

OBAMA EMBRACES KILLER DRONES WITH COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEMS

✖ As bmaz pointed out last week (and Darkblack illustrated so brilliantly), killer drones are coming to America.

In fact, they're coming to America in more formalized fashion, as Janet Napolitano confirmed that the US will add drones to the Texas border.

The Obama administration announced Wednesday that it will station an aerial drone in Texas as part of its stepped-up surveillance of criminal trafficking along the Mexican border.

[snip]

Texas Gov. Rick Perry (R) and Sen. John Cornyn (R-Tex.) had pressed for months for a pilotless drone, and when it was slow in coming, Cornyn blocked Senate confirmation of Michael Huerta to be deputy director of the FAA.

On Wednesday, after learning that the agency had given its approval for the unmanned aerial vehicle, or UAV, to operate in Texas, Cornyn said he would allow a vote on Huerta.

"While the approval process should not have taken this long, I'm pleased to see the FAA moving forward," he said. "The FAA needs to implement a system that will reflect the great importance of border security as well as the growing significance of UAVs in homeland security and national defense."

This bodes ill not just because it probably

starts us down a slippery slope that will bring drones patrolling skies near you. But also because the drones aren't exactly fail safe, as Noah Shachtman reported last week.

For years, drone proponents have pestered the Federal Aviation Administration to let more robotic planes fly in American airspace. For years, the FAA has squirmed; they don't want the drones wandering off-course over Cleveland, or smacking into a traditional airplane as it makes its way to O'Hare.

Incidents like this won't help that comfort level: The first unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) flying on a Texas-Mexico border security mission lost communications with its remote cockpit, leading to undisclosed "pilot deviation," a U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesperson tells the *Brownsville Herald*.

No word on whether American hackers have figured out a way to hack drones the way the Iranians did.