



DRONE-FREE LAPD NO DRONES, LA!

November 9, 2015

Mayor Eric Garcetti
City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Mayor Eric Garcetti:

On behalf of the Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign we write to you to express our deep concern for your failure to respond to the people of Los Angeles on the status of the 2 Draganflyer X6 Drones acquired by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) in May 2014 as a “gift” of the Seattle Police Department.¹ For over a year and a half we have communicated on several occasions to you, your staff and your appointed Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners enquiring about the future of the 2 Drones that are stored at the LAPD Inspector General’s office. Our requests have been repeatedly dismissed without any meaningful response. We demand that you take immediate action and order the destruction of these drones or return them to the manufacturer.

The Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign is comprised of a cross section of concerned Angelenos including many human and civil rights organizations, and faith based and community based organizations. The campaign was launched² in response to the escalating militarization of LAPD, particularly the acquisition of Drones. Since the beginning of the campaign, we have engaged in broad community outreach seeking feedback from members of diverse communities on the use of Drones by LAPD. To date we have collected over 3000 signatures, conducted extensive surveys, organized community townhalls and outreach events, and held numerous press conferences. The results have been unanimous - *Angelenos have categorically rejected the use of drones by LAPD.*

People all over United States have expressed shock and anger over the rampant militarization of law enforcement and demanded an end to military style tactics and weaponry. The impact has been devastating on communities across the country. This year alone, in the United States, 972 murders were committed by police,³ meaning *every 7 hours and 52 minutes someone is killed by police in the United States.* This year Los Angeles leads the nations with 19 murders committed by LAPD officers.⁴ Yet under your leadership LAPD has become more militarized and greatly expanded its architecture of surveillance, spying, and infiltration.

With the acquisition of the 2 Draganflyer X6 Drones LAPD will undoubtedly broaden its usage of drones within the context of “mission creep.” Mission creep alludes to the application of a specific tactic, expanding beyond the original stated scope, towards new and enlarged purposes. A glaring example of mission creep was the recent passage of legislation in North Dakota legalizing armed police drones.⁵

¹ <http://www.laweekly.com/news/game-of-drones-how-lapd-quietly-acquired-the-spy-birds-shunned-by-seattle-4794894>

² <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-anti-drone-campaign-lapd-city-hall-20140821-story.html>

³ <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-map-us-police-killings>

⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-map-us-police-killings>

⁵ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/08/26/first-state-legalizes-armed-drones-for-cops-thanks-to-a-lobbyist.html>

Another example of mission creep is the increased deployment of LAPD Special Weapon and Tactics (SWAT) team for routine policing functions including the execution of search warrants in low-level drug investigations. These tactics are enormously beyond the original stated scope – SWAT deployment for hostage or barricade scenarios - which have occurred in only a small number of incidents. As stated in the June 2014 report from American Civil Liberties Union, “The War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing,”⁶ only a small handful of SWAT deployments were for hostage, barricade, or active shooter scenarios.

Furthermore, another example of mission creep is the expansion of the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) program. The SAR program was originally intended for counter terrorism and is now LAPD’s insidious tool for everyday policing. The SAR program has resulted in rampant racial profiling and the opening of thousands of secret files on people engaging in innocent behavior. A January 2015 LAPD Inspector General’s audit⁷ of the SAR program revealed racial bias in which 31% SARs sent to Fusion Centers were opened on African Americans, who constitute less than 10% of the Los Angeles City population.⁸

We are concerned about LAPD’s transparency and misuse of Drones because LAPD has a long history of distrust, lies and violence. In April 2014 it was revealed that LAPD officers sabotaged 90 out of 300 LAPD squad cars by tampering with antennas that feed video and voice monitoring equipment.⁹ Of the 90 patrol cars, 85 were located in the South East Bureau, where an overwhelming majority of residents are people of color. LAPD’s Chief Charlie Beck knew about this gross violation, but did not share this information with the Police Commission until much later. This officer monitoring equipment was one of the conditions LAPD agreed to in the federal consent decree imposed in June 2001 after the Rampart corruption scandal. The consent decree was finally lifted in May 2013.

Drones pose a notable safety hazard. According to a Washington Post study, 400 U.S. military drones crashed in major accidents worldwide between Sept. 11, 2001 and December 2013. Of these drone crashes, 194 fall into a Class A category, which quantifies crashes that destroyed the drone or caused at least \$2 million in damages.¹⁰ Recent reports by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have highlighted the increasing menace in our skies by private user of Drones resulting in dangerously close call with airliners, *700 just between January and August of 2015.*¹¹ The FAA “has acknowledged growing concern about the problem and its inability to do much to tame it.”

The Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign looks to your leadership and support in prohibiting the use of Drone technology by the LAPD. Drone surveillance equipment in the hands of LAPD will continue to unjustly profile the people of Los Angeles, create a culture of fear and suspicion, invade our privacy, and criminalize innocent behavior.¹² The use of drone technology further militarizes law enforcement tactics, linking local law enforcement to garrison style military rule.

We look forward to hearing from you and would appreciate your response by November 20, 2015. Should have any questions please feel free to email at stoplapdspying@gmail.com or contact us by phone at (424) 209-7450.

Thank You.

Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign

Cc:

Ana Guerrero – Chief of Staff, Mayor of Los Angeles

Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners

Charlie Beck – Chief, Los Angeles Police Department

Alex Bustamante – Office of Inspector General, Los Angeles Police Department

⁶ <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/jus14-warcomeshome-report-web-rell.pdf>

⁷ http://www.lapdpolicecom.lacity.org/012715/BPC_15-0014.pdf

⁸ <http://stoplapdspying.org/lapd-inspector-general-absurdly-denies-evidence-of-racial-profiling-in-the-sar-audit/>

⁹ <http://articles.latimes.com/2014/apr/07/local/la-me-lapd-tamper-20140408>

¹⁰ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2014/06/20/when-drones-fall-from-the-sky/>

¹¹ https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/faa-records-detail-hundreds-of-close-calls-between-airplanes-and-drones/2015/08/20/5ef812ae-4737-11e5-846d-02792f854297_story.html

¹² <http://www.laweekly.com/news/forget-the-nsa-the-lapd-spies-on-millions-of-innocent-folks-4473467>