



## The **Two-Way**

AMERICA

# North Dakota Legalizes Armed Police Drones

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LAURA WAGNER

With the passage of a new law earlier this year, North Dakota has become the first state to legalize law enforcement use of armed drones.

Though the law limits the type of weapons permitted to those of the "less than lethal" variety — weapons such as tear gas, rubber bullets, beanbags, pepper spray and Tasers — the original bill actually aimed to ensure that no weapons at all were allowed on law enforcement drones.

The sponsor of the original bill, Republican state Rep. Rick Becker, said he wasn't happy with how that part of the law turned out.

"In my opinion there should be a nice, red line: *Drones should not be weaponized.* Period," Becker said at a hearing in March, according to The Daily Beast.

Originally, the intent of the bill was to require police to obtain a search warrant before using a drone to look for evidence. It also prohibited weapons aboard drones.

But to get a measure passed that would require search warrants, Becker had to compromise on the weapons issue.

As quoted by Arstechnica website, Becker described the horse-trading that

characterizes much of the legislative process.

" 'I submitted with prohibition of any weapons,' he said. 'The law enforcement lobby offered an amendment and said that if the amendments were added, they would not oppose. The committee accepted amendments and I didn't fight them because I wanted the bill to pass at least to require warrants. The law says that law enforcement can't use drones weaponized with lethal weapons.' "

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It was a decisive victory for pro-privacy advocates and a worrying defeat for those concerned about the militarization of police in America. Becker says he aims to get the law changed when the House returns to session in two years.

"In 2017 when I get back, I will introduce a bill to also include non-lethal," he said, per Arstechnica.

Weapons considered less than lethal can still be deadly. So far in 2015, at least 39 people in the U.S. have been killed by police Tasers, according to The Guardian. Rubber bullets, beanbags and tear gas canisters have also caused extensive injuries and even death.

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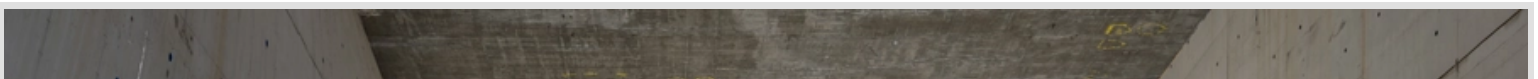
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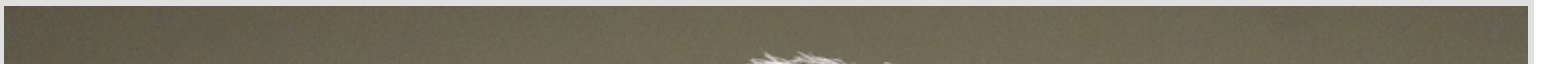
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