

Superspy in the sky could soon be patrolling over British cities to search for hidden terror cells

By [Jason Lewis](#)

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A Top-secret US unmanned drone used to locate Al Qaeda and Taliban hideouts in Pakistan and Afghanistan could soon be patrolling over British cities to search for hidden terror cells.

The controversial move would allow MI5 and GCHQ, the Government's eavesdropping centre, to step up surveillance operations over the UK. Until now, the £23million Global Hawk aircraft has not been available for foreign sale.

However, US policy has been quietly changed and Britain is now negotiating to buy the drones. America is keen to supply them for British patrols after a string of terror plots threatening the US and its citizens.



Terror Watch: The £23 million Global Hawk unmanned drone

These include the attempt in 2006 to detonate liquid bombs on aircraft flying to American cities from the UK. It is not known how many drones the UK wants from manufacturer Northrop Grumman, but earlier this year a senior Ministry of Defence procurement official visited the Pentagon to begin negotiations.

Britain would not need to use the drones in Afghanistan and Pakistan because the US already provides full air coverage in the region. Instead, it is believed they will be used mainly for domestic surveillance.

The drones are also being deployed by the US Navy in the Caribbean and off the Florida coast to combat drug smuggling. In Britain, MI5 and GCHQ already use three planes based at RAF Northolt in North-West London to spy on citizens.

The three Britten-Norman Islander aircraft are all fitted with sophisticated surveillance equipment. They have been used to track down terror cells and to locate former Afghan veterans who may have returned to Britain to plot terror attacks.

The aircraft are able to identify suspects using 'voice-prints' of insurgents with British accents that were picked up by spy planes monitoring Taliban radio signals in Afghanistan.

One stumbling block is that permission from the Civil Aviation Authority would be needed to fly the drones in already congested UK airspace. Although the CAA gave the MoD permission to fly another drone over parts of Wales earlier this month, it is understood to be against regular flights because of safety fears.

However, the Global Hawk recently became the first drone to be certified by the American Federal Aviation Authority for use in civilian air corridors with no advance notice.

The drone can stay airborne for 30 hours without refuelling. Last night, MoD sources said the Global Hawk was being looked at for possible military use but any decision to buy the drone would depend on funding.

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Good job we don't have this yet Gordon would be tracking the opposition eavesdropping for tips on how to win .LOL what a joke we do not need this piece of rubbish at any price .If our discreet services cant cope the old fashioned way why do we need an ugly bit of US junk like this patrolling our own sky's listening even the yanks use it in foreign places of war. Ridiculous another waste of money .

- colin, huddersfield, 25/4/2010 10:34

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Just what the "green police" want.

- derek jeffery, milford uk, 25/4/2010 10:21

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And dustbin offenders and motorists.....

Wait and see.....

- Tony, Buckingham, 25/4/2010 10:20

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Yeah, and I'll dig up my granny and dance the flemenco with her!

- Billy G, London, UK, 25/4/2010 10:13

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What ever happened to our basic human right for privacy and a private family life. I personally do not want to be spied upon and my conversations eavesdropped on by some piece of junk in the sky. Better I write to Brussels this is now going to far.

- nikko, taunton, 25/4/2010 10:09

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Hidden terror cells my eye!

They'll be used to gather 'evidence' to persecute decent law-abiding citizens like the thousands of other surveillance cameras in 'Stasi state' Britain.

- Mark, Bicester, Oxon., 25/4/2010 10:02

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