Military Surveillance Blimps to Hover Over U.S. East Coast

Washington, February 15 (RHC)-- The U.S. Army will fly giant surveillance blimps with the capacity to track a broad area of the U.S. east coast beginning in October, according to The Washington Post. News that this tracking and surveillance technology -- used by the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan -- will be deployed domestically is now sparking public outcry.

Ali Issa, an organizer for the War Resisters League, said: "Yet another stark example of the expanding 'War at Home,' this surveillance blimp is both a handy ad for Raytheon's spy technology and also a lifeline for the long worn-out narrative of the Global War On Terror."

Known as aerostats, these aircraft will hover 10,000 feet in the air above Army-owned land 45 miles northeast of Washington, DC. The blimp, though tethered to the ground, will have the ability to see airborne objects from up to 340 miles away and surface vehicles up to 140 miles away.

The Washington Post reports that these objects will be in place for a three-year trial period of the 'Joint Land Attack Cruise Missile Defense Elevated Netted Sensor System' (JLENS), with the stated goal of detecting cruise missiles or enemy aircraft. Yet, U.S. Army officials have refused to rule out equipping the aerostats with powerful cameras and infrared sensors, according to the Post.

Similar aerostats, often equipped with highly sophisticated cameras, have been used as tools of surveillance in Iraq, Afghanistan and along the U.S.-Mexico border.

Civil liberties groups including the American Civil Liberties Union and Electronic Frontier Foundation promptly denounced the blatant use of military-grade surveillance technology at a time of public outrage at NSA spying.

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