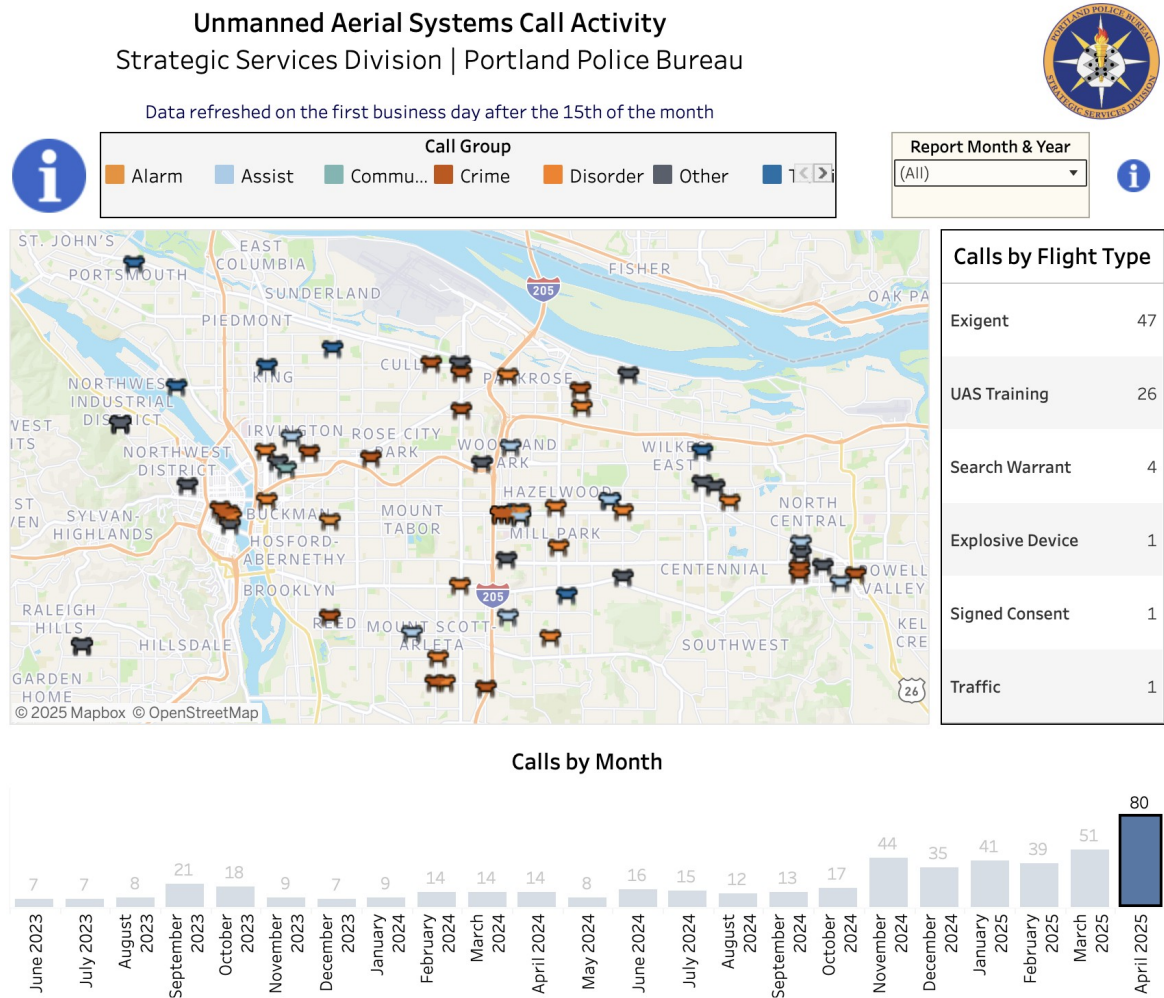


SB 238A unnecessarily and dangerously expands law enforcement’s ability to use drones without judicial oversight and allows law enforcement to deploy drones to any call for service. If an Oregonian calls 911, they will be agreeing to allow drones to be their “first responder.” This is the opposite of community policing and an invitation for abuse. The [ACLU of Oregon’s concerns](#) that “grants of authority are still too broad and vague” and there is a lack of “standards to ensure there will be transparency and accountability available for violations of this law,” are already evident in Portland under the current, more restrictive, state law.

The Portland Police Bureau started its drone program as a pilot project in June 2023, limiting use to a few specific traffic and explosive unit uses. In September 2024, Portland’s City Council [approved PPB’s expansion](#) of its drone program to remove all local restrictions and rely upon state law.

PPB states that their drone dashboard is updated on the 15th of each month, however, as of June 13, 2025, their most recent data is for April 2025. The largest law enforcement agency in the state is unable to meet its own commitment to transparency. PPB’s 80 flights in April 2025 is a nearly 500% increase over their 14 flights in April 2024 and there is a clear jump in drone usage in November 2024 when they started allowing precinct-based drone operations. As current law is sufficient for PPB to be on pace to fly 1,000 missions/year, expansion without judicial oversight is reckless.



Flights are shown as a single symbol on the map, which does not convey the full area covered/surveilled by each flight. PPB's data for April 2024 shows that, of the 80 drone calls, 72 (90%) were flown on the east side of the Willamette River, giving credence to a claim in [RedTail AI's April 2024 report](#) which states:

PPB Drones Are Often Flown Over Neighborhoods with More People of Color and Higher Poverty Rates, Sometimes for Reasons Beyond the Program's Stated Mission

ORS 837.320's requirement for a judicial warrant in all but exigent circumstances and when there is probable cause to believe a crime has been committed, or is about to be committed is a necessary check on law enforcement's use of a technology that, by design, intrudes upon Oregonians' right to be free from government surveillance. SB 238A is a step backwards for privacy and police oversight. Rather than removing judicial oversight over drone usage, the legislature should demand more transparency from law enforcement agencies that use drones and set clear accountability guidelines for overreach by those agencies.

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June 13, 2025