

Secretive Airborne Police Surveillance in California

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The revelation concerning a secretive airborne surveillance test in Compton, CA is disturbing. The Los Angeles County Sheriff Department via "Persistent Surveillance Systems", spied on residents in Compton, CA for nine days in 2012.[1]

Unlike the mirrored pilot program in Lancaster, CA, the citizens of Compton were unaware of this surveillance because the sheriff department and private contractor kept it hidden. The spying was accomplished by utilizing a Cessna mounted with high resolution cameras.

This technology is from Persistent Surveillance Systems which maintained and recorded a live video feed of the entire city of Compton. According to Persistent Surveillance owner Ross McNutt, this surveillance technology is able to capture 10,000 times the area as compared to a standard police helicopter.[2] That feat is impressive, but that is to be expected as this technology was used militarily in Afghanistan and Iraq to look for terrorists.[3]

The characteristics of this technology begs the question:

why is battlefield technology being used on residents of an American city and without their knowledge?

What has been the response from officials following these revelations? In regards to the surveillance in Compton, Sgt. Iketani of the LASD stated,

"a lot of people have a problem with [...] Big Brother, so in order to mitigate any of those kinds of complaints, we basically kept it hush-hush".[4]

Not only is this official response condescending, but it is also a confession to violating Article 1, Section 1 of the California State Constitution.

The audacity of governmental officials to respond in this fashion is a metaphorical slap in the face to every resident in the city of Compton, as well as to every other American. There was an outcry of privacy violations following the confirmation of the NSA's mass internet surveillance, known as PRISM.[5]

The surveillance of Compton is even more draconian because it goes further than being wiretapped from behind a computer screen. The medium of surveillance can now include aerial surveillance of every movement that an individual makes. This is a strong characteristic of a police-state.

The Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution has been blatantly violated under the veneer of a pilot test. Knowing that we are being wiretapped when we are connected to

the internet provoked a great backlash from individuals of all political backgrounds, but where is the outrage now? Compton, CA is treated as if it were a battlefield in the Middle-East. For nine days, residents in the city of Compton experienced a fuller effect of the Patriot Act compared to the rest of America. Why was this covert operation executed in the city of Compton?

Compton has a reputation of being a city of inhabitants who are poor, lacking education, engaging in various forms of crimes, and whom Latinos, Blacks, and Pacific-Islanders make up virtually the entirety of the city. Compton was chosen as a strategic geographical location for aerial reconnaissance because the city serves as a litmus test for a nationwide roll out. This exercise is a means to gauge public response to such technology being used within American cities. Presumably, the city of Compton with its notorious gangster image, as popularized through the Corporate Media, will allow for a soft-launch with minimal critical response. Who wants to defend the Constitutional rights for those who are assumed to be guilty of some crime?

With no doubt, some portion of Americans will be pleased to hear that poor socio-economic cities, such as Compton, are under police surveillance since the majority of their inhabitants must be guilty until proven innocent. They will claim that cities like Compton are full of gang-bangers who commit crimes, leech off of taxpayers, and are not productive; so that in itself is probable cause for privacy invasion. The negative prejudices against the poor and the ghetto is what the military-industrial complex and the prison-industrial complex is banking on, hoping that public opinion will accept this form of intrusion. The hate that some Americans have for people that live in Compton, and similar cities, is precisely the same hate that some Americans have against Middle Easterners which resulted in over 1 million deaths in the Unconstitutional Iraq War,[6] and the reduction of liberty within the United States. If this pilot test by government and private interests are accepted, then expect to live with this aerial form of data gathering soon.

To conclude, we have on record a private contractor spying on Compton, CA ,as sanctioned by the LASD. This latest example displays the militarization of policing and a step towards Martial Law in the United States of America. This nine day exercise of turning Compton into a police-state is not only an issue of privacy, but one that involves socio-economics and race, as I have just presented. Do not let negative preconceived notions about Compton and its' inhabitants prevent you from taking action against this new form of policing.

Notes:

[1] G.W. Schulz and Amanda Pike ,*"Hollywood-style surveillance inches closer to reality"* April 11,2014

<http://cironline.org/reports/hollywood-style-surveillance-technology-inches-closer-reality-6228>

[2] Conor Friedersdorf *"Eyes Over Compton: How Police Spied On A Whole City"* April 21, 2014

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/04/sheriffs-deputy-compares-drone-surveillance-of-compton-to-big-brother/360954/>

[3] PBS Newshour *"New police surveillance technology raises privacy concerns"* April 28, 2014

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily_videos/new-police-surveillance-technology-raises-privacy-questions/

[4] Angel Jennings, Richard Winton, and James Rainey *"After secret air surveillance of Compton,*

mayor wants protections" April 24, 2014

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-air-surveillance-compton-mayor-wants-protections-20140424,0,6911829.story#axzz30P4wuZJe>

[5] ZDNet Community and Zack Whittaker "PRISM: Here's how the NSA wiretapped the Internet"

June 8, 2013 <http://www.zdnet.com/prism-heres-how-the-nsa-wiretapped-the-internet-7000016565/>

[6] Luke Baker "Iraq conflict has killed a million Iraqis: survey" Jan 30, 2008

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/01/30/us-iraq-deaths-survey-idUSL3048857920080130>

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