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CBP Flew A Predator Drone Over Minneapolis Amid George Floyd Protests



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I cover tech, streaming, games, esports, the internet and more.

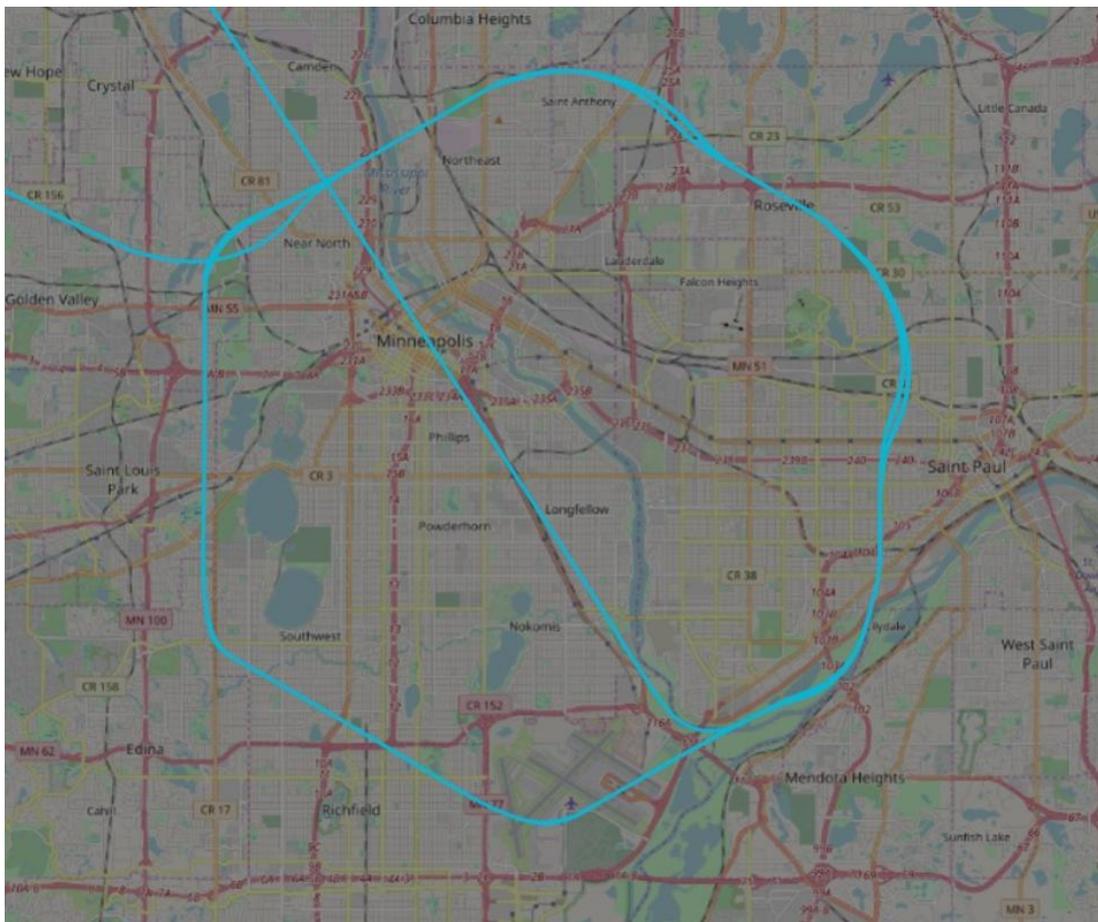


SIERRA VISTA, AZ - OCTOBER 30: The new MQ-9 Predator B, an unmanned surveillance aircraft system, ... [\[+\]](#) GETTY IMAGES

Customs and Border Protection flew a Predator drone, which is commonly used in overseas military operations, over Minneapolis today, drawing criticism from the American Civil Liberties Union and

others. Protests against police brutality have broken out in the city in recent days following the death of George Floyd, in which law enforcement officers were involved.

The use of the MQ-9 Reaper drone, which **took off** from Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, was **first noted** by Jason Paladino, a reporter at *The Project on Government Oversight*. *Motherboard* **confirmed** the hexagonal route of the drone using flight path data. It looped around the city several times Friday morning at a constant altitude of 20,000 feet **before it headed back north**.



The flight path of the CPB104 predator drone over Minneapolis on May 29th. ADB-S EXCHANGE

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Although the CPB104 drone was unarmed, the same type of remotely-piloted aircraft has been used to monitor and kill suspected terrorists in other countries. **Update 8:40 PM ET:** The CPB has provided a statement on today's drone deployment, which I've included in full at the end of this post.

"No government agency should be facilitating the over-policing of the Black community, period. And CBP has no role in what's happening in Minneapolis at all," ACLU Senior Legislative Counsel Neema Singh Guliani said in a statement. "This rogue agency's use of military technology to surveil protesters inside US borders is deeply disturbing, especially given CBP's lack of clear and strong policies to protect privacy and constitutional rights. This agency's use of drones over the city should be halted immediately."

Demonstrations started in the city after a video emerged showing white police officer Derek Chauvin kneeling on the neck of Floyd, an unarmed black man, who later died in hospital. Chauvin and three other officers who were involved in the incident were fired.

Chauvin [was arrested today](#) and charged with third-degree murder and manslaughter. Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman expects that charges will be laid against the other former officers too.

As *Motherboard* pointed out, unarmed Predator drones have been used [hundreds of times](#) in surveillance operations in the country, including along the US-Mexico border. The FBI also [used spy plane](#)

[flights](#) to monitor Black Lives Matter protests in Baltimore in 2015 following the death of Freddie Gray, who was in police custody at the time.

A CBP spokesperson provided the following statement:

“Earlier today a US Customs and Border Protection, Air and Marine Operations unmanned aircraft system was preparing to provide live video to aid in situational awareness at the request of our federal law enforcement partners in Minneapolis. The unmanned aircraft system provides live video feed to ground law enforcement, giving them situational awareness, maximizing public safety, while minimizing the threat to personnel and assets.

“After arriving into the Minneapolis airspace, the requesting agency determined that the aircraft was no longer needed for operational awareness and departed back to Grand Forks.

“CBP AMO routinely conducts operations with other federal, state, and local law enforcement entities to assist law enforcement and humanitarian relief efforts.

“AMO carries out its mission nationwide, not just at the border, consistent with federal laws and policies. During humanitarian missions AMO regularly deploys the unmanned aircraft system to assist FEMA in assessing hurricane affected areas, in coordination with the National Weather Service to capture imagery of storm impacted areas, and with federal, state and local partners to conduct search and rescue missions, in addition to its law enforcement mission.”

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