

Global Arms

by J. Mykell Collinz

City hall had previously been controlled by a corrupt administration. She won the election for mayor on a promise of reform. Yet she encountered a major stumbling block on her first day of business.

"Drones? Patrolling the city from the air? Who authorized this?"

"Congress provided for it in a defense bill. Which bears the president's signature."

"I want it stopped immediately."

"You have nothing to say about it."

"I am the mayor of this city, elected by its citizens. Who are you?"

"My company has a contract with the federal government to operate the drone program."

"What are the drones looking for?"

"Suspicious patterns of behavior. Onboard computers immediately analyze the data to determine its level of priority. Remote operators at a control center are then alerted if necessary for further analysis."

"Are you saying they can operate on their own without being controlled by an operator?"

"Drones must act quickly. A delayed decision while waiting for an operator to give a command could result in the loss of a contact. Human operators are the weak link here, necessary but slow. Drones are becoming increasingly independent."

When finally alone in her new office, the mayor contemplated her next move. She had known about the federally funded armored vehicles and the militarized SWAT units but the privatized security system using airborne drones forced her to reevaluate her approach to reform. She imagined a remote operator watching her through surveillance equipment planted in the room. Along with the operator, a project supervisor and a team of analysts entered her consciousness and became permanent residents.

