Skydio drones reportedly owned by more than 20 US police agencies



More than 20 police agencies around the US own drones from US manufacturer Skydio, according to *Forbes*, which calculated the figure based on a combination of freedom of information requests and public announcements. The report follows news that Skydio is the first US dronemaker to be valued at over $1 billion following a recent funding round.

Working with police departments is thought to be part of Skydio's attempt to make inroads against dominant player DJI, which is said to command between 70 and 80 percent of the commercial drone market. Skydio started offering its drones to government agencies for free last year, and over 30 public agencies reportedly took them up on the offer. America's Custom and Border Protection is also testing using the company's drones this year.

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Skydio’s prospects have been helped by the US government’s recent decision to add DJI to the Department of Commerce’s Entity List. Although DJI’s consumer business hasn’t seen a significant impact, with customers still able to buy and use its drones, the move has reportedly caused some police departments to explore ditching its devices.

The selling point of Skydio’s drones is their self-flying technology, and *Forbes* notes that police forces find this helpful for having the drones fly inside buildings or through forests. Last year, one of the company’s drones was used to help a SWAT team during a standoff with armed suspects in Burlington, Massachusetts.

Although Skydio’s CEO Adam Bry admits that working with government agencies may mean its drones are used in “potentially polarizing and charged situations,” he tells *Forbes,* “steering away from that just because it’s controversial or polarizing would be the wrong thing to do.” In comments given to the *New York Times*, the CEO has come out strongly against Skydio’s drones being used with weapons.

“We are not putting weapons on the drone,” Bry said. “Weaponization is the one thing where you want less automation, not more.”

https://www.theverge.com/2021/3/4/22313031/skydio-20-police-departments-usa-military-customs-and-border-protection-self-flying