

Argentina UAVs spot pools and mansions, not empty lots

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Aeryon Scout UAV in flight.

Officials in Argentina have used unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to locate undeclared mansions in a crackdown on rich tax evaders. The roots of their suspicions that something was amiss were in properties registered as empty lots in a wealthy Buenos Aires area, about 10 miles south of the city, according to a report in The Telegraph, and they sent out \$10,000 drones equipped with cameras to take pictures of the

properties. Resulting snapshots were of luxurious houses and swimming pools. The Telegraph reported that all in all, tax inspectors found 200 mansions and 100 swimming pools that had not been declared. The missing taxes amount to over \$2 million from the hidden mansions and the owners face big fines.

Drone use in South America has been expanding, reported Nick Allen, the Daily Telegraph's US West Coast correspondent, and have been dispatched to support investigations such as identifying routes used by drug smugglers, [monitoring](#) crops, and looking for archaeological sites.

The U.S. is not the major provider of drone technology to South America. A number of countries have made use of drone technology from Israel, among other interesting developments. W. Alejandro Sanchez, senior research fellow at the Council on Hemispheric Affairs (COHA), said In a report last year in Upside Down World, "The most basic surveillance [drones](#) are small and cost about \$600 from a company in Mexico." The prices get higher, he said, "but not as much as most people expect, especially when compared to the cost of a helicopter. Anyone thinking drones are [financially](#) unattainable for less developed countries hasn't looked at the latest models."

Upside Down World added that drones are convenient, economical and unlike helicopters and other manned aircrafts, need less maintenance, less fuel, and "less risk to human life in potentially dangerous operations – all while drone prices drop with each passing year." A COHA report earlier this year also recognized that drones can be applied to beneficial use. "Brazil has deployed Israeli-made drones to monitor the Amazon rainforest and crack down on environmental crimes (such as illegal logging and pillaging of natural resources). Moreover, archaeologists in Peru want to utilize the high-resolution cameras on drones for exploration of designated targets because these machines provide a resourceful "eye in the sky" for archaeological digs."

Sanchez nonetheless expressed concern over technology in the hands of dictatorial governments. "There's definitely a need for a technology that's both cheap and can have some really positive results, but obviously there's a possibility this technology can be used for all the wrong reasons," he said in Upside Down World. In the COHA report, he said, "more debate among policymakers and civic society is required. Given the potential benefits and perils of [unmanned aerial vehicles](#), it is critical for regional governments to establish guidelines, which must be properly enforced, on what is and what is not [permissible](#) regarding drones."

More information: www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world...thy-tax-evaders.html

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