

Imaging, Spy-Cams and Drones: The New Hi Tech Homeland Security State

By [Tom Burghardt](#)

Global Research, June 18, 2010

[Antifascist Calling...](#) 17 June 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

As “gee-whiz” high-tech wonders seamlessly morph into “your papers, please!,” more often than not in “new normal” America science and technological innovation are little more than deranged handmaids serving corporate crime and political power.

In the interest of “keeping us safe,” the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) unveiled a spiffy new surveillance cam “that puts others to shame,” [CNET](#) breezily reported last week.

The Imaging System for Immersive Surveillance ([ISIS](#)) is a hemispherical group of cameras roughly the size of a basketball that, if one believes giddy accolades by enthusiasts touting the system, will lovingly wrap us in a “high-res video quilt,” a DHS press release gushes.

The ultra-wide camera undergoing field-tests since December at Boston’s Logan International Airport, streams distortion free, real-time stitched video and has a resolution capacity of approximately 100 megapixels which our guardians say is “as detailed as 50 full-HDTV movies playing at once, with optical detail to spare. You can zoom in close...and closer...without losing clarity.”

But with an abundance of acronyms, and a decided lack of imagination from a gaggle of secret state agencies, one shouldn’t confuse Homeland Security’s ISIS with one incubating beneath the dark wings of the Pentagon’s “blue sky” office, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency ([DARPA](#)).

That program, Integrated Sensor Is Structure, also known as [ISIS](#), is being shepherded along by Lockheed Martin, America’s No. 1 defense corp. DARPA’s ISIS promises to build an autonomous airship powered by solar fuel cells for American warfighters, one capable of staying aloft for a decade above 70,000 feet, well out of the way of an adversary’s surface to air missiles.

According to the [description](#) on the Strategic Technology Office’s web site, their ISIS “will develop the technologies that enable extremely large lightweight phased-array radar antennas to be integrated into an airship platform.” This would enable ground commanders “to track the most advanced cruise missiles at 600 km and dismounted enemy combatants at 300 km.”

Pentagon gurus and the corporations they so lovingly serve, recently awarded Lockheed Martin and subcontracting Raytheon Corporation, a \$400 million dollar contract for Phase III work on the radar system, [Defense Systems](#) reported in April. DARPAcrats claim the high-flying airship will provide “theatre-wide, persistent area surveillance and tracking capabilities” to America’s Borg Army of resource grabbers.

And with [The New York Times](#) reporting June 14 that the “United States has discovered nearly \$1 trillion in untapped mineral deposits in Afghanistan, far beyond any previously known reserves and enough to fundamentally alter the Afghan economy and perhaps the Afghan war itself,” it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to conclude that sometime soon the corrupt Karzai regime, the Taliban, their ISI paymasters and their American overlords will cozy up and play “let’s make a deal”!

Nor should either project be confused with the failed “secure border” scheme known as the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System or ISIS (there it is again!) or its successor, America’s Shield Initiative. No, that corporatist boondoggle which cost taxpayers some \$439 million between 1997 and 2006, eventually morphed into the equally useless Secure Border Initiative or SBInet.

Fully in keeping with the tenor of the times, to wit, that government should get “out of the way” and let business work its magic, DHS’s own Inspector General described the troubled history of the project in critical [testimony](#) to Congress. The IG criticized lax practices that led the Department to allow the contractors, led by Boeing Corporation, decide what the system would look like and what technology would be used to build it.

Needless to say, that didn’t work out well! Just this week [Washington Technology](#) reported that Boeing “could see its lucrative, but troubled Secure Border Initiative contract scaled back as Homeland Security Department officials consider stopping future construction of the ‘virtual-fence’ security systems along the U.S.-Mexico border.”

Like predecessor ISIS, the \$800 million program has suffered from delays, technical glitches and “changes” in direction. In March, Home Sec Secretary Janet Napolitano announced the program was “being re-evaluated as part of an ongoing reassessment.” No matter, with cash in hand Boeing, and a string of disappointed subcontractors, can afford to “move on.”

But I digress...

No dear readers, the Heimat Security project I’m describing is close to earth, perhaps only a few feet above the congested street where you trod, oblivious to the legion of minders busily stripping you of your rights; above all, the right to be left alone. Ah, but there’s the rub. Why should any of Oceania’s proud citizens have anything to fear? After all, only evil-doers have something to hide, don’t they? Why wouldn’t you leap with joy at the prospect of being enwrapped in a vid-quilt cocoon lovingly designed by America’s finest minds?

