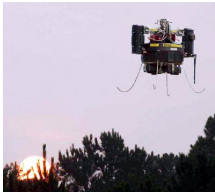


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By: Gabriel Gache, Science News Editor



Honeywell MAV
Honeywell
International

[Half-Life 2 Inspired Drone Takes to The Streets](#)

UAV to be used in crime fighting

Those of you who have played the game know what I'm talking about. You know, the small UAV's wondering through the buildings and outside, keeping an eye on you at all time, taking pictures, alerting the authorities towards your location when you break the law... You got the idea. Well, as it turns out, the game developers were not so far from reality as thought. Such a spy in the sky could be used by the police of Miami in the near future, to fight against crime.

The Micro Air Vehicle has been developed by Honeywell International, is capable of flying without human pilot input and is equipped with optic and infrared sensors with which it can keep an eye on crime from above the streets of Florida. The 6.3 kilograms Honeywell MAV has been chosen by the Miami-Dade Police Department for its unique tactical capabilities, however it still needs the approval of the Federal Aviation Administration before it would patrol the streets of Miami.

Spokesperson of the Miami-Dade Police Department Juan Villalba said: "Our intentions are to use it only in tactical situations as an extra set of eyes. We intend to use this to benefit us in carrying out our mission." Because it is so small, the MAV can be easily packed into a backpack and launched immediately into the air when needed to help SWAT teams in evaluation in hostage taking situations, for example.

But the Miami police department is not the only one making use of MAVs. The US Army has been using them in conflict zones for years. Following the initiative of the Miami police department, now law enforcement agencies all across the US believe that MAVs should become one of the primary tools in domestic crime fighting situations.

The MAV is part of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle branch, or UAV, of flying vehicles, which have been developed into the US ever since the 1970s. CIA for example, is credited for the built of the first dragonfly-sized UAV, the 'Interceptor', a spy vehicle controlled by laser, while the first ever UAVs were the developed by Austrians in 1849 to bomb the Italian city of Venice.

"The FBI is experimenting with a variety of unmanned aerial vehicles. At this point they have been used mainly for search and rescue missions. It certainly is an up-and-coming technology and the FBO is researching additional uses for UAVs," said assistant director of the bureau's Operational Technology Division, Marcus Thomas.

Privacy issues

Additionally, the US government has been using UAVs since 2006 to monitor several of its borders and will most likely start to use modified Predator B drones in the near future. On the other hand, the use of drones to monitor crime in cities could pose some privacy issues. Imagine such a device spying on you, in your own house without you ever breaking the law.

Thus, flight clearance must be approved by both governmental and civilian agencies. "We had interest from dozens of law enforcement agencies. The FAA are preventing a bunch of small companies such as ours from becoming profitable," said Billy Robinson, chief

executive of Cyber Defence Systems Inc. Cyber Defence Systems, had been testing with the Palm Bay police a 3.6 kilogram UAV, when the FAA intervened and restricted it from flight.

"There's been controversies all around about putting up surveillance cameras in public areas. Technological developments can be used by law enforcement in a way that enhances public safety. But every enhanced technology also contains a threat for further erosion of privacy," said Florida director of the American Civil Liberties Union, Howard Simon.