

A legitimate case for drones

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There's been a lot of chatter in the news (and here on ECN) about drones. These arguments usually come down to questions about ethics, military power and tangentially the military industrial complex, and the relationship of the US with various other countries. It's rare to see drones talked about in any context outside of military.

However, animal activists have found an entirely different use for the military machines: targeting animal abusers.

The [League Against Cruel Sports](#) [1] is a British-based organization that works to expose animal cruelty in the name of sport and they've just announced they'll be using surveillance drones (UAV) to further incriminate people participated in illegal or cruel gaming.

The league, which works to protect animals from activities like hare coursing and badger baiting, will use the UAVs to supplement their "on the ground work" and will only implement the drones as support for investigations being done in areas where there is a strong possibility of illegal activity.

The drones, owned by a non-profit aerial surveillance and monitoring organization called ShadowView, are the first to be used for this purpose in Britain, though the USPCA and WWF have used drones in similar capacities.

ShadowView's UAVs are based on

According to their [website](#): [2] *"To achieve the desired flight objectives we have used an open source avionics package that is currently in a Beta development stage codenamed Revolution. The avionics package contains a sensor array containing state of the art 3 axis gyros and accelerometers, a 3 axis magnetometer (digital compass) and a barometric sensor, to aid navigation a GPS is also fitted. As well as*

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the sensor package the Revolution also has a built in telemetry systems that provides a constant link to a ground station which in turn provides information about system and fuel health, locational/heading/altitude and waypoint information. The UAV can be controlled via this link using a soft controller or via live waypoint navigation. For long range direct control we depend on our DragonLink Transmitter system. This comprises a separate long range Transmitter which piggy backs off our Futaba controller - providing a connection that has been tested out to 30 miles. We install a DragonLabs receiver in the OpenRanger to complete the link. To aid the pilot we use an On Screen Display (OSD) system that superimposes flight data on to the pilots screen, such data as GPS heading, altitude, ground and airspeed as well as fuel/electric consumption and levels. We use the DragonLabs Dragon OSD for this purpose which works seamlessly with the DragonLink package and also provides a Return to Home function should anything untoward happen."

[ShadowView Multi Rotor flying Low and Slow](#) [3] from [ShadowView](#) [4] on [Vimeo](#) [5].

I haven't completely settled on how I feel about using UAVs for military purposes, but it seems like a worthwhile purpose in this case. I can see this being further implemented in areas where it's particularly difficult to catch poachers due to inadequate resources or the geographical challenges of particular areas. They allow smaller organizations to patrol larger swatches of land and, used wisely, could potentially put the brakes on poaching.

Do you think it's okay to use the drones to catch poachers or should they be banned?

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<http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2013/03/legitimate-case-drones>

Links:

[1] <http://www.league.org.uk/news/1113/League-takes-to-the-sky-to-catch-wildlife-criminals>

[2] <http://www.shadowview.org/uas.html>

[3] <http://vimeo.com/57284023>

[4] <http://vimeo.com/shadowview>

[5] <http://vimeo.com>