“Traditional surveillance cameras can be of great assistance to law enforcement officers for a range of scenarios,” DHS flacks croon. “Canvassing a crowd for criminal activity during a Fourth of July celebration, searching for who left a suitcase bomb beneath a bench, or trying to pick out a terrorist who has fled the scene and blended into a teeming throng in the subway.”

Who’d oppose that?

But why stop there? Surely there are other applications for the privacy-killing gizmo. Where did that political malcontent go after handing out “subversive” leaflets at the mall? And that flash mob of miscreants protesting an oil firm’s board meeting or, heavens forbid!, bum-rushing giftling merchants of death at an industry trade show; where’d they scam to? Multitasking is the name of the game and DHS has got it covered!

A joint project of the Science and Technology Directorate's Infrastructure and Geophysical Division, MIT's Lincoln Laboratory and the Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, ISIS was built with off-the-shelf cameras, image processors and readily-available commercial software. No need to reinvent the wheel here in these tough economic times!

The innocent-looking array points in all directions and captured images are "stitched" together, creating a creepy "god's eye" view that allow CCTV operators to easily track people back and forth through the HD "quilt" files without losing a single suspect, I mean American, as they pass from one field to the next.

"Other neat tricks" enthusiasts effervesce, "will be provided by a suite of software applications called video analytics. One app can define a sacrosanct 'exclusion zone,' for which ISIS provides an alert the moment it's breached. Another lets the operator pick a target—a person, a package, or a pickup truck—and the detailed viewing window will tag it and follow it, automatically panning and tilting as needed." (emphasis in original)

We're told that "video analytics at high resolution across a 360-degree field of view, coupled with the ability to follow objects against a cluttered background, will provide"—wait!—"enhanced situational awareness as an incident unfolds."

"We've seen that terrorists are determined to do us harm," Dr. John Fortune, the I&G's head honcho told contractors lining up to get a slice of the vid-quilt pie. "ISIS is a great example of one way we can improve our security by leveraging our strengths."

And should things, pardon the pun, pan out, "ISIS creators already have their eyes on a new and improved second generation model, complete with custom sensors and video boards, longer range cameras, higher resolution, a more efficient video format."

"Eventually," we're told, "the Department plans to develop a version of ISIS that will use infrared cameras to detect events that occur at night."

South of the Border ... Bring On the Drones!

Meanwhile, as Homeland Security unveiled their chic new spy-cam and exiled SBINet to the Isle of Lost Corporatist Dreams, [The Hill](#) reported that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) began flying "Predator B aerial drones, which have proved successful fighting insurgents in Afghanistan, were deployed this week along the border between Texas and Mexico."

CBP, a DHS satrapy plagued by endemic corruption engendered by deep state management of the multibillion dollar drug trade, was accused last week of murdering an unarmed 15-year-old who had the temerity to throw rocks at border agents from the Mexican side of the border.

[Democracy Now!](#) disclosed June 10, that U.S. authorities said that "Sergio Adrian Hernandez Güereca was part of a group of boys throwing rocks at Border Patrol agents who were trying to detain two people at the border crossing."

While intrepid agents claimed they feared for their lives, "a cell-phone video obtained by the Spanish language network Univision shows otherwise," Amy Goodman reports. "The grainy footage shows the Border Patrol agent detaining one man at gunpoint. While he has the

man on the ground, he points his gun toward a second person on the Mexican side of the border. The video shows that person running away as the agent fires several shots. The video then shows a body next to a column under the bridge.”

In other words, there’s nothing to see here, move along!

This latest border killing follows closely on the heels of “change” President Obama’s pledge to station 1,200 National Guard troops along the border to stem the flow of economic migrants hammered by continued depredations resulting from the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the highly-lucrative drugs trade.

According to [Narco News](#), “a special operations task force under the command of the Pentagon is currently in place south of the border providing advice and training to the Mexican Army in gathering intelligence, infiltrating and, as needed, taking direct action against narco-trafficking organizations,” investigative journalist Bill Conroy reported June 12.

