. The SAR UAVs are equipped with both 30x zoom digital HD cameras and thermal imaging cameras," said Mike Adlard, UAV pilot and program administrator at ESU OPS. "We use a third 30X Zoom camera that is also equipped with a laser

range finder that is able to direct an infrared beam to the ground that tells us the GPS coordinate of the item we are looking at from the sky. This enables us to communicate to ground search teams the exact co-ordinate and they are subsequently able to rapidly navigate to the location to locate the person. Our search teams have embedded paramedics as well so that we are able to immediately administer emergency first aid as required." [3].

UAV use should be regulated and a framework for their appropriate and effective use developed. With suitable policy in place, the use of armed UAVs can be (comparatively) safe and effective. From the body of knowledge related to armed UAV use in warfare and the use of force by police, decision making considerations relevant to the use of force by armed UAVs are identified and categorized as part of a decision-making framework.

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