Odd police video shows drone removing knife from motionless suspect

The Electronic Frontier Foundation’s Atlas of Surveillance database lists more than 1,800 police departments and sheriff’s offices as having operated drones in the United States. The nonprofit organization also highlighted a notable rise in US law enforcement adopting “drone as first responder” programs in 2025, with tech and drone companies teaming up to sell law enforcement on drones with enhanced surveillance capabilities.

Such companies pitching drone surveillance systems tailored for law enforcement include Flock Safety, Axon and Skydio, and Brinc and Motorola Solutions. For example, Flock’s drones carry the company’s automated license plate readers.

“Flying cameras are bad enough,” wrote Beryl Lipton, a senior investigative researcher at the Electronic Frontier Foundation, in reference to the drone-as-first-responder programs. “They can see and record footage from a special vantage point, capturing video of your home, your backyard, and your movements that should require clear policies around retention, audits, and use, including when the cameras shouldn’t be recording.”

The Sacramento County Sheriff’s Office listed 18 drones in its inventory for its 2025 annual report, including commercial multirotor drones made by Chinese drone manufacturers DJI and Autel, along with a single fixed-wing drone from the Ohio-based company Event 38 capable of vertical takeoffs and landings.

In September 2025, Sacramento County supervisors unanimously approved the purchase of another 27 drones for the sheriff’s office with a starting price of $5,000 per drone, according to the KCRA 3 TV station. The drone purchases came as part of a larger $1 million package for the sheriff’s office that also included a robot and a Bearcat armored vehicle, along with other military-style equipment.

https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2026/06/police-tout-using-drone-to-disarm-incapacitated-person-in-nationwide-first/