

Meet the North Dakota family of anti-government separatists busted by cops using a Predator drone... after 'stealing six cows'

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2073248/Local-cops-used-Predator-drone-arrest-North-Dakota-farm-family-stealing-6-cows.html#axzz2Kbphmyf5>

By Daily Mail reporter, **UPDATED:** 11:48 EST, 13 December 2011

Meet the Brossarts, a North Dakota family deemed so dangerous that the local sheriff needed unleashed an unmanned Predator drone to help bring them in. The Brossart's alleged crime? They wouldn't give back three cows and their calves that wandered onto their 3,000-acre farm this summer. The same aerial vehicles used by the CIA to track down and assassinate terrorists and militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan are now being deployed by cops to spy on Americans in their own backyards.

The head of the anti-government Brossart family are Susan and husband Rodney, who live with seven of their eight adult children in a compound which includes a house, trailer and two RVs



Daughter Abby allegedly hit an officer during the arrests, which included brother Alex, after the family was spied on by a government drone

Sons Thomas and Jacob were also arrested in the bust after a 16-hour stand off, which stemmed from a half dozen stolen cows

The Brossarts are the first known subjects of the high-flying new surveillance technology that the federal government has made available to some local sheriffs and police chiefs - all without Congressional approval or search warrants.

Local authorities say the Brossarts are known for being armed, anti-government separatists whose sprawling farm is used as a compound. Rodney Brossart, 55, and his wife Susan live in a house and a trailer and two RVs with seven of their eight adult children.

When the cattle wandered onto the Brossarts' land, Sheriff Kelly Janke, who patrols a county of just 3,000 people, rounded up some sheriff's deputies and arrested Mr Brossart for failing to report the stray livestock.

They also took away his daughter, Abby, after she allegedly hit an officer during the arrest.

When cops returned to collect the lost cattle, three of Brossart's sons - Alex, Jacob and Thomas - confronted Sheriff Janke with rifles and shotguns and would not allow officers on the farm.



A spy plane comes home: Privacy advocates fear the use of Predator drones on US citizens gives police agencies too much power

That's when the sheriff summoned a \$154 million MQ-9 Predator B drone from nearby Grand Forks Air Force Base, where it was patrolling the US-Canada border for the US Department of Homeland Security.

Using a handheld device that picked up the video camera footage from the spy plane, Sheriff Janke was able to watch the movements of everyone on the farm.

During an 16-hour standoff, the sheriff and his deputies waited until they could see the remaining Brossarts put down their weapons. Then, dressed in SWAT gear, they stormed the compound and arrested the three Brossart sons. No shots were fired.

Susan Brossart, the matriarch of the clan, was later arrested, as well.

Police also recovered the cattle, valued at \$6,000. They face several felony charges and have repeatedly not shown up for court after posting \$250,000 bail.

US Customs and Border Protection agents fly eight Predator remote-controlled aircraft to patrol the American borders with Canada and Mexico, searching for smugglers and illegal immigrants. But increasingly, the federal government and local police agencies

are using those drones to spy criminal suspects in America with sophisticated high-resolution cameras, heat sensors and radar. All of it comes without a warrant.



Not his first arrest: An earlier police handout showing Rodney Brossart, who lives on a 3,000 acre farm in North Dakota with his family

Allowing local sheriffs and police chiefs access to spy planes happened without public discussion or the approval of Congress. And it has privacy advocates crying foul, saying the unregulated use of the drones is intrusive.

'There is no question that this could become something that people will regret,' former Rep Jane Harman, a Democrat, told the Los Angeles Times.

The sheriff says that might not have been possible without the intelligence from the Predators.

'We don't have to go in guns blazing. We can take our time and methodically plan out what our approach should be,' Sheriff Janke told the Times.

All of the surveillance occurred without a search warrant because the Supreme Court has long ruled that anything visible from the air, even if it's on private property, can be subject to police spying.

However, privacy experts say that predator drones, which can silently fly for 20 hours nonstop, dramatically surpasses the spying power that any police helicopter or airplane can achieve.