



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Drones Flew Over The Solano Stroll

Exigent Use Report says Alameda County Sheriff Drones Monitored Street Fair

For more information contact :

*Tracy Rosenberg, Advocate, Oakland Privacy Email: [tracy@media-alliance.org](mailto:tracy@media-alliance.org) Tel: (510) 684-6853*

**BERKELEY** — A [report](#) filed with the Berkeley City Council due to the requirements of Berkeley's surveillance ordinance framework revealed that the Alameda County Sheriff's Office flew drones "unobtrusively" over the Solano Stroll, focusing on the perimeter of the rooftops. The use of the sheriff's department drones would not have been known to the public without the 2018 surveillance ordinance, which requires reports to the City Council after the temporary use of unpermitted technologies for exigent circumstances.

The city of Berkeley passed a [sweeping moratorium](#) on police use of drones in 2015, which has since expired. The City Council has allowed the use of drones for fire rescue purposes, but no other use has been allowed. The Berkeley Police Department declared the temporary use of the sheriff's department drones at the street fair to be an "exigent circumstance", meaning there was an imminent threat to life and property. However, the report submitted on Friday September 30 via email described the exigent circumstance as "recent attacks on similar events" with no further details. This is possibly a reference to the mass shooting in Highland Park, IL at a 4th of July parade.

The notification suggests that future street fairs, festivals, parades and community gatherings in the City of Berkeley may be subjected to “unobtrusive” drone use in the future by the Alameda Sheriff’s Department at the invitation of the Berkeley Police Department despite the lack of a specific imminent threat directed at that event.

The video footage taken by the drones, per the [Alameda County drone policy](#), should have been destroyed after the mission since it did not contain evidence of criminal activity. However, no verification has been received that this has occurred. The list of authorized missions for departmental drone use in Alameda County does not include monitoring street fairs.

According to Police 1: the Alameda County Sheriff’s Department has [more than 50 drones in their arsenal, some outfitted with zoom cameras and thermal imaging](#). Long time sheriff Greg Ahern was not re-elected in June of 2022 and will soon be replaced by incoming sheriff Yesenia Sanchez.

In 2013, then Berkeley council member, now Berkeley Mayor, Jessie Arreguin [told](#) Oakland North: “We advise the sheriff not to buy a drone,” Arreguin said. “Although we do not have control over our airspace, we have made it clear that we do not want drones flying over Berkeley.”

#### *About Oakland Privacy*

*Oakland Privacy is a citizens' coalition that works regionally to defend the right to privacy and enhance public transparency and oversight regarding the use of surveillance techniques and equipment. To learn more, visit [oaklandprivacy.org](http://oaklandprivacy.org)*

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