



Border Patrol Begins Testing Drones to Spot Illegal Crossings

Bob Price

September 20, 2017

U.S. Border Patrol agents announced the testing of new types of drones for fighting illegal immigration and smuggling. Opponents decry their use saying that agents using facial recognition capabilities would violate civil liberties.

According to media sources based in Tucson, Arizona, the Border Patrol will begin testing “new and smaller types of drones” in the Tucson Sector later this month. Agents will also be testing the devices in Texas and Vermont.

The drones will be used to help agents in “difficult to access and high-risk areas,” Tuscon.com reported. Agents can transport the craft easily in a vehicle or a backpack. The agency will test three different kinds of small unmanned aircraft systems.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) spokesman Roland “Chip,” Filiault told the news outlet that Puma, Raven, and InstantEye Quadcopter drones will be tested. The drones will have sensors. Infrared cameras and facial-recognition features may also be tested.

The use of drones for securing the border has been called a “gamechanger” by Border Patrol Agents.

CBP will test the units in hot and cold temperatures. After, the agency will decide on whether to expand the program.

The CATO Institute has decried the use of drones to patrol the border saying they “ought to concern Americans who value civil liberties.” They especially criticize the use of drones with facial recognition capabilities.

In their article, the CATO Institute referred to the 100-mile zone of the external U.S. boundary where CBP officials legally patrol, stop, and search vehicles – a “Constitution-free zone.”

Smugglers certainly have used small remote-controlled aircraft to get illegal contraband into the country.

According to CBP, traffickers have used drones this year primarily in the San Luis area in Yuma County, Arizona, to carry contraband into the country illegally.

Breitbart Texas reported in late August that a 25-year-old smuggler was caught using a drone to fly over the border. When Border Patrol officials apprehended the man near the San Ysidro Port of Entry in California, agents found approximately 13.44 pounds of methamphetamine on him. The street value of the drugs was estimated at \$46,000.