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Dorner: A drone target on U.S. soil

The manhunt for cop-killing ex-cop helps inaugurate drone targeting within American borders

BY NATASHA LENNARD



Christopher Dorner (Credit: AP)

Updated, 1:30 p.m. ET:

Ralph DeSio of Customs and Border Patrol has contacted Salon to state that reports that he confirmed the use of drones in the Dorner manhunt — such as the comment cited by MSNNow below — are incorrect. “Reports that U.S. Customs and Border Protection’s unmanned aircraft systems are being used are incorrect. CBP UAS are not flying in support of the search.”

However, a source named only as a “senior police source” reportedly told the U.K.’s Daily Express:

“The thermal imaging cameras the drones use may be our only hope of finding him. On the ground, it’s like looking for a needle in a haystack.”

Asked directly if drones have already been deployed, Riverside Police Chief Sergio Diaz, who is jointly leading the task force, said: “We are using all the tools at our disposal.”

Original post: Alongside the police shooting on two separate incidents of innocent individuals in the manhunt for cop-killing ex-cop Christopher Dorner, the frenzied search has also introduced the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (drones) to seek a target on U.S. soil.

According to MSNNow, “their use was confirmed by Customs and Border Patrol spokesman Ralph DeSio, who revealed the government’s fear that Dorner will make a dash for the Mexican border.”

A number of news sources, MSNNow included, stated that this was the first instance of airborne drones targeting a human target within the U.S. Not so: Among a handful of instances, police in North Dakota used a Predator drone

(unarmed) in 2011 to track down the Brossart family — anti-government separatists who refused to return cows that had wandered onto their land.

As Gizmodo's Eric Limer noted, the drones employed to search for Dorner are also “presumably” unarmed. “Should *armed* drones actually be authorized to *fire* on Dorner, then it *would* be a first, and frankly a terrifying precedent,” wrote Limer.

Natasha Lennard is an assistant news editor at Salon, covering non-electoral politics, general news and rabble-rousing. Follow her on Twitter @natashalennard, email nlennard@salon.com.

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