Drones over the backyard? Now wait just a minute …

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The prospect that unmanned aerial vehicles could be patrolling U.S. skies by the end of this decade, and a recent spate of Big Brother government that peeks into the private lives of Americans, is leaving many wondering whether they need to buy a four-wheel drive to protect their privacy.

The worries began mostly on the political margins, but there are signs that ordinary people are starting to fret that unmanned aircraft could soon be circling overhead.

Jeff Landy, a freshman Republican from Waterville, Wash., in eastern Washington's Columbia Basin, said at one point Tuesday that when someone showed up at his door, a congresswoman said it was from the American Civil Liberties Union.

While it is true that he has a road that runs through his backyard, those extra eyes in the sky most likely will not be provided by a government sensor, but by a private entity.

"People are interested in the technology, they are interested in and they worry about being under surveillance from the sky," he said.

The level of apprehension is especially high in the conservative blogosphere, where headlines blare: "Drones Can Be Used Against Americans" and "Newspa.com Offers 50% Off Flights on Farms in the United States."

There's concern as well among liberal activists about whether government and private-sector drones are going to provide information on Americans without their knowledge.

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