**Exploring the Issues of Drones and Privacy**

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Fears are often illogical, but their promotion can convert them to legal realities. Is there reason to fear drones? Can they snoop, maim and kill? Yes, to the extent that guns, cars and planes can. However, we have learned to live with those deadly devices. Are these devices useful? Did we stop buying guns and climbing into cars and planes? Could we live without them? Yes, but who wants to ban them completely? Even the most ardent opponent of guns will be glad to see that the police have guns at hand when there is danger, especially when irrational behavior is revealed. Therefore, we try to keep these devices out of the hands of the irrational.

Drones are useful. However, they have to be used carefully. My motto is “use technology responsibly”, and that applies to drones. The biggest problem is the perception of danger. We have learned that drones are used to kill. This is true in the Middle East. This is also “true” in several recent prime time TV shows that are staged in the US. Hunters in Colorado have used them to detect game, and other hunters have threatened to shoot them down.

These quick examples indicate that we have to undertake the same due diligence that we have learned with the “dangerous devices” listed above. This would take the form of something similar to: Drivers/gun licenses, traffic lights, brakes, brake lights, pedestrian crossings, fines for jaywalking, no driving on sidewalks, yellow safety vests for crosswalk guards, stop signs (on posts or hand-held), hard hats for workers, identification of vehicles/guns, identification of owners, driver training, no parking in front of fire hydrants, etc. For drones, all this will become reality in the long term. The end effect will be that illogical or excessive fears will be managed.

However, what about the short term? Such cultural changes as listed above will take time. UAV operators will do well in doing a few things that can reduce fears when drones are flown:

* Identify a drone operation correctly, so that onlookers know what is being done. For example, surveying an accident scene as just that, and not making it look as a secret spying operation.
* Make the operation look “official” (safety vests, hard hats, safety glasses, signs that ask people to stay back, yellow tape, clear UAV assembly/takeoff/landing/control areas, assign one person the role of spokesperson to answer any public questions, a sign that states the purpose of the survey, etc.). This sounds like a lot, but is cheap to implement.
* Make sure that the public knows where the camera is pointing (downward, sideways to the left, etc.).
* Try to operate as a professional team, and discourage sloppy operations that look like kids playing with kites.
* Do not try to be secretive (no sneaking around), and be friendly and open to the public. Make them feel your pride in what you are doing.
* Portray an image of safe operations, and ask the public to cooperate. Make sure that they understand basic UAV safety features, like homing, circling, and flight control patterns.
* Ask the public, if it decides to stick around, to be aware of the UAV while it is aloft, and to listen to any warnings from the control crew.
* Clearly identify who is in control of the UAV at any one time (the guy on the computer or the guy with the controller), and ask that that person should not be spoken to (Silence please: Active flight operation underway).

It is in our court to make a go of this technology, to help create the right impressions, and to build down the effects of illogical fears.

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