

'Abortion drone' delivers pregnancy-terminating pills to women in Poland

Doctors with a non-profit Dutch charity use quadcopters to give women in Poland access to safe abortions

By Lauren O'Neil, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 29, 2015 8:15 PM ET Last Updated: Jun 29, 2015 8:15 PM ET

In what might be the most political use of personal drones yet, Dutch activists successfully flew a quadcopter carrying abortion-inducing pills into Poland this weekend — without the need for any sort of government authorization, thanks to their unique method of delivery.

Abortion is not currently legal in Poland unless a woman's life is in danger or [evidence](#) of rape, incest or severe fetal abnormalities is provided.

Because of this, more than 50,000 underground abortions are performed illegally each year in the traditionally Catholic country, often by doctors who use outdated tools and charge thousands of dollars, [according to The Guardian](#).

The "abortion drone" was created both as a way to raise awareness about Poland's laws, and to provide women living there with a safe and affordable alternative when it comes to ending unwanted pregnancies.

"The medicines used for a medical abortion, mifepristone and misoprostol, have been on the list of essential medicines of the World Health Organization since 2005 and are available in Germany and almost all other European countries," reads [a press release](#) issued last week by Women on Waves, the non-profit group of doctors and activists behind the project.

"However this medicine is still not registered in Poland," the release continues. "Drones can also be used to provide safe abortion pills by [loading] the package in Germany, where abortion is legal and delivering it into a border town in Poland where abortion is severely restricted since 1993."

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The Dutch group explained that, because its consumer drone weighs less than 5 kg and is not used for commercial purposes, neither Polish or German laws could prohibit it from flying between borders.

So, on Saturday, a small UAV was loaded up with medication prescribed by a Dutch gynecologist and flown from the German town of Frankfurt an der Oder to Slubice, Poland.

The entire trip (as seen [in the video below](#)) lasted only 60 seconds, but the drone was able to make it across a river and deliver its load to activists waiting in Poland despite threats of being shot down by pro-life activists.



The [AFP reports](#) that about a dozen anti-abortion protesters had gathered at the Polish site to give out plastic fetuses, but that neither they nor several plainclothes police officers in attendance interfered with the landing.

Back on the German side of the river, however, police confiscated the group's drone controllers and iPads.

This didn't seem to deter Women on Waves, which called the mission "a success" in [an update on its website](#) later that day.

"After the drones left, the German police tried to intervene but the drone pilots were able to safely land the drones at the Polish side," the post reads. "Two Polish women swallowed the abortion pills that were delivered to them by the drones. The German police confiscated the drone controllers and personal iPads. They pressed criminal charges but it is totally unclear on what grounds. The medicines were provided on prescription by a doctor and both Poland and Germany are part of Schengen."

Jula Gaweda of the Polish feminist organization Feminoteka, which collaborated on the project with Women on Waves, clarified to the AFP that the two women who swallowed the medication in Poland were not pregnant and that the gesture was symbolic.



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"The operation went well," Gaweda told a reporter, saying that "just a few kilometres (between the take-off and the landing site) can be a gulf in terms of respect for women's rights, reproductive rights, which

are human rights."

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