

TASERS WITH WINGS

I've been focusing on Edward Snowden's NSA revelations, but I didn't want this tidbit of news to go unnoticed. Among the other documents EFF has gotten in its FOIA on drones in the United States is a planning document for Customs and Border Patrol's use of the Predator drone. In it, there's one line that suggests future upgrades (the report dates to 2010) might include non-lethal immobilization technology.

A Customs & Border Protection (CPB) report, released in response to EFF's Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against the agency, shows CBP has considered adding weapons to its domestic Predator drones.

The report, titled "Concept of Operations for CBP's Predator B Unmanned Aircraft System" and submitted to Congress on June 29, 2010 shows that, not only is the agency planning to sharply increase the number of Predator drones it flies and the amount of surveillance it conducts by 2016 (detailed further in a separate blog post tomorrow), but it has considered equipping its Predators with "non-lethal weapons designed to immobilize" targets of interest. (p. 63).

And remember: CBP loans out its drones to other Federal agencies. I suspect when Robert Mueller testified recently that FBI had used drones he had CBP ones in mind.

So the next time LAPD uses loaner drones in a manhunt across Southern California, that drone may well be armed with industrial sized tasers.