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Eyes in the Sky: Public Attitudes Towards Police Use of Drone Technology

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Eyes in the Sky: Public Attitudes Towards Police Use of Drone Technology

Miliaikeala S.J. Heen, Joel D. Lieberman & Terance D. Mieth

Law Enforcement UAV Applications

- Border Patrol
- Search and Rescue
- Tactical Operations
- Surveillance and Monitoring Crime in Public Settings
- Crime Scene Investigation
- Crowd Management and Monitoring
- Highway and Traffic Monitoring

Context Specific

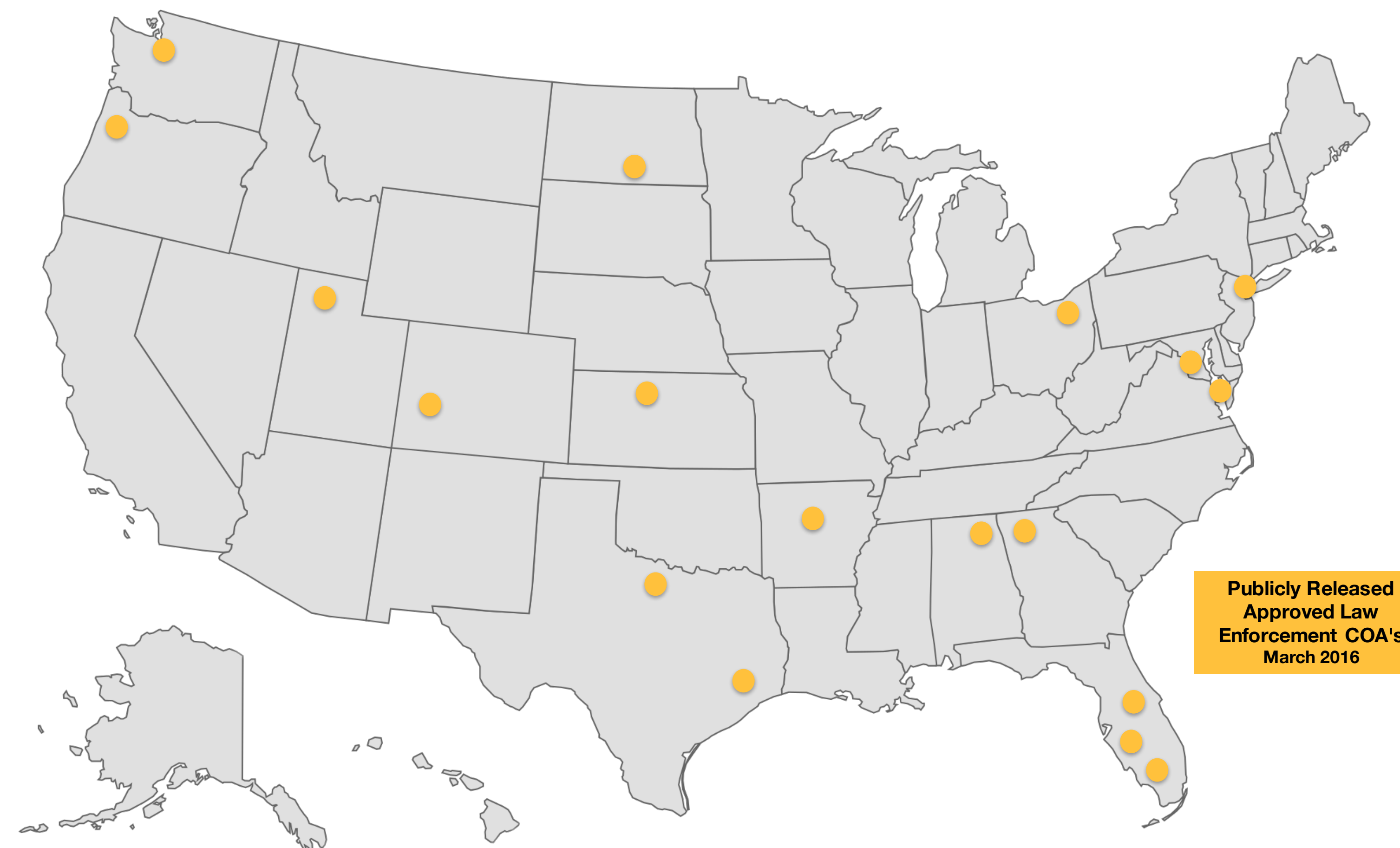
| Application | Support % |
|--|-----------|
| Search and Rescue Operations | 92.3 |
| Monitoring Highway Accidents | 76.7 |
| Crime Scene Photography | 75.7 |
| Tactical Operations for Officer Safety | 74.4 |
| International Border Patrol | 70.9 |
| Locating or Apprehending Fugitives | 68.2 |
| Detering Criminal Activities in Open Public Places | 44.3 |
| Crowd Monitoring at Large Public Events | 42.0 |
| Monitoring Political Protests or Civil Unrest | 40.3 |
| Monitoring of Offenders under House Arrest | 38.7 |
| Detecting Traffic Violations | 33.3 |

Reactive Policing Applications • **Proactive Policing Applications**

Findings

Public support for drone use in domestic policing applications is highest for:

- Applications involving protection of life (vs. applications involving surveillance-like monitoring)
- Across geographic factors (city size and region)
- Across social factors (political party affiliation, views about government, and level of technological knowledge)



Policing Strategies

| | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Total % Support | 59.7 | 76.4 | 39.7 |

Geographic Factors

| City Size | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Small (< 1 million pop.) | 59.5 | 76.6 | 38.9 |
| Large (> 1 million pop.) | 60.6 | 75.5 | 42.8 |

| Region | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|-----------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Northeast | 58.1 | 72.7 | 40.6 |
| Midwest | 61.2 | 81.0 | 37.5 |
| South | 59.7 | 76.4 | 39.7 |
| Pacific | 59.3 | 74.4 | 41.2 |

Current Study

Assess public perceptions about various ways police departments use drone technology

- Context specific applications
- Impact of geographic and social factors

National online survey

- $n = 481$

Social Factors

| Political Party Orientation | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Democrat | 63.5 | 79.4 | 44.5 |
| Republican | 60.6 | 74.0 | 44.4 |
| Independent | 54.9 | 73.8 | 32.2 |

| Do you prefer a government that puts greater emphasis on.... | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|--|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Public Safety | 70.4 | 81.7 | 56.8 |
| Individual Rights | 54.5 | 73.8 | 31.4 |

| Knowledge of Technology | Overall Policing | Reactive Policing | Proactive Policing |
|--|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Low Knowledge (e.g., I use this technology but don't know how it works.) | 56.5 | 69.6 | 40.9 |
| Medium Knowledge (e.g., I use this technology and know a little about how it works.) | 57.5 | 73.3 | 38.6 |
| High Knowledge (e.g., I use this technology and know how it works.) | 62.5 | 80.4 | 41.0 |

Policy Implications

Agencies looking to implement drone technology should:

- Start with reactive applications and avoid using drones within proactive activities
- Provide public with education and awareness of technology to increase transparency and overall knowledge of police use of UAV's