
Introduction: Drones and privacy

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Biographical notes: Ronald C. Griffin served as a scholar and Consultant in the specialised field of international trade and sales as a Visiting Professor of Law at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. He was invited to observe the hearings for the Meech Lake Accord, Canada's process for restructuring its Constitution. His international study of law and culture includes extended visits to Scotland, Ireland, Ghana, South Africa and Japan.

We live in cyberspace. Borders, boundaries, and territories are irrelevant. Drones prowl the sky collecting information about us. From still and moving images, sounds, data travelling over the internet, to cell and telephone conversations, they snare it all.

It is a hard time for personal communications. Privacy is under siege. Aside from living in a cabin, covered by dense foliage, it is difficult to erect a space that is private. In virtual reality where almost everything sent is unencrypted, the government harvests everything.

Drones are add-ons. They are sneaky, useful, and cheap toys. The state deploys them for search and rescue, border protection, and surveillance. The question is: whether we should make them a conspicuous part of civilian life? W. Gregory Voss, Toulouse University – Toulouse Business School, addresses that question, recounting in his essay what is happening in Europe and the USA.

Some elites are preoccupied with constraints placed upon the state, leaving private entities with the option to do anything. Others want to use conventions and European directives to erect a comprehensive scheme for privacy. Professor Voss's article is illuminating in that regard. His use of language is crisp. What he posits is thought provoking. The footnotes provide the reader with useful citations.

Now, let us shift the ground and plumb what we known about privacy; that is, go beyond Professor Voss's drone account. The climate for privacy is toxic. The government's rigged the rules against anonymity. Individuals have to make their own arrangements to veil things as secrets. There is a tussle between the public and the government over what is protected under the rubric 'the right to be left alone'.

What is the norm? It is dignity in some places; the notion that we can sequester personal information that harms a person's social standing and his attempts to erect an identity for himself. Privacy (in this context) is about how organisations gather and distribute information about somebody. It is what or whatever we define as private and the rules and directives we need to protect the stuff in that space (e.g., personal honour, respect, prestige, and esteem accorded by achievements.)

Modern day video and facial recognition technology make us familiar objects on city streets. Smart phones and whatever we do with them make us assessable over the internet. That alone is innocuous. But somebody's compilation of this material that's fashioned by others into avatars that diverge from our being is a problem.

Maybe privacy is *propriety* in the end – that is doing what is right. Personal indignation, protest, discomfort, and resistance to everyday technology should mark boundaries beyond which individuals and organisations should not go.