



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 15, 2012

FAA Promises Safe Drone Deployment; Air Force Trains 100s of “Pilots”

The ever-expanding use of drones and the frightening possibilities thereof are only exacerbated by statements from insiders telling citizens that they have nothing to worry about.

At a recent convention of drone manufacturers, the acting administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Michael Huerta, said that his department is working tirelessly to “fully integrate” drones into the wider world of civil aviation. This synthesis, Huerta insists, should be accomplished within three years and will bring with it great strides in the federal government’s commitment to guard our nation from threats to our security.



[In his address to the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International \(AUVSI\)](#) conference held in Las Vegas earlier this month, Huerta admitted that “There’s a lot of work that needs to be done to move integration for all UAS [Unmanned Aircraft Systems] forward,” but added that he is “very, very optimistic that we will get there.”

[As we have reported](#), the FAA has issued numerous licenses for the domestic use of small drones (under 55 pounds) beginning in 2014 with the deployment of larger vehicles scheduled for 2015. Congress has tasked the Federal Aviation Administration with drafting a plan for drones to be deployed domestically by September 2015, and believe it or not, several states are competing to become one of six locations to help implement that plan.

Witness [this story from USA Today](#): “The skies over Florida will look dramatically different in the years to come,” Space Florida President Frank DiBello told a gathering of aerospace professionals this month. The agency’s board recently approved spending up to \$1.4 million to try to win designation as one of six test ranges across the country that Congress has directed the FAA to name by the end of the year. The FAA anticipates that about 10,000 unmanned aircraft will be patrolling over cities and towns in the United States within five years. In his keynote address, Huerta reported that the FAA is “very close to choosing” the sites that will serve as the test locations for the safe deployment of drones nationwide.

Not to be outdone, the U.S. Air Force is rapidly ramping up the training of “pilots” who will control those drones that will fly under the flag of the United States. According to a story published by the Associated Press: “Initially snubbed as second-class pilot-wannabes, the airmen who remotely control America’s arsenal of lethal drones are gaining stature and securing a permanent place in the Air Force.”

The AP reports that these erstwhile fighter pilots are drawn to the drones by their success in “tak[ing] out terrorists including al-Qaida leader Anwar al-Awlaki in Yemen.” Readers of *The New American* may



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see a significant error in the AP's depiction of the events that resulted in Awlaki's death.

[As we have reported](#), Awlaki was placed on the president's infamous kill list after he was suspected of influencing the Ft. Hood shooter, Major Nidal Hassan, as well as the so-called Underwear Bomber, Umar Abdulmutallab. No official charges were ever filed against the American-born cleric. The government never attempted to apprehend him and try him for his alleged atrocities. He was placed on a proscription list and summarily murdered by remote control.

The hit reportedly went down like this: On September 30, 2011, while Anwar al-Awlaki had stopped to eat breakfast, two unmanned Predator drones fired Hellfire missiles, killing him. Two weeks later, his American-born, teenage son Abdulrahman was killed in a similar manner. No charges. No trial. No due process. No apologies.

While it is indisputable that Awlaki openly advocated for the end of the American presence in the Middle East (including Yemen) and issued screeds that were little more than pro-Islamist propaganda, neither of those activities is criminal. But, as was revealed in our earlier article reporting on the CIA's filing of the request, the government doesn't need a crime, just a "pattern of suspicious behavior."

An important question implicit in the AP's report and its claim that "Some airmen are even volunteering to give up the exhilarating G-force ride in their F-16s for the desktop computer screens and joysticks that direct drones over battlefields thousands of miles away" is, What sort of soldiers are we creating? Are we fostering the notion among members of our nation's military that the Constitution is subject to sidestepping when someone has been branded a "terrorist"? Will the same fervor be evident when the target is named "John Smith" rather than "Anwar al-Awlaki"?

In a quote included in the AP story attributed to "Major Ted," a drone pilot, we see chilling evidence of the inculcation of these otherwise praiseworthy servicemen with the tenets of the federal government's preference of safety above liberty. Ted reportedly said: "They're going to be on the tip of the spear. And not just deploying weapons, not just dropping bombs; it will be doing the (surveillance), collecting that intelligence, and really feeding the fight for everyone."

Finally, in concert with Huerta's remarks at the AUVSI's conference, major defense contractor Raytheon revealed that after four years of research and development, it has successfully tested a 13.5-pound "smart bomb" at [the Army's Yuma Proving Ground](#) in Arizona. [According to a story in the Los Angeles Times](#), "the bomb, called Pyros, was dropped from a drone flying at 7,000 feet and hit the designated bull's-eye on a target that lay below."

"It went right through the center of the target board," said J.R. Smith, a company business development manager. "We demonstrated everything works end to end."

Let us hope that such powerful ordnance will never be used against citizens of our Republic guilty of no other crime than being courageous enough to speak out against the creeping surveillance state that strikes right through the center of our Constitution and the freedom from government oppression that that document protects.

Photo: Controllers working for Customs and Border Protection monitor drone aircraft.



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