The deployment of deep cover Special Forces assets are part of the Obama regime’s Mérida Initiative, a “security arrangement” between the U.S. secret state and their Mexican and Central American counterparts.

The alleged aim of the initiative is to stamp out national security threats posed by drug traffickers, transnational criminal syndicates and money laundering by “dirty” banks. To aid the venture, Congress generously allocated some \$1.6 billion for training, equipment and intelligence to regional security forces. Undoubtedly, such operations would be greatly enhanced by flying unmanned drones over suspected drug smuggling routes as an assist to our allies.

Last Saturday however, the [National Post](#) reported that “an investigation conducted by The Montreal Gazette, CBC Radio and the U.S.’s National Public Radio (NPR) has found powerful elements within the Mexican government and army have no intention of ending the narcotics trade.”

But wait, hasn’t a Special Forces contingent dubbed Task Force 7 by Conroy’s source, been providing expertise for more than a year to the Mexican Army to root out corruption and slay evil-doers, the same Army that has “no intention” of ending the grisly trade responsible for deaths of thousands?

The National Post disclosed that “senior government and military officials are helping the Sinaloa cartel and its leader become the dominant drug-trafficking organization in Mexico. This means the cartel will likely become the most powerful organized crime group on the continent.”

True enough as far as it goes, but I’d offer one slight edit: the Sinaloa cartel would perhaps “become the most powerful organized crime group on the continent,” only were we to ignore the key role played by North American, specifically U.S. banks, in laundering billions of dollars in blood money, a minor, though pertinent detail, omitted by the National Post, the Gazette, NPR and the CBC.

After all as Antonio Maria Costa, the head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime told [The Observer](#) in December, “the proceeds of organised crime were ‘the only liquid investment capital’ available to some banks on the brink of collapse last year.” Indeed, Costa claimed that “drugs money worth billions of dollars kept the financial system afloat at the height of

the [2008] global crisis.”

All the more reason then, to bring on the drones!

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-TX), a close political ally of former President George W. Bush (no slouch when it came to protecting Afghan drug rackets), praised Obama’s move to fly Predators along the border. The good Senator told The Hill, “the beginning of UAV flights over the west-Texas portion of our border with Mexico marks an important advancement for border security in our state.”

The Bushist crony continued: “We are working hard to make round-the-clock aerial surveillance the standard for all 2,000 miles of the U.S.-Mexico border, and I hope this development is the first of many steps to bring our border detection and security efforts into the 21st century.”

Not to be outdone by a political “rival” across the aisle, Rep. Henry Cuellar, a south Texas Democrat, praised CBP’s drone deployment and said, “By putting eyes in the sky along the Rio Grande, we will gather real-time intelligence on the ground to augment the good work of federal, state and local law enforcement on the border.”

Or provide those shipping multi-ton loads of cocaine and other illicit drugs northward adequate warning! Indeed, [Narco News](#) disclosed in May that “a law enforcement task force in New Mexico that is supposed to target drug-trafficking criminals is instead awash in charges that it is using its nearly \$600,000 taxpayer-subsidized budget to fund its own corrupt practices.”

Although an investigation by an internal affairs unit of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) revealed “a disturbing trail of bookkeeping irregularities and multiple mysterious bank accounts,” the indefatigable Bill Conroy revealed that “nothing of consequence happened to the task force or its operations, and it continues to operate under the same leadership to this day.”

A minor detail perhaps, but then who cares! Certainly not our intrepid “watchdog” Washington press corps led by CNN’s White House correspondent Ed Henry, The Atlantic’s Marc Ambinder and others, who recently cavorted with the Vice President at a “beach party” at Joe Biden’s mansion, Salon’s Glenn Greenwald [disclosed](#)!

For the “people who matter” however, unleashing a drone fleet along the border will be music to the ears of General Atomics, the manufacturer of the Predator B. What, with saturation coverage of the Iraq and “Afpak” theatres by the CIA and Pentagon’s armada of killer robots, the \$10-12 million dollar price tag per drone is a surefire win-win all around.

Is this a great country or what!

The original source of this article is [Antifascist Calling...](#)
Copyright © [Tom Burghardt](#), [Antifascist Calling...](#), 2010

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

Become a Member of Global Research

Articles by: **Tom Burghardt**
<http://antifascist-calling.blogspot.com/>

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca