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**OPD Statement on the Baltimore Police Department’s Secret Aerial  
Surveillance Program**

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The Office of the Public Defender is outraged by the recent revelation that the Baltimore Police Department is yet again secretly using invasive technology to conduct widespread surveillance of Baltimore citizens.

Prior to the news reports uncovering this program, the “Baltimore Community Support Program” with Persistent Surveillance System, was never publicly disclosed. This program relies upon a Cessna surveillance aircraft to videotape one-third of the city from the air, and is akin to GPS monitoring of every citizen. The program was funded through anonymous private sources and never reported to the Board of Estimates, which is charged with overseeing the purchases made by city agencies.

“In the aftermath of the problems exposed regarding the illegal use of stingray cell phone tracking technology, as well as the Department of Justice’s report highlighting the unconstitutional practices within the Baltimore Police Department, it is particularly troubling that the Department continues to lack any transparency regarding its technology acquisitions and practices,” said Paul DeWolfe, the Public Defender for Maryland.

The secrecy of the program has precluded any oversight of the technology’s use. Beyond the abuses that are ripe from its use, the unfettered monitoring of citizens will have a chilling affect on peaceful protests protected by the First Amendment.

According to the Department, more than 100 investigations have already resulted from the preliminary use of this technology. Nonetheless, the Office of the Public Defender has never received any information regarding this program or its application. DeWolfe continued:

“Widespread surveillance violates every citizens’ right to privacy; the lack of disclosure about this practice and the video that has been captured further violates the rights of our clients who may have evidence supporting their innocence that is kept secret.”

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