Domestic Drones

Americans are currently facing a decision as to whether the use of surveillance drones on domestic soil is beneficial or harmful to society. The question becomes, which is more important to society, our security or our privacy. The truth is that this issue is complex and the best solution is a balance between the two.

Many of the most sensitive issues can be viewed from both sides: supporting the use of drones or opposing it. Proponents of drone usage argue that drone footage provides both a detailed and accurate picture of the environment or person that it is tracking. Widespread usage might result in people modifying their behavior when they are in public spaces. This would mean that what is being seen by the drone is not, in fact, how people normally act.

Beyond general surveillance a drone may be used to identify people from far away. For example, law enforcement may use drone footage to track suspected criminals, but in some cases they may identify the person incorrectly. Drones are not true thinkers and they can misidentify if two items of interest look alike or act similarly. The most well publicized issue with drone usage is the invasion of privacy if the vast stores of information fall into the wrong hands. One must think about all the good uses that this information could be put to in the proper hands. For example, if a child is abducted from a known place, surveillance footage may show the abductor and potentially where they took the child.

The potential use of drones goes far beyond law enforcement. “Drones are being used for humanitarian purposes such as search and rescue missions, environmental conservation, and forest fire detection.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Many of these operations could endanger the lives of pilots; drones could provide valuable footage without the risk to human life. The danger is that we may put our safety in the hands of drones too often that an unhealthy dependence begins to grow.

We believe that the best interests of the general public would come with some drone usage. The benefits we have laid out outweigh the drawbacks of drone usage. Most of the drawbacks occur when drone usage oversteps its usefulness. Drone usage for the purposes of law enforcement should not be used as the impetus for an investigation. If probable cause were determined in some other way, drone footage and surveillance would be valuable in supporting traditional investigation strategies. As mentioned earlier, there are also uses for drones outside of law enforcement. The study of the spread of forest fires is a dangerous activity for any human to attempt but drones could provide the same, if not better, views of how they spread. This invaluable information could be used to help prevent future disasters. Drone usage should not be permitted to run without restriction, however, eliminating their use altogether is overlooking the many benefits they offer. Their focus should be security for the general public, and the general public must understand that safety, at times, comes at the price of privacy.

1. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/next/tech/how-dumb-are-drones/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)