



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

RISA VETRI FERMAN
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KEVIN R. STEELE
FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

SAMUEL J. GALLEN
CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

JESSE S. KING
CHIEF OF STAFF

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX
COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU

(610) 278-3090
(610) 278-3095
(610) 278-3368

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

Montco Sheriff Bono, joined by DA Ferman, launches new drone to assist bomb unit



Sheriff Russell J. Bono, joined by District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman, unveiled a new drone on Friday, September 18, 2015, which will be used to assist the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Bomb Unit in reconnaissance missions, while responding to bomb calls. A demonstration at the Public Safety Training Campus in Conshohocken, Pa., displayed how the unmanned aerial vehicle can search and examine sites inaccessible by robot, prior to sending a bomb technician into potentially deadly situations. The drone will not be used for criminal searches or investigations and its use requires the approval of the sheriff or chief deputy.

"We want to take every precaution that our bomb unit is as safe as possible when conducting their investigations of suspicious and dangerous materials," said Bono. "The drone is a great tool, which allows the unit to gather preliminary information on a robot inaccessible site or object, before taking the risk to send in a bomb technician."

The Draganflyer Guardian, which is made in Canada, is a hand controlled quad copter aircraft made of carbon fiber, injection molded parts. It is 23.5 inches square and 10 inches high, and weighs approximately three pounds when carrying its detachable optical zoom camera, which transmits images to the operator. The Draganflyer's practical size, weight, quick assembly and ease of use make it an important tool when responding to emergency situations. The helicopter can fly up to 30 mph and a handheld controller allows the drone to move at a quarter of an inch at a time, while holding on GPS positions or altitudes. The drone's onboard processors with 11 sensors help keep it stable and easy to fly.

"Protecting the public is my top priority, and that includes making sure that our law enforcement officers and all first responders have the best tools available to ensure their personal safety as they undertake very dangerous jobs," said Ferman. "The benefits to using drone technology in this limited way is that it maximizes the safety of our bomb techs, and enhances their capabilities without any infringement on citizens' personal privacy."

The cost of the drone, which was generously donated from District Attorney Risa Vetri Ferman is \$10,000, and includes a warranty package.

"I am pleased to be able to make use of dollars seized from criminals, and forfeited to the DA's Office to protect our law enforcement officers, first responders and our community, with no expense to taxpayers," said Ferman.

The new drone will be operated by the bomb unit according to FAA guidelines. A sensor automatically returns the drone to its operator when it is either getting out of range of the controller, running out of battery power, or is at risk of flying in unauthorized areas.

"Our bomb unit has been doing extensive training with the drone over the past several weeks testing various scenarios," said Bono. "We are ready to use it whenever it is necessary."

Approved for release:

Risa Vetri Ferman