



DRONE-FREE LAPD NO DRONES, LA!

August 12, 2014

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 are requesting an urgent meeting with you to share our deep concerns about the recent "gifting" of two **Draganflyer X Drones by the Seattle Police Department (SPD)** to the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). As residents of Los Angeles, we reject the recent acquirement of these drones by LAPD. We believe the acquisition of drones signify a giant step forward in the militarization of local law enforcement that is normalizing continued surveillance and violations of human rights of our communities.

The Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign is comprised of a cross section of concerned individuals, including human and civil rights, and privacy rights organizations, faith based and community based organizations.

LAPD has a long history of lies, brutality, and violence against communities. We demand LAPD not be allowed to add drone technology to its expansive arsenal of weapons and surveillance equipment. As an untrustworthy and unaccountable institution, we believe LAPD is incapable of creating any policy that would protect our human and civil rights. A current example of distrust in LAPD stems from the astonishing revelations in April 2014, that LAPD officers sabotaged 90 out of 300 LAPD squad cars by tampering with antennas that feed video and voice monitoring equipment.¹ 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 that was imposed in June 2001, after the Rampart corruption scandal and was finally lifted in May 2013.

We expect LAPD will 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. As stated in the June 2014 report from **American Civil Liberties Union, "The War Comes Home: The Excessive Militarization of American Policing,"**² Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams were often deployed—unnecessarily and aggressively—to execute search warrants in low-level drug investigations; deployments for hostage or barricade scenarios occurred in only a small number of incidents. A majority of SWAT deployments were for the purpose of executing a search warrant, most commonly in drug investigations. Only a small handful of deployments were for hostage, barricade, or active shooter scenarios.

¹ <http://www.scpd.org/news/2014/04/15/43524/la-police-commission-grills-lapd-over-officers-who>

² <https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/assets/jus14-warcomeshome-report-web-rel1.pdf>

Furthermore, the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) program – originally intended for counter terrorism, now is LAPD's insidious tool for everyday policing. The SAR program has resulted in the opening of thousands of secret files on people engaging in perfectly innocent behavior.³

Adding drone surveillance technology to the arsenal of surveillance equipment, already in operation by LAPD, will exacerbate the flagrant violation of privacy rights of Angelenos. Two years ago, it was revealed that dozens of law enforcement agencies in LA county, including LAPD, were using License Plate Recognition devices to record the position of *all* cars that police vehicles pass while on patrol; while a lawsuit is in process, this program continues to blatantly violate our privacy.⁴

Drone technology also creates high potential for false identification. Since the passage of the STEP Act in 1988, the CalGang database has grown to include photos of people identified via long-range photography, obtained without due process. Because one's "association" can be proved simply via multiple photographs in which one appears in proximity to a "known" gang member, people passing frequently surveilled street corners are already at risk for being labeled as gang-affiliated.⁵ Such law enforcement programs continue to ruin the lives of thousands of youth falsely identified as gang affiliated.

Drones are globally associated with death and destruction. In **people's consciousness, drones represent the** murder of an estimated 2,400 people since 2009, of which an estimated 416 to 951 were civilians including 168 to 200 children just in Pakistan. During this five year period, there have been 390 drones strikes under President Obama.⁶

Lastly, drones pose a great 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. 194 of these drone crashes fall into a Class A category, which quantifies crashes that destroyed the drone or caused at least \$2 million in damages.⁷

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.⁸ The use of drone technology further militarizes law enforcement tactics, linking local law enforcement to garrison style military rule.

The Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign will launch its public campaign on August 21, 2014. We are requesting this meeting prior to the launch date. Please contact us by email at stoplapdspying@gmail.com or call at (562) 230-4578. We look to your leadership and support in prohibiting the use of drone technology by the Los Angeles Police Department.

Sincerely,



Hamid Khan

Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign

³ <http://stoplapdspying.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/PEOPLES-AUDIT-UPDATED-APRIL-2-2013-A.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.eff.org/press/releases/eff-and-aclu-sue-la-law-enforcement-agencies-over-license-plate-reader-records>

⁵ <http://www.youth4justice.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/TrackedandTrapped.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.presstv.com/detail/2014/01/24/347476/us-drone-program-has-killed-at-least-2400-report>

⁷ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/investigative/2014/06/20/when-drones-fall-from-the-sky>

⁸ <http://www.laweekly.com/2014-02-27/news/forget-the-nsa-la-cops-spy-on-millions-of-innocent-folks>