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Access Denied

Can We Please Get an Abortion Drone?

With repro-rights activists dropping abortion pills into Poland using drones, technology may prove to be our greatest ally in the U.S., where safe and legal access is diminishing by the minute.

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Written by
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Look, up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane! It's ... an abortion drone?

As abortion access disappears city by city, county by county and potentially state by state depending on the outcome of a few impending Supreme Court cases, pregnant people are literally traveling hundreds of miles in order to access a legal termination. But what if they didn't have to do that traveling at all. What if, instead, someone was willing to bring that access straight to her doorstep?

It's not a sci-fi fantasy. It is very much a reality—well, at least, it could become one in Poland. [Starting this weekend, Women on Waves](#), the Dutch group which has been advising women in countries where abortion is illegal on how to safely terminate their own pregnancies, will send a drone into Ślubice, Poland, and drop medication-abortion packets into the country for women's groups to distribute to those who want abortions.

"The Abortion drone will mark the different reality for Polish women to access to safe abortion services compared to other women in Europe," the group said via press release. "In almost all European countries abortion is legal, only in Poland, Ireland and Malta abortion is illegal and women's rights are still violated."

So, the obvious question is: How can we get a drone here in the U.S.?

We've been remarkably bad in our country when it comes to using technological advances to expand abortion access locally. Telemedicine abortion—a procedure where a patient goes to a local clinic and speaks via video conference with a physician—should have been an easy way to make sure that all people had the ability to end an abortion early in a pregnancy and with minimal travel and time commitments, and was immensely successful in Iowa for years. In fact, it was so successful that conservative states lined up to [preemptively ban telemed abortion](#) as an option in 16 states just to get ahead of any possible implementation of the procedure. The Iowa's socially conservative governor and

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the anti-abortion activists he appointed to the state board of health then attempted to dismantle Iowa's own program, although their [efforts continue to be blocked](#) by the courts.

In a technology- and consumer-driven country like the United States, drone delivery of products in general is an obvious next step for everyday purchases. [Amazon says](#) it is already prepped to drone out its deliveries, and that they are just waiting for rules to be put in place to let their "Prime Air" program be a reality. Could we ever use that network for droning drugs, too?

An abortion-drug drone wouldn't necessarily be completely incompatible with current laws, either, at least, not in states without teled bans on the books. In fact, for a state like Utah, which has a mandatory face-to-face meeting with a doctor, followed by a 72-hour wait, but no prohibition on doing a medication abortion without a doctor present, it could enforce that three-day wait by arriving at a patient's home after that period passes, but allow her to avoid the additional potentially long-distance drive back for a second appointment.

But let's be honest: For those of us who may want a drone-led abortion revolution, this has nothing to do with working within the extraordinarily limited legal framework that the abortion opponents have created. Instead, we want a drone to break it wide open.

Six states are down to just one legal abortion clinic each. Texas and Louisiana are in the courts fighting to close most of their clinics down. And four states have waiting periods that are three-days long: [Abortion access](#) is increasingly limited, and only getting more so—in many areas, non-existent. Pregnant people are turning away from the legally approved, more expensive and massively regulated clinics that are often teeming with "prayer warriors" and "sidewalk counselors" positioned to deter them, and turning to their own resources to end a pregnancy. Activists in favor of abortion rights have joked about starting abortion buses, RU-trailers, and other mobile clinic options in order to bring care directly to those who most desperately need it but can't navigate the increasingly tight rules surrounding a termination.

A drone of our own could make that pipe dream a reality.

Like Poland, in the United States a person technically shouldn't be charged with a crime for ending her own pregnancy—at least, [as long as she does it well before viability](#). A drone-borne pill package takes away the waiting periods, extra cost and other hurdles placed on obtaining an abortion through a provider, and the criminal punishments that can be placed on a doctor for providing that termination in the first place if every last detail isn't meticulously observed and recorded.

Of course, the likelihood of seeing a drone in the U.S. anytime soon is about the same as us getting a Women on the Waves boat tucked into the Gulf of Mexico a few miles out from Brownsville, Texas. On the other hand, we could have a mini-breakthrough if Amazon does bring its drone system online, at the very least rushing [emergency contraception](#) to those who need it immediately but can't find a store close enough that stocks the medication for purchase.

Ideally, teled laws would be rescinded, waiting periods would be abolished as a restrictive attempt to block a pregnant person from obtaining an abortion in a timely manner, and every person's medical insurance would cover all abortion procedures. Sadly, that future is far off, and may never become a reality.

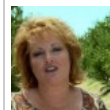
In that case, let me be the first to say: Send in the drones.

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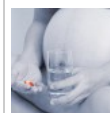


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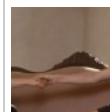
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COMMENTS

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