

The Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General (OIG) announced today the release of a report assessing the Department of Justice's (DOJ) use of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), commonly referred to as "drones." This report follows up on the findings of the OIG's September 2013 interim report on the DOJ's use and support of UAS, and also examines the extent to which DOJ components have relied on other agencies' UAS to support DOJ law enforcement efforts.

The report released today found that:

- As of August 2014, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) remained the only DOJ component that operationally deploys its own UAS. The FBI had deployed its UAS exclusively to provide targeted aerial surveillance in the context of 13 investigations, including search and rescue operations, kidnappings, fugitive manhunts, national security missions, and anti-drug trafficking interdictions. We confirmed that the FBI obtained all required approvals from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to operate UAS in the field between 2010 and 2014.
- The FBI faces discrete program management challenges regarding its use of UAS. Specifically, during our review the FBI maintained all 17 of its operational UAS at a single location and had only one pilot team on staff adequately trained to fly all models of its UAS. We believe this could limit the FBI's ability to deploy UAS to distant locations quickly, or to multiple locations simultaneously. FBI officials emphasized that its manned aircraft program is capable of deploying to multiple locations quickly, but they acknowledged that UAS can have operational advantages. The FBI had begun addressing these challenges by training additional UAS pilots and establishing a goal to deploy UAS to additional FBI field divisions over the next 5 years, although we found that the FBI had not fully developed plans to implement this goal. We also found that the FBI and FAA have drafted, but not yet finalized, rules which would expand the locations and times that the FBI could operate its UAS without first requesting written FAA permission.
- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) spent approximately \$600,000 on UAS but never flew them operationally. ATF officials told us that they encountered a series of technological limitations with these UAS related to flight time and maneuverability and concluded that the systems were unreliable or unsuitable to support operations. ATF subsequently suspended its UAS program in June 2014 and disposed of these UAS. Yet less than a week after that suspension, a separate unit within ATF purchased five small commercial UAS for approximately \$15,000 without coordinating with ATF's UAS program office. That unit of ATF has grounded these UAS until they receive further guidance regarding their use.
- The FBI, ATF, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and United States Marshals Service (USMS) have all received support from Predator-B UAS operated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Our

review of CBP records identified 95 CBP UAS flights in support of missions that involved DOJ components between 2010 and 2013. DEA was involved in 73, the FBI in 13, ATF in 4, the USMS in 3, and 2 involved multiple DOJ components. We found that the DOJ components did not have recordkeeping policies or practices to document support received from non-DOJ operated UAS, and that they maintained only minimal documentation of such support in the field. Without such efforts, we believe that DOJ components may not be able to accurately assess their need for UAS support or how to use UAS most effectively and appropriately to support their operations.

- The extent of DOJ involvement in these CBP UAS flights varied significantly. For example, ATF specifically requested that the CBP conduct three UAS flights to help it prepare to serve a search warrant pertaining to a firearms trafficking investigation adjacent to the U.S.-Canadian border. In several other instances, DOJ components requested UAS assistance to assist local police emergencies. Most commonly, the cases receiving non-DOJ UAS support involved DOJ components serving on domestic or international joint task forces with other federal, state, and local agencies.

Today's report makes four recommendations to help the DOJ continue to improve its UAS management and oversight. The DOJ, including the FBI and ATF, concurred with all of the OIG's recommendations.

Today's report can be found on the OIG's website at the following link: www.justice.gov/oig/reports/2015/a1511.pdf.